

Associations between Metacognitive Beliefs about Friendships and Adjustment among Japanese University Students

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INTRODUCTION

Japanese adolescents' friendships are often described as "superficial," with fear of evaluation and avoidance of intimacy linked to maladjustment (Ishimoto et al., 2009). These attitudes involve self-focused attention, the mentality of fearing evaluation by others, injury to oneself and others, and avoidance of intimacy. These can be understood within the framework of Metacognitive therapy as the Cognitive Attention Syndrome (CAS), a middle-level construct within the Self-Regulatory Executive Function (S-REF) model, is responsible for avoiding intimacy and fearing evaluation and self-injury, while upper-level metacognitive beliefs control the CAS and are involved in forming and maintaining superficial friendships. Although metacognitive beliefs and superficial friendships are not necessarily related, the relationship between metacognitive beliefs and superficial friendships remains unclear. To date, few studies have empirically examined this relationship. Therefore, this study aimed to examine superficial friendships from the perspective of metacognitive beliefs.

METHOD

A total of 215 Japanese university students (46 male, 164 female, and 4 others, mean age 18.87 ± 1.23 years). The following measures were used: (a) demographic information, including gender and age; (b) metacognitive beliefs related to friendships were assessed using the metacognitive beliefs about attention scale (which includes negative metacognitive beliefs about self-focused attention, positive metacognitive beliefs about self-focused attention, positive metacognitive beliefs about attentional bias, negative metacognitive beliefs about attentional bias) (MFAQ; Tomita et al., 2020); (c) avoidance of intimacy with others, evaluated using the Friendship Scale (consisting of self-closure, avoidance of being hurt, avoidance of hurt, pleasant relationships) (Okada, 1999); (d) sense of school adjustment, assessed using the Adolescent Adjustment Scale (Okubo, 2005), and (e) internal adjustment, which was evaluated using the Psychological Well-being Scale (Nishida, 2000). A theoretical path model, with metacognitive beliefs about friendships as the independent variable, avoidance of intimacy with others as the mediating variable, and school and internal adjustment as the dependent variables, was developed and tested using structural equation modeling (SEM).

RESULTS

The results of the SEM indicated a good fit of the data (GFI=.98, AGFI=.94, CFI=.99, RMSEA=.03). Moreover, the analysis showed a positive association between metacognitive beliefs related to attention bias and avoidance of intimacy. Additionally, negative metacognitive beliefs about self-focused attention, negative metacognitive beliefs about attention bias, self-closure, and avoidance of being hurt were associated with maladaptive states among adolescents. Furthermore, the findings also revealed that metacognitive beliefs about attentional bias mediated avoidance of hurt and were associated with higher levels of school and internal adjustment. Conversely, negative metacognitive beliefs about attentional bias mediated avoidance of being hurt and were associated with lower levels of internal adjustment.

DISCUSSION

Our results suggest that paying attention to external threats is an important factor in the development and continuation of superficial friendships. In addition, it was observed that among individuals with superficial friendships, focusing on the reactions and behaviors of others to avoid negative impressions can lead to maladaptive states. Therefore, to support maladjusted Japanese adolescents with superficial friendships, it may be beneficial to focus on their behavior at school.

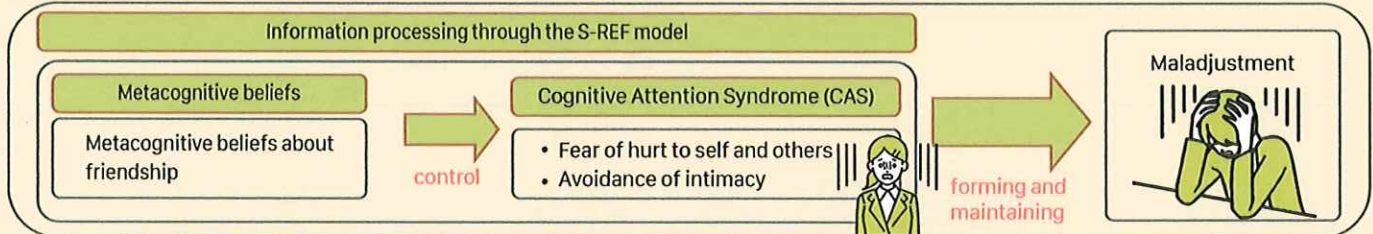
Association between metacognitive beliefs about friendships and adjustment among Japanese university students.

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INTRODUCTION

- Japanese adolescents' friendships are often described as "superficial," with fear of hurt to self and others and avoidance of intimacy linked to maladjustment (Ishimoto et al., 2009).
- These attitudes can be understood within the Self-Regulatory Executive Function (S-REF) model.



→ Metacognitive beliefs are thought to be involved in forming and maintaining superficial friendships.

However, the relationship between metacognitive beliefs and superficial friendships remains unclear.

Therefore, this study aimed to examine superficial friendships from the perspective of metacognitive beliefs.

