Role of food preoccupation and current dieting in the associations of parental feeding practices to emotional eating in young adults: A moderated mediation study

Natalie A. Williams a, *, Dipti A. Dev b, Maren Hankey c, Kimberly Blitch d

a Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 250 Mabel Lee Hall, Lincoln, NE 68588-0236, United States
b Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 135 Home Economics Building, Lincoln, NE 68583-0831, United States
c Department of Psychology, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 238 Burnett Hall, Lincoln, NE 68588-0308, United States
d Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 135 Mabel Lee, Lincoln, NE 68583-0831, United States

ABSTRACT

Parental feeding practices reflecting coercive control are related to children's later eating behaviors, but the mechanisms underlying these effects remain poorly understood. This study examined the relationships between recalled childhood experiences of parental pressure to eat and restriction and current food preoccupation, dieting, and emotional eating in a racially diverse sample of college students (N = 711). Results revealed that parental restriction, but not pressure to eat, was associated with more emotional eating (r = 0.18, p < 0.0001). Food preoccupation mediated the association between restriction and emotional eating (95% CI [3.6495–7.2231]); however, a moderated mediation model revealed that the strength of the indirect effect of restrictive feeding on emotional eating through food preoccupation was significantly different for dieters and non-dieters (index of moderated mediation = 1.79, Boot SE = 0.79; 95% bias-corrected bootstrap CI [−3.5490 to −0.4515]). These findings provide unique insight into the mechanisms linking parental feeding practices with emotional eating in young adulthood. Future studies attempting to clarify the processes through which child feeding practices impact later eating behaviors should consider the role of current dieting.

1. Introduction

Child feeding practices used by parents are related to both child weight status and eating behaviors during childhood. Feeding practices that reflect coercive control, such as pressuring children to eat, restricting children's access and consumption of unhealthy foods, and using food to influence children's behaviors or regulate their emotions, appear especially detrimental to the development of healthy eating patterns and weight (Lansigan, Emond, & Gilbert-Diamond, 2015; Shloim, Edelson, Martin, & Hetherington, 2015; Vaughn et al., 2016; Ventura & Birch, 2008). Cross-sectional and experimental studies have established associations between these feeding practices and increased child preference for restricted foods, heightened responsiveness to the presence of palatable foods, and eating beyond satiety when restricted foods are made available (Galloway, Fiorito, Francis, & Birch, 2006; Jansen et al., 2012). In longitudinal investigations, coercive control feeding practices have been shown to contribute to excessive weight gain (for restriction only) and problematic eating behaviors during childhood and adolescence (Birch, Fisher, & Davison, 2003; Houldcroft, Farrow, & Haycraft, 2016; Hughes, Power, O'Connor, Orlet Fisher, & Chen, 2016; Rodgers et al., 2013).

Available evidence suggests that childhood feeding experiences continue to adversely affect individuals' food preferences, dietary habits, and eating behaviors into adulthood (Batsell, Brown, Ansfield, & Paschall, 2002; Brunstrom, Mitchell, & Baguley, 2005; Wadhera, Capaldi Phillips, Wilkie, & Boggess, 2015). For example, adults who recollect being forced to clean their plates as children or were frequently rewarded or punished with food are more likely to...
be overweight and to display obesity-promoting eating behaviors, such as emotional eating or binge eating (Puhl & Schwartz, 2003). More recently, studies using retrospective reports of parental feeding practices have documented associations between controlling feeding practices and maladaptive eating behaviors in college students. For example, parental pressure to eat during childhood is associated with lower levels of intuitive eating (i.e., less sensitivity to internal hunger and satiety cues) and more disordered eating behaviors, such as binge eating or eating in response to the experience of negative emotions (i.e., emotional eating) (Ellis, Galloway, Webb, Marzt, & Farrow, 2016). Parental restriction and using food to influence children’s behaviors or regulate their emotions (i.e., emotional regulation feeding; Vaughn et al., 2016) during childhood are also associated with emotional eating in college students (Galloway, Farrow, & Marzt, 2010; Tan, Ruhl, Chow, & Ellis, 2016).

These findings are concerning, given evidence that emotional eating relates to increased fatty food intake and higher body mass index in adults (Camilleri et al., 2014; Cartwright et al., 2003; Konttinen, Mannisto, Sarlio-Lahteenkorva, Silventoinen, & Haukkala, 2010; van Strien, Herman, & Verheijden, 2012).

Despite emerging evidence of the long-term impact of controlling child feeding practices, we are aware of only one study that has tested any hypothesis linking early feeding experiences with maladaptive eating behaviors in young adults. Drawing on restraint theory (Hill, Weaver, & Blundell, 1991; Polivy & Herman, 1985) and empirical evidence associating food restriction, food preoccupation (i.e., obsessively thinking about food and eating) and obesity-promoting eating behaviors, Tan and colleagues examined food preoccupation as a mediator of associations between recalled parental feeding practices during childhood and current emotional eating in a sample of 97 college students (Tan et al., 2016). In their study, food preoccupation was found to mediate the relationship between emotional regulation feeding in childhood and emotional eating in adulthood, but food preoccupation did not account for the association between parental restriction and emotional eating. Replication of this unexpected result is needed given the strong theoretical and empirical basis informing these hypothesized relationships. Moreover, examination of other controlling feeding practices commonly used by parents, such as pressuring children to eat, is needed to advance the currently small literature exploring the role of food preoccupation in the link between childhood feeding experiences and later emotional eating.

Another important next step for research investigating the mechanisms linking childhood feeding experiences with later eating behaviors is to establish not only how childhood feeding experiences impact adults’ eating behaviors, but also under what conditions these meditational processes occur. For example, it is possible that the mediating effect of food preoccupation observed by Tan and colleagues is not universal across all college students, but instead varies as a result of factors that moderate one or more of the associations between parental feeding practices, food preoccupation, and current eating behavior. Considering potential moderators in the context of meditational models examining the long-term effects of parental feeding practices could identify specific subpopulations of young adults at elevated risk and yield novel information to inform the development of targeted interventions.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants and procedure

Participants included 711 undergraduate students aged 18–23 years attending a mid-sized public university located in the southern United States. Participants were recruited through the Psychology Research Participation System at the university where the research was conducted. This system provides a mechanism for undergraduate students to participate in studies and earn research credits, which they can assign to one or more of their psychology courses in order to receive extra credit points in the course(s). Students who were interested in participating in the study signed up electronically, and were emailed a link to a secure website to provide informed consent and participate in the study. The survey included a demographic questionnaire and measures assessing participants’ recollections of how their parents approached feeding them as a child and their current experience of food cravings and eating habits. Participants also provided self-reports of their current height and weight, which were used to determine body mass index (kg/m²).
دریافت فوری متن کامل مقاله

امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات