

FEMALE INMATES WHO ABUSED THEIR OWN CHILDREN AND PROSPECTS FOR THEIR TREATMENT

KIMURA Yayoi *

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on 12 incarcerated female inmates who committed child abuse. These women participated in a specific survey to identify their characteristics for appropriate correctional treatment, rehabilitation and reoffending prevention. The survey revealed that most of them experienced interpersonal problems/difficulties, which in many cases is rooted in past victimization. By helping women develop pro-social relationships and deal with past victimization, this study proposes that targeted interventions can end the cycle of abuse and prevent reoffending.

II. BACKGROUND

A. Current Circumstances of Penal Institutions for Females in Japan

The total number of sentenced female inmates was 3,237 nationwide at the end of fiscal year (31 March) 2018. This total number has generally decreased since 2013. There were 4,421 (2013), 4,376 (2014), 4,257 (2015), 4,116 (2016), and 3,861 (2017) female inmates incarcerated in penal institutions at the end of each fiscal year. There are 11 penal institutions for women in Japan. The major crimes committed by female inmates are violation of the Stimulant Control Act (1,483 inmates), theft (1,306 inmates), murder (302 inmates), fraud (226 inmates), robbery causing death or injury (97 inmates), injury causing death (60 inmates) and injury (44 inmates). The number of inmates who committed violations of the Stimulant Control Act and theft is the largest, so it is important to improve the guidance for overcoming drug addiction and theft.

B. Overview of the *Mine* Rehabilitation Programme Center

The Mine Rehabilitation Programme Center, which opened in April 2007, was the first penal institution in Japan to be operated through joint cooperation between the public and private sectors using the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) method. The PFI operators maintain the facility and agree to undertake some parts of its management. With the ideas and expertise of the private sector, the Japanese government and the PFI operators cooperate with each other in managing the penal institution to have more efficient and effective treatment for inmates.

The Center is managed in cooperation with members of the local community based on the philosophy of "for the facility based on public understanding and support". In such facility, it is possible to implement flexible forms of treatment and comprehensive correctional treatment for first-time incarcerated offenders who are amenable to treatment. Our aim is to facilitate their rehabilitation to become pro-social members of the society. Recently, with the cooperation of Mine City and Yahoo Co., inmates are able to participate in online vocational training programmes. Through these programmes, the inmates at the Center sell local products online under the guidance of instructors sent from Yahoo Co. The inmates can acquire IT literacy and communication skills through this training, and they are expected to find a job and continue to work after leaving the Center.

Thus, at the Center, it is possible to have a variety of flexible programmes. The programmes aim to give complete treatment to first-time incarcerated offenders, so they can become skilled workers and leave the Center after a short time.

As of 20 June 2019, there were 270 male inmates and 369 female inmates residing at the Center. They are all first-time incarcerated offenders who had been transferred from other penal institutions in Japan. The

* Principal Supervisor, Second Treatment Section, Mine Rehabilitation Programme Center, Japan.

majority of crimes committed by the female inmates at the Center are violations of the Stimulant Control Act (126 inmates), theft (102 inmates), fraud (46 inmates), murder (20 inmates), embezzlement and malpractice (16 inmates), bodily injury causing death (9 inmates) and bodily injury (7 inmates). Because most of the crimes committed involved stimulant drugs or theft (as is the case throughout Japan), it is important to have guidance for overcoming drug addiction and theft. However, the number of inmates who committed violent crimes cannot be ignored, and the backgrounds of these offences should be looked into.

III. VIOLENT FEMALE OFFENDERS IN THE CENTER

A. Classification of Violent Female Offenders

As of 20 June 2019, there were 36 female inmates who committed murder, attempted murder, injury causing death, aiding injury causing death, or injury residing at the Center. Also, there were 7 inmates who committed the crimes of confinement, abandonment causing death or injury, indecent assault, child welfare law violations and attempted rape.

B. Victims of the Relevant Crimes

There are 17 victims of the above-mentioned violent crimes, and they are mostly children of the offenders. There is one child victim who was a classmate of the offender's child at elementary school. All the victims who are offenders' children were under 15 at the time of victimization.

