A Study of Sense of Coherence (SOC) and Recognition of Dental Hygienist Practice in University Students

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\textbf{Abstract:} This study was undertaken to clarify the relationship between the level of a Sense of Coherence (SOC) and recognition of dental hygienist practice in terms of university students in their early adulthood. The analyzed subjects were 1,772 male and female students in total who, in their sophomore year at a private university, located in the suburbs of Nagoya City, responded to a health survey questionnaire (valid response rate: 90.7%). The research procedure for the recognition of dental hygienist practice was applied employing the 10 items of the dental hygienist practice questionnaire of Matsuda. For the SOC scale, the 29-item scale of the Japanese language version was used. As a result, regarding the average cognitive score for dental hygienist practice (mean \pm SD), it was 5.0 \pm 2.6 for male and 5.8 \pm 2.3 for female students. The average SOC score for male students was 116.8 \pm 17.7, and 117.1 \pm 16.3 for females. The female students showed a higher-level recognition of dental hygienist practice than males. More than 70% of both sexes recognized that “brushing guidance” is performed by a dental hygienist. The SOC score of male students who regard “risk evaluation” as a task of a dental hygienist was significantly higher than in male students who answered incorrectly. In the female subjects, there was no significant difference in the SOC score between the correct and incorrect respondents regarding the ten items of dental hygienist practice. In both sexes, students who effectively recognized dental hygienist practice showed a higher SOC score than those with a poor recognition.

It was observed that university students with a higher SOC score also showed an excellent cognitive score for dental hygienist practice, and university students’ health-related behavior in regard to teeth and the oral cavity and their recognition of dental hygienist practice were significantly correlated with the SOC.

It was concluded that university students who effectively recognize dental hygienist practice show a higher SOC score than those with low-level recognition.

\textit{Key words:} SOC scale, Practice of dental hygienists, Dental health behavior, University students