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# The Effectiveness of a Domestic Violence Prevention Program in Japanese Agricultural University

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## Abstract

In Japan, the Gender Equality Bureau, which is part of the Cabinet Office, conducted a survey in 2018 on the state of harm suffered by domestic violence (DV) victims regarding crimes perpetrated by a current or former spouse. In this survey, 31.3% of women and 19.9% of men experienced serious violence at the hands of a current or former at least once. In addition, 21.4% of women and 11.5% of men encountered serious violence from dating partners at least once. Although both men and women are subject to DV, the literature does not include studies on the effects of DV prevention education among Japanese university students. Thus, it is necessary to offer DV prevention classes to university students, irrespective of gender. The participants consisted of 353 Japanese university students majoring in agriculture. They took part in our DV prevention program, we examined its effects using a questionnaire, which we administered before, directly after, and six months following the class. In the preliminary questionnaire, 21.5% of university students had heard some story on DV damage from people close to them. On a positive note, 51.3% had taken a class on DV previously, and 10.9% had learned about DV from reading books. Following the class, the students became more aware of DV and retained their knowledge even after six months, as indicated by three statements out of the questionnaire's seven items: 3) Violence from a woman to a man is not DV, 6) Even someone close to you could suffer from DV, 7) DV perpetrators sometimes apologize after acting violent, but it is common for them to use violence again. The conclusion is that it is important to offer DV prevention classes at universities.

**Keywords:** DV, Preventive Program, University Students

## 1. Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines domestic violence (hereafter DV) as spouse abuse or past-spouse abuse, and dating violence as an early form of partner violence, occurring primarily in adolescence and early adulthood, and experienced within a dating relationship (WHO 2013). According to the Department of Justice of the United States, DV is defined as a pattern of abusive behavior that used to take power, control or authority over

another intimate partner. The definition divided DV to physical, sexual, emotional, economic DV can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone (Department of Justice of the United States 2015).

To have a complete understanding of DV in a society, it is necessary to identify different factors and conditions result in DV. Among various sources provoking the DV, one may refer to cultural pressure, gender inequality, insufficient legal and protective system, lack of financial support and incomes, social and religious factors, marriage patterns, etc.(Boujarian et al. 2016). In Japan, the most recent large-scale survey on the current state of the damages caused by DV was conducted by the Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office in 2018 on violence from a spouse or a past-spouse (participants were 3,376 individuals, 1,807 women, and 1,569 men). In this survey, 31.3% of women and 19.9% of men reported experiencing serious violence from spouse or past-spouse at least once. Additionally, 21.4% of women and 11.5% of men reported experiencing serious violence from dating partners at least once. Given these circumstances, it is necessary to implement DV preventive education programs for youth (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office 2018).

In Japan, the effectiveness of implementing DV preventive education for high school boys against coercive acts was reported (Suga 2017). In the USA, five preventive education programs were identified: Safe Dates (Foshee et al. 2005), the Fourth R (Wolfe et al. 2009), Shifting Boundaries (Taylor et al. 2010), Coaching Boys into Men (Miller et al. 2010), and the Katie Brown Educational Program (Joppa et al. 2015). These programs were conducted for high school students, and significantly less victimization was reported after their implementation. The effects of DV prevention education for university students have not seen in the USA. However, a report cited factors related to dating violence among university students (Shorey et al. 2015). Because studies have not explored the effects of DV prevention education among university students in Japan, I measured knowledge level before, directly after, and after six months after a DV preventive education program in this study.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1 Participants*

The study had 353 participants (248 male, 105 females) majoring in agriculture in the Hokkaido region in Japan at a private university. Their ages ranged between 18 and 21.

### *2.2 Survey*

Two questionnaires, “Preliminary Questions about DV” (Table 1) and “Understanding DV Characteristics (Suga, 2018)” (Table 2) were administered to all participants. “Preliminary Questions about DV” sought to assess the participants’ experiences of hearing or studying

about DV, and the “Understanding DV Characteristic” questionnaire was used to assess their views on DV characteristics.