C. Female Offenders Who Abused Their Own Children

12 inmates abused their own children, which is 3.3% of the total female inmates (369 in total) in the Center.

D. Survey of Female Offenders Who Abused Their Own Children

The 12 inmates at the Center all behaved well, and they have been residing at the Center for about 1 to 7 years. The average incarceration period at the Center is 2 years and 9 months. They do not have any particular problems with their behaviour. However, the result of interviews with them and their letters show their strong desire for love from others and tendency to be dependent on those who accept them. Most of them experienced dependency or other interpersonal issues before they committed crimes. In addition, in many cases, they lacked social support, such as friends or family members they could talk to about their problems relating to their misbehaviour.

Our survey on their backgrounds was conducted at the Center on 8th July in order to identify patterns. The results are shown as Appendix B and C. None of them suffer from mental illnesses. Although answering the questionnaire was optional, all 12 inmates participated in the survey, but some were distressed or did not know how to respond. From the survey, it was found clearly that many of them had no one to consult with when they had trouble. 2 of 12 inmates answered that they had someone to talk to. However, one of them did not try to do it. Overall, almost all inmates did not have a proper consultation.

On the other hand, three quarters of the inmates (9 inmates) view men as necessary for their lives. Although they have problems with men, they tend to be dependent on them. It is noticeable that they have negative feelings against relationships as they were physically abused by their parents or they were not able to rely on them, they were bullied by classmates, or they were not helped by their parents when they were bullied. It is necessary to give suitable guidance to each inmate.

9 of these 12 inmates are supposed to take the special guidance for reform called "R4 (education from the victim's viewpoint)" before they leave the Center, but so far, only 4 inmates have taken the programme. Also, the inmates have chances to participate in other guidance programmes, and those mainly focus on the improvement of interpersonal relationships.

Other than these educational programmes, inmates can have interviews with trainers, and trainers try to identify the emotional changes of the inmates.

At the end of the questionnaire, the inmates were able to write whatever they wanted to write. For example, they wrote about their relationships (their parents, male partners or their own children) or about a type of guidance they need. Only one inmate was unable to write, as she did not know how to express her feelings. All other 11 inmates wrote, and what they wrote is shown in Appendix C. Most of them worry

about their relationships with their family members after they leave the Center. They want to know how to build relationships with their families. This shows that most of them still have anxieties about their families as they once broke the relationship with them.

E. Treatment for Female Offenders Who Abused Their Own Children

Among the offenders who abused their own children, some of them refuse to draw any links between past victimization and their current criminal behaviour. They are not against violence as they were also physically abused, and it is normal to do so, or they believe they are in difficult situations because of their children, or they think children should be disciplined with corporal punishment. More than half of them were physically abused by their own parents, so they were not able to depend on them.

They behave well in the Center, and they do not complaint about the correctional treatment. In addition, they do not want to talk about their own experiences as victims and show no sign of it. Even in interviews, they do not talk a lot about it. However, it is obvious that they need to reflect on their past victimization, and how it influences their current behaviour, perspectives and problems.

There are several common characteristics in these inmates. They tend to think they are unlucky; they are not confident and are poor at maintaining comfortable space between themselves and others as they were neglected or bullied when they were young. They have a strong desire for love and dependence and want to be accepted by others. Moreover, they are reluctant to consult with others. They sometimes abused their children physically, because they wanted attention from their male partners. As a part of treatment, they need to acquire the skills to have proper relationships with others and to talk about their problems to the right person.

Thus, after the process of restoration on female inmates' past victimization, they can be proud of themselves, and respect their lives and reject any violence including physical abuse. They also have a chance to think about their relationships with others. It is important for them to restore good relationships with their families through meetings and letters during incarceration. By maintaining these relationships, they can be confident about their lives when they leave the Center.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is assumed that the patterns found from the survey could be the same as those of female inmates at other penal institutions. Those offenders who abused their own children are not good at understanding how their own experiences as victims impact their offending behaviours. They do not reject violence, because they think it is normal to physically abuse their children as they had the same experience, or they think it is their children's fault for making their lives miserable. One of the promising approaches to correctional treatment is giving offenders the opportunity to understand their past negative experiences including their own victimization, which will hopefully lead to their rehabilitation. Then, they will start to respect themselves and know the importance of their lives. Thus, they will reject violence and nurture considerate feelings towards others.

