

外 国 語 要 旨

学位論文題目 Development of early mother-infant relationships in infants admitted to Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) due to low birth weight

氏 名 Yuki Iizuka

This study investigated the effects of separating mothers and infants from being placed in NICU due to low birth weight. The study focused on the role of clinical psychological interventions during this process.

In Chapter 1, the social background to the problem of low birthweight in children is described. The birth rate in Japan is decreasing, although the number of low birth weight children is on the increase. This could be because of the increase in childbearing age and by children being conceived through fertility treatment. Today, children with a birthweight of over 700 grams, can survive, however, a number of studies have pointed out that low birth weight children have an increased risk of being abused. Certain studies have also suggested deficiencies in the relationship between mothers and low birth weight children.

In Chapter 2, a review of studies conducted on the early separation of mothers and children is described. For example biological theories, such as the theory of bonding and the theory of attachment, as well as examples from psychoanalysis are discussed. All of the theories suggest that early separation of mothers and children has negative effects and that such separation is detrimental to their relationship.

In Chapter 3, purposes and methods of Studies 1 and 2 are described. Study 1 analyzed interactions that occurred when 20 infants were taken out of incubators, by focusing on how mother's held their babies. The objective of Study 2 was to identify subjective experiences of mothers from the gestation period to when infants were taken out of incubators, by using interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Chapter 4 provides more details of Study 1, which investigated interactions between mothers and low birth weight infants. Maternal holding behaviors and behaviors of low birth-weight infants placed in the NICU were analyzed in 20 mother-infant pairs. The study also focused on how mothers held their babies and the actions of infants. Holding is a very important modality of communication between mothers and children that had experience separation. Therefore, the rate

of holding was compared between immediately after reintegration and immediately before leaving the hospital. Results showed that rate of holding peaked immediately after reintegration, whereas the rate of face-to-face holding peaked immediately before leaving the hospital. In addition, frequency of actions by infants increased between these two periods, which suggested a close relationship between the process by which mothers add horizontal holding to face-to-face holding, and the increase in the frequency of children's activities. Events that occurred before and after holding were used to infer the meaning of this association by giving it context, which suggested that horizontal and face-to-face holding might have different functions. Why did mothers conduct these behaviors? It is possible that the rate of interactions by children increased because mothers changed their holding style and increased messages. These actions by mothers' might contribute to reducing the damage caused by separation.

Chapter 5 describes Study 2, which investigated emotional conflicts and real life experiences. In this study, interviews conducted with eight mothers were analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis, which extracted five topics: "Lack of real feeling of giving birth to a child," "Guilt about bearing a child with low birth weight," "Feeling psychologically distant from the child due to separation in the incubator," Formation of maternal awareness through physical contact," and "Anxiety about development, illnesses and disorders."

In Chapter 6, the author summarizes the findings of the complete study and discusses their implications. Guilt about bearing a child with low birth weight and feeling psychologically distant are negative emotions, which might motivate compensatory action, such as visiting children in hospital and promote active interactions between mothers and children. Nevertheless, these emotions were also problematic to the mothers. Therefore, they required clinical psychological interventions. Their emotions were not sympathized with even their husbands and other people. Consequently listening attentively to their emotions by therapist helps them.

One of the limitations of this study was the small sample size. It is suggested that future studies should include a larger sample. Perhaps because of the small sample size, all participating mother-child pairs had a relatively good relationship. Increasing the sample size would make the sample more representative by including mother-child pairs with deficient relationships.