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A study of associations among attachment patterns, maltreatment and behavior problems in institutionalized children in Japan

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Introduction: Despite a decrease in the total number of children in Japan, the number of children living in residential foster care facilities is increasing. One of the reasons for this increase is the rise of child abuse and negligence in Japanese society. In fact, more than half of the children (53.4%) living in residential foster care facilities have experiences of maltreatment before being institutionalized. Previous studies have indicated that maltreatment influences children's attachment formation (attachment patterns), which can create children's behavior problems. In Japan, however, there has been no study to investigate the relationship between child maltreatment and attachment patterns, although there are a few studies that show no association among child maltreatment, child's degree of attachment security, and child's behavior problems. The present study examined the association among those variables with Japanese institutionalized children.

Method: Twenty-nine children (12 boys and 17 girls) from 3 different institutions participated in the study. Their average age was 6.4 years old. The attachment doll play assessment and the child behavior checklist/4-18 were used to assess their attachment patterns and behavior problems respectively. Children's maltreatment history was obtained from each institution.

Results: None of the children with secure pattern had history of maltreatment, whereas five out of six children with disorganized pattern had history of maltreatment. Children with maltreatment history had significantly higher externalizing problem score than those without it. Children with disorganized pattern and maltreatment history had extremely high externalizing problem score compared to those with other attachment patterns.

Conclusion: Consistent with previous studies in western society, associations among child maltreatment, attachment pattern, and behavior problems are confirmed in Japanese children.

Recent Publications:

1. Bakermans-Kranenburg M J, Dobrova-Krol N A and van IJzendoorn M H (2012) Impact of institutional care on attachment disorganization and insecurity of Ukrainian preschoolers: Protective effect of the long variant of the serotonin transporter gene (5HTT). *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 36(1):11-18.
2. George C and Solomon J (2016) The Attachment Doll Play Assessment: Predictive validity with concurrent mother-child interaction and maternal caregiving representations. *Frontiers in Psychology* 7:1594.
3. Goodman G, Bartlett R C and Stroh M (2013) Mothers' borderline features and children's representations as predictors of children's externalizing behavior. *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 30(1):16-36.
4. Hazen N L, Jacobvitz D, Higgins K N, Allen S and Jin M Y (2011) Pathways from disorganized attachment to later social-emotional problems: The role of gender and parent-child interaction patterns. *Disorganized attachment and caregiving* 167-206.
5. Lionetti F, Pastore M and Barone L (2015) Attachment in institutionalized children: A review and meta-analysis. *Child Abuse & Neglect* 42:135-145.

Biography

Emiko Katsurada is professor in Department of Integrated Psychological Sciences at *Kwansei Gakuin University, Japan* and is a vice president for *Kwansei Gakuin University School of Humanities during 2015-2017*. She completed her medical degree in Philosophy at Oregon State University in the year 1995. Her research expertise is educational psychology.

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