THE ROLE OF FAMILY COMMUNICATION IN INDIVIDUAL ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS CONCERNING NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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ABSTRACT

Despite the increasing popularity of family health communication studies, little attention has been paid to nutrition- and physical activity-related health communication in the family context. This mixed-method study explores the influence of family health communication on individual member attitudes and behaviors. Both phases of the study—grounded in Family Communication Patterns theory and Social Cognitive theory—revealed the importance of family communication as a contributor to physical health. Specifically, the first quantitative phase of the study used structural equation modeling and an Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) to assess the relationships between a young adult’s and corresponding family member’s health attitudes and behaviors. Moderating and mediating effects of communication and non-communication related variables were also examined. Two overarching themes and corresponding subthemes developed from the second, phenomenological phase of study. It emphasized (a) the importance of nonverbal health communication and (b) health as a gendered experience.