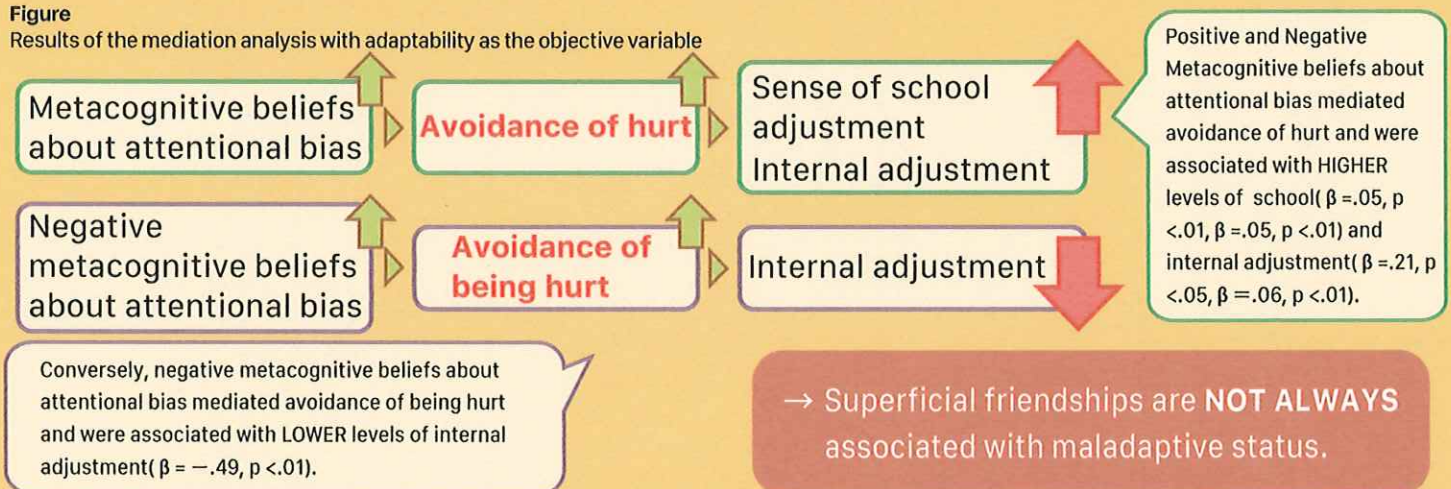
METHOD

Participants: A total of 215 Japanese university students (46 male, 164 female, and 4 others, mean age 18.87 ± 1.23 years) were included in the analysis.

Measures: a) Demographic information: gender and age; b) Metacognitive beliefs related to friendships: Metacognition of Focused Attention in Subjects with High Social Anxiety Questionnaire (MFAQ; Tomita et al., 2020); c) Avoidance of intimacy with others: Friendship Scale (Okada, 1999); d) Sense of school adjustment: Adolescent Adjustment Scale (Okubo, 2005); e) Internal adjustment: Psychological Well-being Scale (Nishida, 2000). Before data collection, the nature of the study was described to the participants, and their informed consent was obtained.

RESULTS

Figure
Results of the mediation analysis with adaptability as the objective variable



Conversely, negative metacognitive beliefs about attentional bias mediated avoidance of being hurt and were associated with LOWER levels of internal adjustment ($\beta = -.49, p < .01$).

→ Superficial friendships are **NOT ALWAYS** associated with maladaptive status.

DISCUSSION



avoid getting hurt

They care about others and have superficial friendships as smooth relationships.



avoid getting hurt

They are afraid of being hurt and tend to avoid relationships with others.



発表概要報告書

目的：日本の青年の特徴として「表面的な」友人関係のあり方が指摘されている。その背景には他者からの評価や自他の傷つきを恐れる心性と、他者との親密化の回避の2つの要因があることが明らかにされており、不適応状態との関連も報告されている（石本他, 2009）。そして、他者からの評価や自他の傷つきを恐れる心性と他者との親密化の回避は自己注目が関与していると考えられる。これらを自己調節実行機能（S-REF）モデルから理解すると、中位の認知注意症候群（CAS）が他者からの評価や自他の傷つきを恐れる心性と他者との親密化の回避にあたり、上位のメタ認知的信念が表面的な友人関係の形成・維持に関与していると理解できる。しかし、メタ認知的信念が表面的な友人関係の形成・維持に影響しているか検討している研究は少ない。そこで本研究はメタ認知的信念の観点から表面的な友人関係を検討することを目的とした。

方法：日本人大学生215名（男性46名、女性164名、その他4名、平均年齢18.87歳±1.23）。尺度（a）デモグラフィック項目：性別・年齢、（b）友人関係に関するメタ認知的信念：高社交不安者における注意の向け方に関するメタ認知的信念尺度（自己注目に関するネガティブなメタ認知的信念、自己注目に関するポジティブなメタ認知的信念、注意バイアスに関するポジティブなメタ認知的信念、注意バイアスに関するネガティブなメタ認知的信念）（MFAQ；富田他, 2020）、（c）他者との親密化の回避：友人関係尺度（自己閉鎖、傷つけられることの回避、傷つけることの回避、快活的関係）（岡田, 1999）、（d）学校適応感：青年用適応感尺度（大久保, 2005）、（e）内的適応感：心理的well-being尺度（西田, 2000）。友人関係に関するメタ認知的信念を独立変数、他者との親密化の回避を仲介変数、学校適応感・内的適応感を従属変数とした理論的パスモデルを作成し共分散構造分析を行った。

結果：共分散構造分析の結果、十分な適合度が得られ（GFI=.98, AGFI=.94, CFI=.99, RMSEA=.03）、注意バイアスに関するメタ認知的信念が他者との親密化の回避と正の関連を示した。また、注意バイアスに関するメタ認知的信念が傷つけることの回避を媒介し学校適応感や内的適応感の高さと関連を示した一方、注意バイアスに関するネガティブなメタ認知的信念が傷つけられることの回避を媒介し内的適応感の低さと関連性を示した。

考察：表面的な友人関係の形成、維持には、自己注目の中でも外的な脅威刺激への注目が重要な要因であることが考えられる。また、自己注目が高い状態であっても、傷つけることの回避を行っている場合は適応感の高さと関連を示したが、傷つけられることの回避を行っている場合は適応感の低さと関連を示した。このことから、他者を気遣い、傷つけることを回避する者は表面的な友人関係を持っていても適応状態にあり、自身が傷つくことを恐れ、回避している者は不適応状態になると考えられる。

（日本語 1200 字以内）

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