Moreover, they can finally focus on the experiences as offenders and find out what caused the offences and what the problems were. Then, they will realize that they tend to be dependent on someone and became obsessed with them because of their perceived inferiority. They may find it necessary to look back at their relationships with others.

The penal institutions should be an environment where offenders feel it is easier to look back and talk about their past experiences as victims. After that, they should take a programme in which they learn to develop skills of building proper relationships mainly with men, skills to express their emotions properly and awareness of the importance of talking to the right person about their problems. Furthermore, it is helpful for them to get training to learn how to build family relationships while incarcerated. When the problem of child abuse is handled, it is important to have treatment following these steps. After offenders learn how to build good relationships with others, they will not be dependent on others, they can avoid violence on their own, and they can have independent lives. Thus, they will not commit violent crimes such as child abuse anymore and can function as sound members of society.

Appendix A

The Questionnaire

1 Childhood Experiences		
(1)	I was bullied by my classmates.	YES / NO
(2)	I was abused by my parents.	YES / NO
(3)	I could rely on my parents.	YES / NO
(4)	My parents were very strict.	YES / NO
(5)	I think it is sometimes necessary to spank my child or withhold meals as forms of discipline.	YES / IN CERTAIN CASES / RARELY / NO
(6)	We should obey our parents whatever happens.	YES / IN CERTAIN CASES / RARELY / NO
2 Relationships with men		
(1)	Men are necessary for my life.	YES / NO
(2)	Violent behaviour is acceptable in some cases.	YES / NO
(3)	I cannot leave my violent partner.	YES / NO
3 Background of violent behaviour/abuse		
(1)	I had someone to consult with.	YES / NO
(2)	I had a problem with an interpersonal relationship.	YES / NO
(3)	I was in trouble over money.	YES / NO
(4)	I love my children.	YES / NO
(5)	Because of my children, I had difficulty.	YES / NO

