Family Functioning Relating to Healthy Eating

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Abstract
This study of 445 mothers and their first grade children showed that a family’s healthy psychological functioning is related to whether a family thinks that fruits and vegetables are good or bad. When a family’s psychological functioning is higher, families are more likely to believe that fruits and vegetables are good. Mothers who reported higher family psychological functioning also modeled and encouraged eating fruits and vegetables. This study also showed that maternal modeling and encouraging were significantly related to a child’s belief about eating fruits and vegetables. When modeling and encouraging are highly used by mothers, a child is more likely to think fruits and vegetables are good.

Rationale

Background
a. Research
• The goal was to see how family functioning relates to the amount of fruit and vegetables a child consumes or how much a family believes they should consume. We also set out to discover if maternal modelling and encouraging were related to higher family functioning.

b. My Role
• Checking data on the Family Assessment Device (FAD) to ensure that the scale remained the same throughout Waves 1, 2, and 3.
• Learning to understand the FAD.
• Learning how to make a poster.

Research Questions
1. Are mothers’ reports of general family functioning related to their reports of their family’s and child’s belief about eating fruits and vegetables?
2. Do mothers from higher functioning families model healthier eating?
3. Does higher family functioning relate to parents encouraging their children to eat more fruits and vegetables?

Methods

Participants
- 445 mothers and their first grade children
  - Married (first time) 51%
  - Divorced 12%
  - Separated 2%
  - Never married 19%
  - Other 10%
  - Not Reported 15%

Figure 1—Marital Status of Mothers

- Did not report age
  - 26 or younger 4%
  - 27 to 29 years old 14%
  - 30 to 32 years old 12%
  - 33 to 35 years old 12%
  - 36 to 38 years old 16%
  - 39 to 45 years old 19%
  - 46 or older 10%

Figure 2—Percentage of Mothers Per Age Group

Methods—Measures

- Family Assessment Device (FAD; Epstein, Baldwin, Bishop 1983)—measures a family’s healthy psychological functioning by asking questions such as “In times of crisis, we turn to each other for support.” Questions were rated by mothers on a scale of 4—Strongly Agree, 3—Agree, 2—Disagree, 1—Strongly Disagree.
- Child Normative Beliefs Questionnaire (CNBQ; Cullen et al. 2001)—measures beliefs about whether eating fruits and vegetables as a snack is good. The survey included question such as “My child thinks eating one serving of vegetables at supper is...” with a rating of 0—“They don’t care/I don’t know,” 1—a good thing,” and 2—a very good thing.”
- Child Normative Expectations Questionnaire (CNEQ; Cullen et al. 2001)—measures how encouraged children are to eat fruits and vegetables. The survey included questions such as “How much do you encourage your child to eat vegetables at supper?” Mothers rated the questions of a scale of 2—Encourages a lot, 1—Encourages a little, 0—Neither encourages or discourages, -1—Discourages a little, and -2—Discourages a lot.
- Child Modeling Questionnaire (CMQ; Cullen et al. 2001)—measures how parents model eating behaviors for their children. The survey included questions such as “I eat vegetables for supper when I am with my child.” Mothers rated the questions of a scale of 1—Never, 2—Sometimes, 3—Often, 4—Always.

Results—Correlations

Results (Cont.)

Research Question 1
• Table 2 shows a significant positive correlation between FAD family functioning and the mothers’ reports of their family’s beliefs of eating fruits and vegetables (.159). The higher the FAD family functioning score, the higher the mother rates that her family thinks fruits and vegetables were good.

Research Question 2
• Table 2 shows that the correlation between FAD family functioning and the child’s belief about fruits and vegetables was not significant (.047).

Research Question 3
• Table 2 shows that FAD family functioning is significantly and positively related to FAD family functioning (.141).

Discussion and Conclusion
This study is a continuation of a previous study. The correlations show that higher family functioning is related to mothers reporting that their family thinks fruits and vegetables are good. There were also other areas with high correlations. For example, maternal modelling of healthy eating was positively related to parents encouraging their children to eat more fruits and vegetables. The results in regard to my research questions lead me to believe that high functioning families are more likely to eat more fruits and vegetables than lower functioning families.

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References