



Opinion

Considering the effects of mothers' economic resources on their children's physical and psychological health

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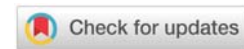
Received: 17 November, 2020

Accepted: 08 January, 2021

Published: 09 January, 2021

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There is a large body of studies examining parents' economic influences on their children's physical and psychological health [1-3]. However, few studies have addressed the impact of mothers' economic resources on health outcomes specifically [5-7]. Additionally, women's labor force participation is increasingly growing [7-9] and their roles in the workplace have a great impact on the labor market [10,11]. Thus, it is necessary to consider the influence of mothers' economic resources on their children's development, particularly regarding their physical and psychological health.

Even though gender discrimination in the labor force persists, the proportion of women's contributions to household finances is increasing compared to that of previous generations. That is, women's increased labor force participation leads to increased household income, which may allow mothers to be able to provide their children with access to better quality and more healthy food options. Given that the quality and nutritional value of foods closely relate to physical health [12-15], mothers' economic contributions through their employment positively influence their children's physical health. For instance, mothers with higher incomes, compared to those with lower incomes, may avoid providing their children with fast food [4,16]. As fast food consumption may lead to numerous physical health problems such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease [14,17,18], it is important to reduce fast food consumption among children. In other words, mothers' economic resources inversely affect their children's fast food consumption. While fathers' economic resources are still important for children's physical health, we need to consider a new perspective regarding women's economic resources.

Moreover, economic resources are also associated with psychological health problems, such as depression and anxiety [19,20]. However, little is also known about the effects of mothers' economic resources on their children's psychological health. Children with wealthier parents may have more confidence in their behaviors and decisions because they are able to do things they want which require financial support. On the other hand, children who cannot receive parents' financial support may have decreased self-esteem, leading them to suffer from psychological health problems. As discussed previously, mothers' contribution at an economic level has increased [7-9]. Thus, we should pay more attention to mothers' economic influence on their children's psychological health.

As women's household financial contributions have increased, new research focusing on mother's economic influences has emerged [4,21,22]. However, these studies were limited to areas such as intergenerational mobility and inequality across generations. That is, there is little empirical evidence examining the effects of mothers' economic resources on their children's physical and psychological health. Therefore, we suggest that future studies should specifically consider mothers' influences to understand children's health more deeply.

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Citation: Lee J, Allen J (2021) Considering the effects of mothers' economic resources on their children's physical and psychological health. *Arch Community Med Public Health* 7(1): 006-007. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.17352/2455-5479.000124>