Appendix B

Table 1. Childhood Experiences

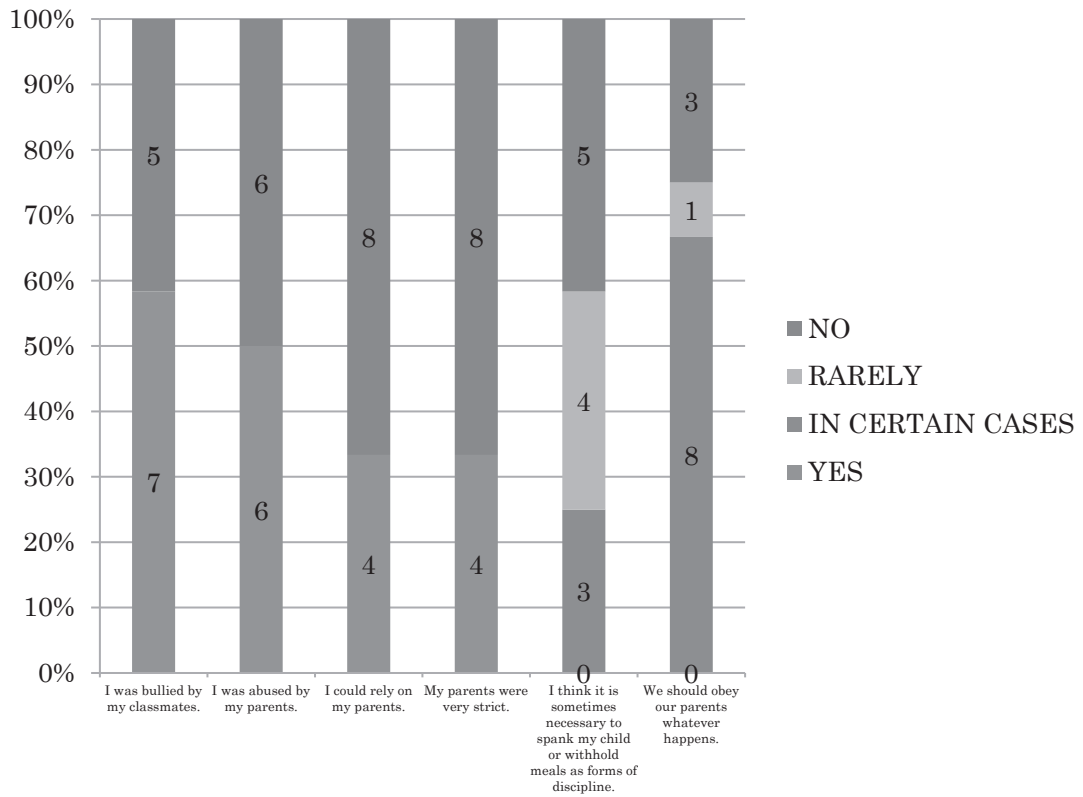


Table 2 Relationships with Men

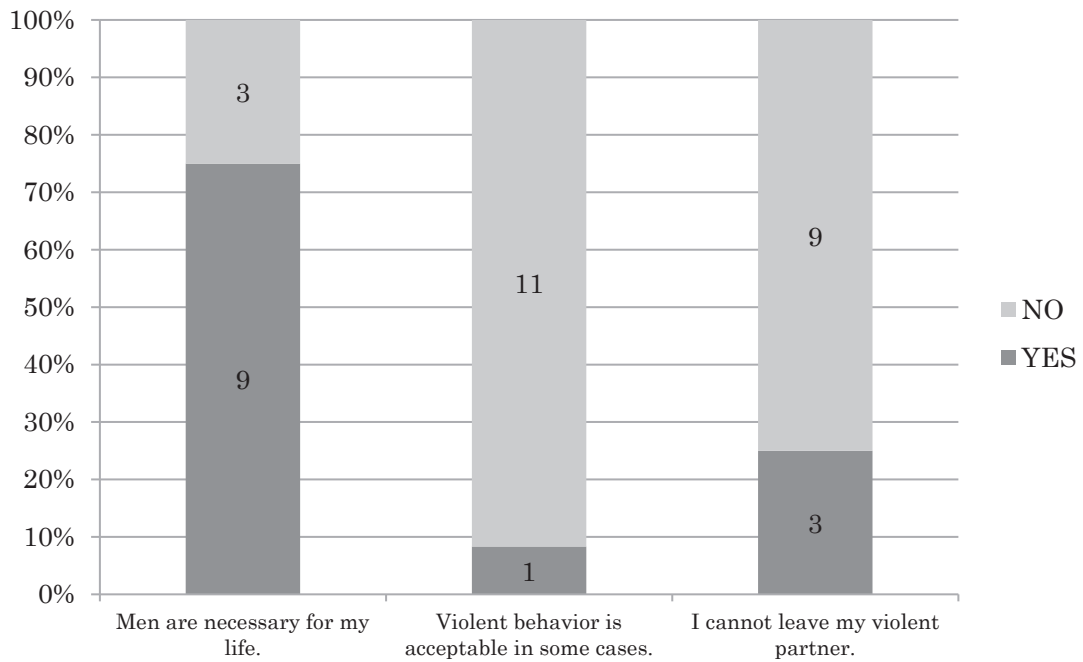
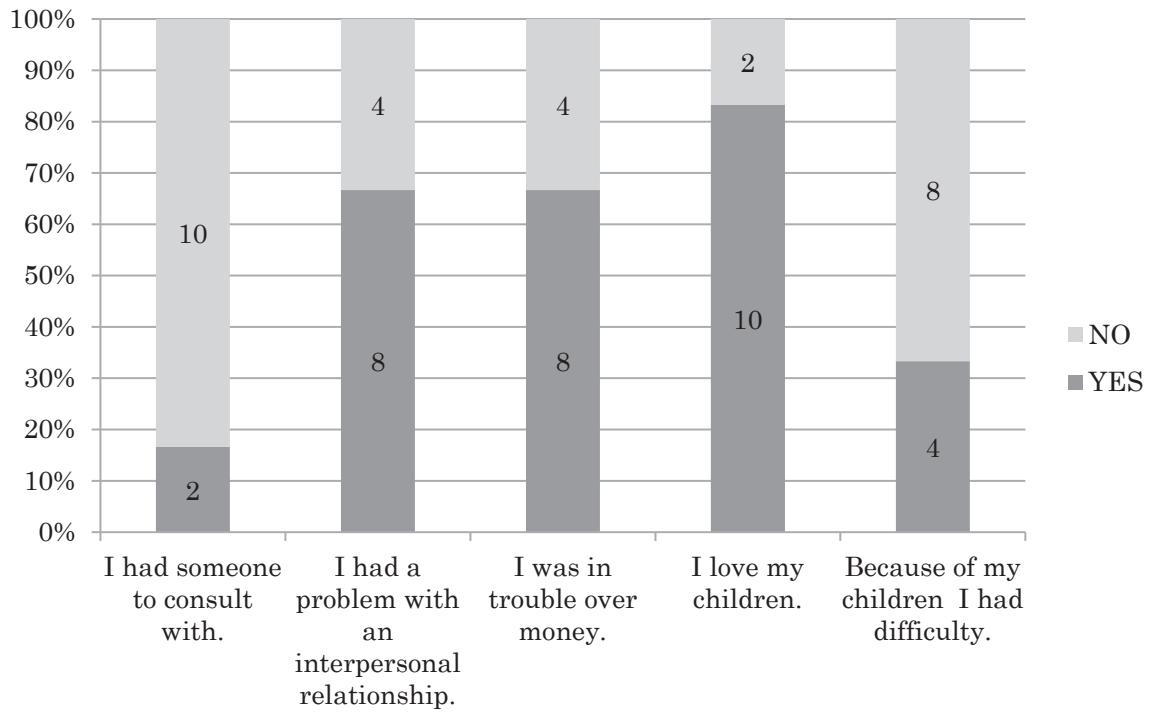


