

Parents' Influences on their Children's Unhealthy Food Consumption since COVID-19

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Introduction

Coronavirus Disease-19 (COVID-19) has greatly influenced individuals' lives in diverse dimensions since the outbreak began [1,2]. A large body of recently published studies focus on ways to prevent COVID-19 or determinants influencing the spread of COVID-19 [3-5]. However, COVID-19 also affects our daily life, such as nutrition, as individuals' environments have dramatically changed in various ways, in part to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Changes in parents' stress or economic status considerably influence child's nutrition. In other words, parents play an important role providing balanced nutrition to their children as they are not mature enough to prepare food by themselves. Empirical evidence regarding nutrition during COVID-19 has accumulated slightly [6] while there is no study based on parents' influence on their children's nutrition. Even though it is critical to examine changes in children's nutrition since COVID-19, there are few studies particularly considering the effect of parents' life changes during COVID-19 on their children's nutrition.

Parents' Reduced Economic Resources and Children's Nutrition

Since COVID-19 emerged, many lower-, working-, and middle-class people have encountered economic difficulties, such as decreased income, reduced wealth, and unemployment. Even though many governments around the world have provided financial support to those who have suffered from economic challenges [7], their troubles continue and even worsen. Given that parents' financial problems may impact their children's development [8], it is important to pay more attention to parents. Additionally, to achieve expected outcomes in each developmental stage, having adequate nutrition is one of the most important factors. However, parents who were unemployed

due to COVID-19 might not have enough money to provide good nutrition to their children. In addition, parents might pay additional expenses such as a face mask and hand sanitizer. That is, they might purchase more extra goods even if their income decreases. It results in poor nutrition of children as parents may stop buying fruits or vegetables, which are good for children's health, and increase expenses about unhealthy foods, which is relatively cheaper. As such, changes in parent's economic resources since COVID-19 should be taken into account to understand children's nutrition.

Caregiving Burden and Nutrition

As many schools have switched to online learning and children are not going to school in person, the amount of time that parents are required to provide or find caregiving for their children has increased since the emergence of COVID-19. As children spend more time at home, the amount of time which parents take care of their children also grows. As the COVID-19 pandemic reaches one year since it began, parents' caregiving burden is increasingly rising, leading to the possibility of neglect or abuse [9]. Even though most parents do not maltreat their children, the nutrition of children who have experienced abuse or neglect by their parents can be worse than those who have not and in fact poor nutrition [10]. Further, parents' overwhelmed responsibilities and role result in mental health problems [11,12], which may also interrupt their ability to provide balanced nutrition to their children [13-15].

Conclusion

Because children's nutrition is greatly influenced by their parents' caregiving burden and economic status, more government programs and support for parents with children should be provided to improve nutrition of children during COVID-19. To be specific, the number

of people in the United States claiming unemployment benefits has increasingly risen since COVID-19, showing that many people are suffering from economic difficulties. However, eligibility for unemployment benefits is limited and additional Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation cannot ensure a return to their normal lifestyle among the unemployed. This phenomenon indicates that the underprivileged are more likely to suffer from economic challenges and less likely to offer nutritious food to their children as often as before COVID-19. In particular, low-income families should be given more attention because parents in low-income families or who are in poverty might not have sufficient financial support to provide their children with balanced nutrition. That is, we suggest that the intergenerational transmission of parents' economic resources to their children's nutrition as well as disparities in race/ethnicity and gender should be considered in future studies in order to more deeply understand children's nutrition during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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