

Abstract

学位論文題目 Association between psychological well-being and family meals in junior high school students

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This dissertation examined the association between psychological well-being and individual meal habits among junior high school students, with a particular focus on the role of family meals. In recent years, social attention to *Shokuiku* (food and nutrition education) has been increasing in various domains, including school education. With respect to children, particular attention is paid to family meals, but children's meals at home cannot be considered separately from the working environment of their parents or the family's lifestyle. Given that the long working hours of men in their 30s and 40s—the child-rearing generations—is becoming a chronic issue and that women will be more active in society in the future, it will be difficult to increase the number of family meals. We should consider ways to promote *Shokuiku* with such a social environment in mind. As a first step, it is important to clarify what factors and mechanisms influence children's psychological well-being in the context of family meals.

In previous studies on adolescents' family meals in other countries, some methodological limitations in the measurement of family meals were suggested; meals were often quantified on a unidimensional scale, such as behavioral frequency, and even measures using such scales were found to be inconsistent across studies. While previous research in Japan has attempted to address the concept of family meals using a variety of factors such as helping practices (e.g., sharing cooking duties, washing-up), communication at meal times, and individual perception of family meals, many studies failed to control for covariates (e.g., family demographics, family relationships) that may affect the outcome variables. To advance our knowledge of the role of family meals, this empirical paper conceptualized individuals' affective attitudes, as opposed to their cognitive or behavioral attitudes, toward family meals as their “sense of family meals” (SFM) and attempted to elucidate the process by which this sense is formed in terms of multifaceted aspects concerning the quality and quantity of family meals, and then examined its relationship with psychological well-being among junior high school students. Family demographics and relationships have been controlled for, in order to overcome the limitations of previous studies.

In study 1, a one-week diary survey was conducted to depict the individual meal habits of junior high school students. The data from 14 meals (i.e. breakfasts and dinners for a week) were collected from

160 students from public junior high schools in Gifu. Firstly, the students' meal habits were examined and the results found that the average number of people at the table was 1.52 and the average frequency of family meals was 2.31 out of 14 meals, which indicated that the families of many study participants experienced difficulty in having meals with all members present. Then, to clarify the process by which SFM is formed, we explored the associations of SFM with meal related factors: number of dishes, whether the meal was home-made, time of meal, meal location (at home or elsewhere), number of people at the table, family meal frequency, helping practices, meal time communication, and SFM. The results showed that, among the meal-related factors, the number of dishes, the number of people at the table, and helping practices were associated with meal time communication. Further analysis revealed a mediating mechanism in process of SFM formation, with the association between those three factors and SFM mediated by meal time communication. Moreover, an additional analysis indicated that those who were less likely to eat with family members expressed a significantly lower SFM in comparison with those who ate with their family often; students for whom 3 out of 14 meals were family meals showed significantly lower SFM-scores than those for whom more than 3 meals were family meals.

In study 2, a longitudinal study was carried out to investigate the relationship between the SFM formation process and psychological well-being at two timepoints (T1 and T2), using data obtained from 469 students of a public junior high school in Gifu. More precisely, this study examined the relationship of T1 meal related factors (i.e., the number of dishes, the number of family members at the table, helping practices) to T2 psychological well-being (i.e., life satisfaction, depression), mediated by T1 meal time communication and SFM. The results found that the number of people at the table was related to meal time communication, and was thus associated with students' levels of life satisfaction and depression, both of which were mediated by SFM. These findings suggested that the T1 formation of SFM had contributed to T2 students' psychological well-being, and that individual SFM played a pivotal role in these models.

The findings were discussed on the basis of previous literature, as well as in relation to related studies in the fields of family meals research, home science, and school education, and lend support to the promotion of the policy of *Shokuiku*.