Table 3: Background of Violent Behaviour/Abuse



Appendix C

Comments by Inmates in the Survey (Free Description)

- I have no confidence in myself, and I hate each of my characteristics such as my appearance and behaviour.
- I would like to receive guidance focusing on marital and parent-child relationship.
- I am worried about my future, especially appropriate communication with men. I distrust other people, particularly men, because of being betrayed by my ex-husband.
- I have never been honest in talking with my mother. I just do not know how to get close to her despite my desire to express my true feelings. Additionally, I have no confidence being with my child, and I am worried about raising my child. Sometimes when I remind myself that I killed my first daughter, I wonder whether I should be still alive or not.
- I would like to receive guidance/education relating to my weak points, which should be improved. In particular, I need guidance/education designated for facilitating a strong bond with children and parents, and I want to have guidance/education relating to the importance of life.
- I would like to be together with my child after release, and I would like to try to recover the previous and good relationship that I had with my child, even if it takes a long time.
- I felt that I was still an immature person with emotional dependence when I answered "yes" to the question asking "do you absolutely follow the directions of your parents?"
- I would like to learn something more about human physiology and behaviour, because I did not have any proper knowledge of that. I am embarrassed about myself. In the beginning, I did not recognize the seriousness of my case, but eventually, I could identify my faults. I got this perception from the learning process about the human body in the guidance programme at the Center.
- I would like to learn how to raise children, because my way of raising children involved violence. I hope not to act that way in the future.
- One of my concerns is the relationship with my family members, and I have no idea how to pray for my daughter's soul. Moreover, I am worried about my tendency for depending on men.
- I am concerned about the relationship with my family members. I want to be together with my children someday, and I am interested in how they are thinking about me. Additionally, I am worried about my influence on their development.