

学位論文の要旨

氏名 堀西祐多

学位論文名 The Role of Beauty Salons in Community Health Promotion:
Exploring Health Engagement and Social Connectivity in Japanese
Hair Salons

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著者名 Yuta Horinishi, Rimi Horinishi, Chiaki Sano, Ryuichi Ohta

論文内容の要旨

INTRODUCTION

Beauty salons have traditionally been perceived as spaces dedicated to personal grooming. However, they also play important roles as informal social hubs, especially in communities with limited access to health services and social infrastructure. In contemporary society, where social isolation and lifestyle-related diseases are increasing, the potential for beauty salons to contribute to community-based health promotion has gained attention globally. Studies from countries such as the United States have demonstrated the effectiveness of salon-based interventions in promoting cancer screening and cardiovascular risk management. Despite this, there remains a paucity of evidence regarding the role of Japanese beauty salons in health promotion and their potential integration into local health ecosystems. Japan faces significant challenges due to rapid population aging, particularly in rural areas, where traditional support structures are diminishing. In such settings, beauty salons may serve as unique venues for maintaining community connectivity and providing health-related information. This study aims to explore how Japanese hairstylists engage with customers on health-related matters and to assess the potential role of beauty salons as agents of community health support.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This qualitative study was conducted at *Hair Labo en Luce*, a beauty salon located in

Tawarayama, Matsue City, Shimane Prefecture. The salon has three hairstylists and two assistants, and serves approximately 250 customers per month. Over the course of June 2022, five staff members recorded customer interactions using a survey designed to capture conversation content, customer demographics, staff emotions, and potential actions to be taken in the future.

The survey was developed through a review of existing literature on health communication in informal settings and validated by experts in qualitative research and salon management. Predefined conversation categories included health and medical topics, family, personal life, work, hair and beauty, nutrition, hobbies, and current events. Open-ended fields allowed for elaboration on staff emotions and perceived actions.

All participants provided informed consent, and the study was approved by the Clinical Ethics Committee of Unnan City Hospital (Approval Number: 20220005). The study protocol was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Shimane University.

Thematic analysis followed the six-step approach: data familiarization, initial code generation, theme identification, theme review, theme definition and naming, and report generation. Coding was conducted independently by the first and second authors. Conceptual categories were refined through iterative discussion and consensus, leading to the extraction of three primary themes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 127 survey responses were analyzed. Health-related topics accounted for 27.6% of all recorded conversations, demonstrating that beauty salons are venues where health dialogue naturally occurs. Three overarching themes emerged:

1. Continuity with Customers

Long-term customer relationships enabled hairstylists to support individuals through significant life stages—such as weddings, school milestones, and parenthood—by offering not only aesthetic services but also emotional support. Customers often brought their family members, expanding the salon's involvement across generations. These enduring relationships fostered trust and created a foundation for discussing sensitive topics, including health concerns.

2. Trust-Based Customer-Hairstylist Relationships

The personalized nature of beauty services cultivates a unique bond between customers and hairstylists. Hairstylists were found to be attentive listeners, offering tailored advice on hair care, skincare, and lifestyle practices. Customers viewed hairstylists as confidants, freely sharing personal struggles, stressors, and health-related anxieties. In turn, hairstylists gained insights from their customers, contributing to their own personal and professional development.

3. Expansion of the Role of Beauty Salons

Beauty salons served as informal health promotion settings. Hairstylists regularly encountered signs of dermatologic or systemic conditions (e.g., alopecia, edema) and sometimes referred customers to medical professionals, including family physicians. In some cases, hairstylists provided self-care advice, nutritional suggestions, and emotional support. Their close proximity to customers and non-threatening environment allowed for more open dialogue than might occur in clinical settings. Additionally, customers with chronic conditions or undergoing treatments such as chemotherapy found solace in visiting the salon, considering it a therapeutic space.

These findings highlight that Japanese beauty salons are not only places of grooming but also potential public health assets, especially in rural regions. Compared to Western contexts, the Japanese model emphasizes continuity, emotional intimacy, and mutual growth over formalized health interventions. The salon's role as a "third place" distinct from home or workplace allows for honest conversations, making it suitable for health education and early detection of psychosocial or medical issues.

CONCLUSION

This study illustrates that beauty salons in Japan, particularly those with long-standing relationships with customers, have the capacity to serve as community-based health promotion hubs. The findings underscore the significance of trust, interpersonal continuity, and informal care settings in fostering health engagement. Hairstylists are often the first to notice subtle health changes and may be key partners in identifying unmet health needs, especially in populations that underutilize formal healthcare systems.

The role of beauty salons in community health promotion remains underdeveloped in Japan. However, this research suggests substantial potential for integration into broader public health strategies. Collaboration between hairstylists and healthcare professionals, especially in primary care, could lead to innovative models of community-based care.

Further research is needed to generalize findings across diverse geographic and cultural contexts, and to evaluate the impact of salon-based health interventions on measurable health outcomes. Nonetheless, this study offers foundational evidence for reimagining beauty salons as culturally embedded, trust-rich spaces for enhancing health literacy and social well-being.