

Abstract

The present study examined the mothers' influences on daughters' eating attitudes and behaviors among a group of young girls (9 –14 years old) and their mothers in Hong Kong. Subjects were assessed on their weight and appearance concern, body area dissatisfaction, symptomatic eating attitudes and behaviors and other weight-related variables. Active maternal influences in terms of commentary and criticism, verbal encouragement and control on eating were also measured. Symptomatic eating attitudes and behaviors were found to be prevailing among these Chinese girls. Mothers' body concern and body dissatisfaction was found to directly affect daughters' eating attitudes. However, the impact of mothers' symptomatic eating behaviors and active maternal influences on daughters' pathological eating behaviors was mediated by daughters' own eating attitudes. Therefore, daughters' weight and appearance concern and body dissatisfaction appear to be important mediating factors to consider when examining maternal influences on daughters' eating attitudes and behaviors. Due to the prevalence of pathological eating attitudes and behaviors found among the local girls and the intricate relationship among mothers and daughters in eating, intervention and prevention programs relating to the development of eating disorders among young girls and education to their mothers are warranted.