### *2.3 The DV Preventive Education Program*

The DV program was based on situations that occur in schools or universities. The main principle behind the program was that as people respect each other, there would be no violence or DV; therefore, I named the program “A Program for Mutual Respect: Learning about Domestic Violence in Order to Value Our Relationships.” I also introduced violence topics (Walker 1997) and the effects of abuse on children (Kaufman & Zigler 1987). This program was composed of the following fifteen parts.

Lesson 1, “Meeting People”: This lesson provides students an introduction to human relationships by discussing how feelings such as “I’m glad I met this person” or “Being with this person makes me tired” are normal and important.

Lesson 2, “What Does It Mean to Respect Others?”: In this lesson, students discuss things that their friends have said to them in class that made them feel good.

Lesson 3, “What Kind of Person Can’t Respect Others?”: In this lesson, we discuss how a disrespectful person constantly comments on the flaws in others, never attempts to use their words to explain things clearly, or uses physical or verbal abuse to get their own way emotionally.

Lesson 4, This lesson includes narrative examples describing DV among young people. I prepared two stories: one about a boy abuser deliberately kicking a girl's bicycle in order to brow beat her, and the other about a boy abuser who grabs a boy's phone and checks his usage history. I presented both sides to show that both boys and girls are capable of being abusers and that both are capable of becoming victims.

Lesson 5, “Relationships”: This lesson focuses on how it is all right to “be yourself” and on how people need to learn how to maintain the appropriate amount of distance.

Lesson 6, “What Is Violence?”: This lesson teaches that violence is fundamentally about control. Violent people tend to deny their violence or make light of its effects.

Lesson 7, “Types of Violence”: This lesson provides an instructors’ list and explains different types of violence and abuse: physical, psychological, sexual, and economic.

Lesson 8, “Cycle of Violence”: This lesson describes the Acute Battering Incident, where after violence occurs, the abuser feels a sense of relief from the tension, causing him/her to apologize and behave kindly to his/her victim in what is called the Honeymoon Phase. However, this, in turn, leads to the Tension Building Phase, wherein violence occurs again. Instructors explain that this pattern is dating violence.

Lesson 9, “What Is Domestic Violence?”: This lesson defines DV specifically. It refers to violence perpetrated by one member in an intimate relationship (such as a spouse or a lover) against another. Students are told that this type of violence has a distinctive trait: the closer the relationship becomes, the stronger the emotions become, and the more severe the abuse becomes.

Lesson 10, “DV by the Numbers”: The students were told that in a 2012 study by the Japanese government, 29.1% of women and 15.6% of men reported that they had been brutally abused at least once. The aim was to help students understand using statistics showing that DV can occur at home or to someone close to them.

Lesson 11, “What Should I Do if Someone I Know Is Experiencing DV?”: This lesson explains that DV is not something that one should ignore or treat as “not my business,” as well as the importance of noticing that abuse is occurring.

Lesson 12, This lesson introduces Japan’s DV counseling hotlines.

Lesson 13, “How Violence Affects Children”: This lesson discusses that some children who are victims of DV or other abuse do sometimes go on to become victims or perpetrators of violence later in life, and providing care for these children breaks this chain of abuse (Kaufman & Zigler, 1987).

Lesson 14, “Creating Mutually Respectful Conversations,” and Lesson 15, “Role-Play”: In these lessons, students create conversations themselves and engage in role play in class, fostering empathy among participants. In terms of the program format, a combination of lectures with opinion exchange on the role plays was used.

