

Understanding social systems for healthier eating

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Research in the *International Journal of Agile Systems and Management* has [investigated](#) the relationship between people and their environment, with a particular focus on food.

The research by Ysanne Yeo and Masahiro Niitsuma of the Graduate School of System Design and Management at Keio University in Yokohama, Japan, suggests that standard approaches to analyzing human behavior need an upgrade. They suggest a more holistic view that recognizes the complexity of human systems is needed. The work could lead to a change in the way we design [social systems](#) and behavioral interventions.

Traditional methods of studying human behavior often break down [complex systems](#) into separate components. This has the unfortunate side effect of ignoring the interactions seen in real-world situations, and so can result in fragmented understanding that then leads to interventions that do not take into account all the issues underlying that situation.

The new study adopts a model-based systems approach to bring together different aspects of human behavior and to create a more comprehensive framework for studying them. This, the researchers suggest, should allow a better understanding of the various factors that affect attitudes to [healthy eating](#) or otherwise.

This could then be used to guide how policymakers and health care providers encourage healthier eating habits in a way that does not lead to unintended consequences. The likes of "calorie counting" and "dietary restrictions" are often at odds with the body's natural signals of hunger and fullness and so more holistic, sustainable, interventions might emerge from this new understanding.

The work points to the need for a more collaborative and nuanced approach to designing social systems that takes into account the knowledge inherent in any human system. This kind of knowledge can play an important role in how people interact with their environment. Understanding the factors involved could help us create environments that better support long-term positive outcomes for individuals and

society as a whole.

More information: Ysanne Yeo et al, Proposal of an integral model of human-food interaction: insights for social systems design, *International Journal of Agile Systems and Management* (2024). [DOI: 10.1504/IJASM.2024.140464](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJASM.2024.140464)

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