

Relationship between parent-child dyads in seafood consumption, attitudes and preferences

Bjørn Tore Nystrand* & Kari Lisbeth Fjørtoft
Møreforskning AS, P.O. Box 5075, N-6021 Ålesund, Norway

Introduction

This study examines seafood consumption, attitudes and preferences (S-CAP) in parent-child dyads.

The main objective is to determine differences in S-CAP between children and their parents. Additionally, age effects are studied. Motives for disparities are discussed.

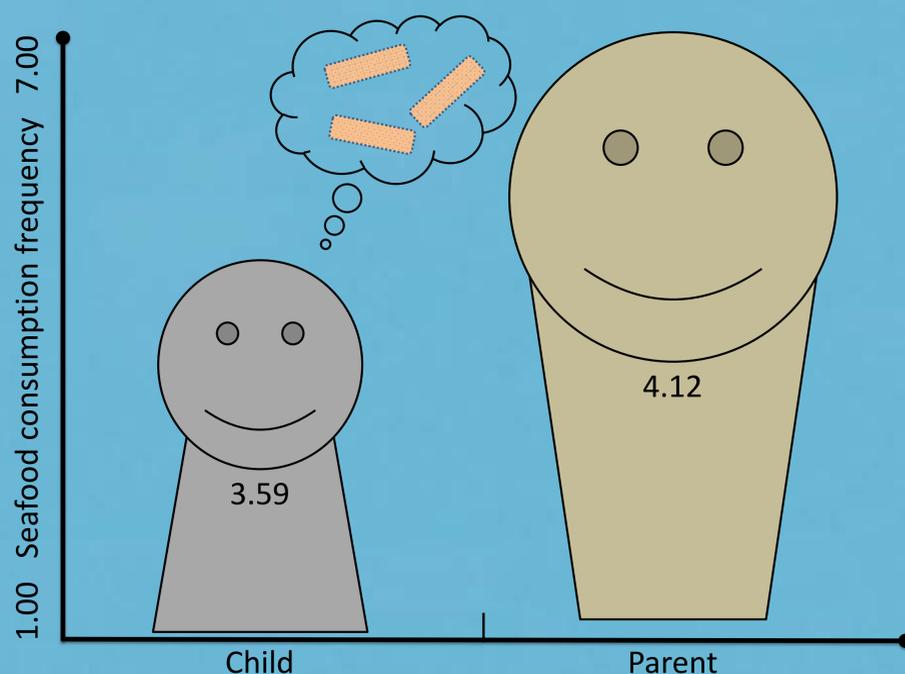
Materials and methods

The study includes 154 parent-child dyads with children between the ages of 10-16 years. The mean age of the participating children was 13.3 ± 1.9 and 50.0 % were female. The mean age of the parents was 44.3 ± 6.1 years and 72.1 % were female.

All participants completed a questionnaire measuring seafood consumption, attitudes and preferences (liking) along with age and gender. Fifteen seafood items were included.

The parent survey was administered online using the QuestBack Ask & Act survey tool, distributed by email. Children completed a similar pen & paper version during lessons.

The relationships in S-CAP patterns in parent-child dyads are explored by means of Spearman correlations, while paired-samples t-tests are assessed to study mean differences.



Results

Parents show a more positive attitude than their children towards eating fish both for dinner and as cold cuts. This observation is true across age-groups.

Overall there exist a weak but significant relationship between parent-child dyads in attitudes towards fish as dinner, $r = 0.166$, $p = 0.04$. Further analyses show a significant correlation only in dyads where the child attends lower secondary school, $r = 0.236$, $p = 0.04$.

A significant negative relationship is found in parent-child dyads in seafood consumption frequency, $r = -0.372$, $p < 0.00$. Children eat seafood for dinner less frequently than their parents. No relationship in consumption frequency is found in dyads where the child attends primary school. However, in dyads where the child attends lower or upper secondary school the relationship is significantly negative, $r = -0.401$ and $r = -0.522$, respectively.

Significant parent-child differences in seafood preferences exist for all 15 seafood items, mean differences ranging from 0.45 (salmon) to 1.84 (bacalhau). Parents' preferences are higher for every seafood item except for fish fingers. No relationship is found between parent-child dyads in seafood preferences.

Discussion

The major finding of this study is the negative relationship between parents and children in seafood consumption frequency. The number of foods tried has previously been found to increase by age (e.g. Cooke and Wardle, 2005). In addition, 16-year-olds are more independent and likely to eat out than 10-year-olds. This might explain why the negative parent-child relationship in seafood consumption frequency seems to grow stronger by age of the child. Another explanation can be that younger children are requested to eat whatever is served at family mealtime, while older children either eat at a different time or get to eat other foods at family meals.

To verify the mechanisms behind these findings, future research should encompass a qualitative approach (e.g. focus groups). It would be interesting also to study parent-child dyads longitudinally to investigate how S-CAP relationships develop over time.

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