Table 1. Preliminary Questions about DV

- 
1. Do you know of someone close to you who could suffer from DV or dating violence?
  2. Have you ever taken a class or attended training related to DV?
  3. Have you ever studied DV (books, etc.)?
- 

Yes/No 2-point scale

Table 2. Understanding DV Characteristics

- 
- \*1. DV occurs because of a fight with one’s partner.
  2. DV can occur between dating partners, too.
  - \*3. Violence from a woman to a man is not DV.
  4. DV is not a consequence of acting impulsively from anger, but rather of the chosen method of violence.
  5. The true nature of DV is dominating one’s partner.
  6. Even someone close to you could suffer from DV.
  7. DV perpetrators sometimes apologize after acting violent, but it is common for them to use violence again.
- 

“I think so”: 4 points, “I somewhat think so”: 3 points, “I don’t really think so”: 2 points, “I don’t think so”: 1 point,

\*Reverse items “I think so”: 1 point, “I somewhat think so”: 2 points, “I don’t really think so”: 3 points, “I don’t think so”: 4 points

Figure 1. Research Design

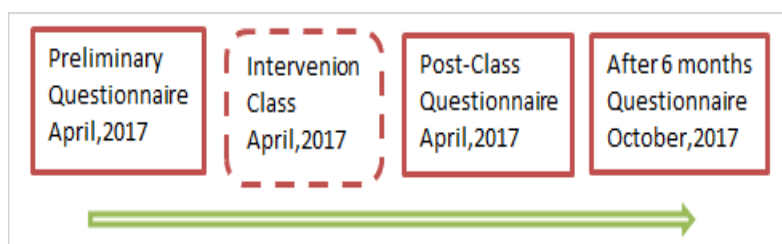


Table 3. Results of Preliminary Question about DV

	Yes. (%)	No. (%)
1. Do you know of someone close to you who could suffer from DV or dating violence?	21.5	78.5
2. Have you ever taken a class or attend training related to DV?	51.3	48.7
3. Have you ever studied DV (books, etc.)?	10.9	87.7

#### 2.4 Research Design (Figure 1)

The study design is presented in Figure 1. Prior to the class, participants completed the “Preliminary Questions about DV” (Table 1) and the “Understanding DV Characteristics” (Table 2) questionnaires. After the intervention, students completed “Understanding of DV Characteristics.” The “Understanding DV Characteristics” questionnaire was answered three times by students, once before class (henceforth referred to as “preliminary survey”), directly after class (henceforth referred to as “directly after survey”) and after six months (henceforth referred to as “after six months survey”). The intervention class was held once for a 90-minute duration.

#### 2.5 Data Analysis

The results of “Preliminary Questions about DV” were analyzed using descriptive statistics. For the results of the “Understanding DV Characteristics” questionnaire, I performed 1-factor analysis of variance (repeated measures) for the before, directly after, and six months later comparisons. I used IBM SPSS 22.0.

#### 2.6 Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted with the permission of the Rakuno Gakuen University Research Ethics Committee. I explained the study by giving a written explanation to the participants. Students’ responses were anonymous, and study participation was voluntary. The questionnaire clearly stipulated that any data provided would not be used for any purpose outside of this research study. Further, the class for the study was conducted during the educational psychology period, as were the preliminary, directly after, and after six months surveys. I administered these questionnaires in the school classrooms, and I distributed and collected the responses personally.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Preliminary Questions about DV (Table 3)

Results of preliminary questions about DV showed in Table 3.

### 3.2 Changes in “Understanding DV Characteristics”

I performed a 1-factor analysis of variance (repeated measures), with a time of measurement (before, directly after, and six months after) as independent variables.

For Question 1, the program did not affect "DV occurs because of a fight with one's partner." (Figure 2).

For Question 2, the program did not affect "DV can occur between dating partners, too" (Figure 3).

For Question 3, the participants scored  $3.62 \pm 0.75$  (hereafter  $M \pm SD$ ) on the preliminary survey, higher ( $3.73 \pm 0.72$ ) on the directly after survey (significant difference,  $p < .01$ ), and  $3.80 \pm 0.54$  on the after six months survey (not significantly different). The program affected "Violence from a woman to a man is not DV" (Figure 4).

For Question 4, the participants scored  $2.65 \pm 0.97$  on the preliminary survey,  $3.23 \pm 0.97$  on the directly after survey (significant difference,  $p < .01$ ), and  $2.95 \pm 0.86$  on the after six months survey (a significant difference,  $p < .001$ ). The program had an effect on “DV is not a consequence of acting impulsively from anger, but rather of the chosen method of violence” directly after, but this effect was not retained after six months (Figure 5).

For Question 5, participants scored  $3.13 \pm 0.88$  on the preliminary survey, they scored higher at  $3.63 \pm 0.61$  on the directly after survey showing a significant difference ( $p < .01$ ) and obtained a slightly lower score of  $3.40 \pm 0.80$  on the after six months survey showing a significant difference ( $p < .001$ ). The program affected "The true nature of DV is dominating one's partner" directly after, but this effect was not retained after six months (Figure 6).

For Question 6, participants scored  $3.54 \pm 0.70$  on the preliminary survey, slightly higher ( $3.76 \pm 0.56$ ) on the directly after survey (significant difference,  $p < .001$ ), and  $3.80 \pm 0.46$  on the after six months survey (not significantly different). The program affected "Even someone close to you could suffer from DV" (Figure 7).

For Question 7, participants scored  $3.61 \pm 0.70$  on the preliminary survey, slightly higher ( $3.80 \pm 0.46$ ) on the directly after survey (significant difference,  $p < .001$ ), and higher ( $3.85 \pm 0.38$ ) on the after six months survey (not significantly different). The program affected on "DV perpetrators sometimes apologize after acting violent, but it is common for them to use violence again" (Figure 8).

Figure 2. DV occurs because of a fight with one's partner.

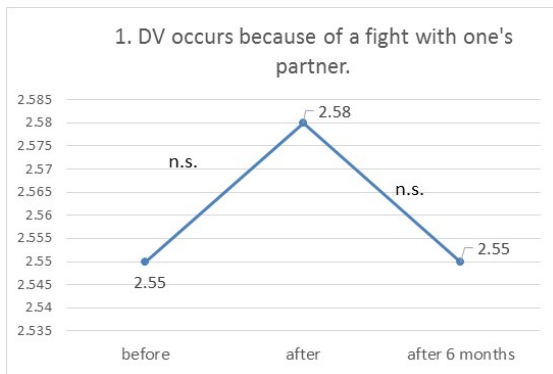


Figure 3. DV can occur between dating partners, too.

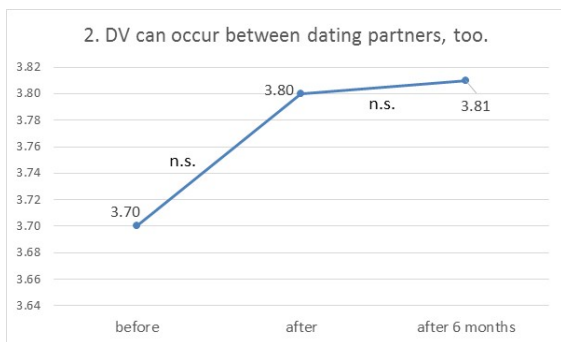


Figure 4. Violence from a woman to a man is not DV.

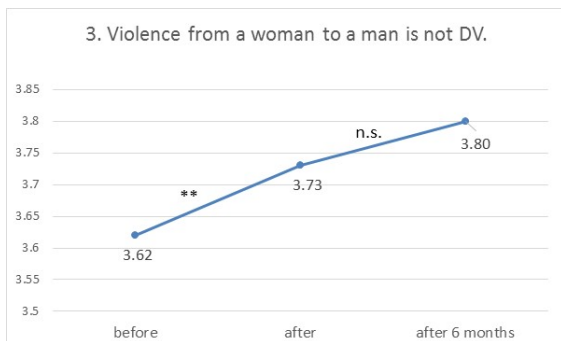


Figure 5. DV is not a consequence of acting impulsively from anger, but rather of the chosen method of violence.

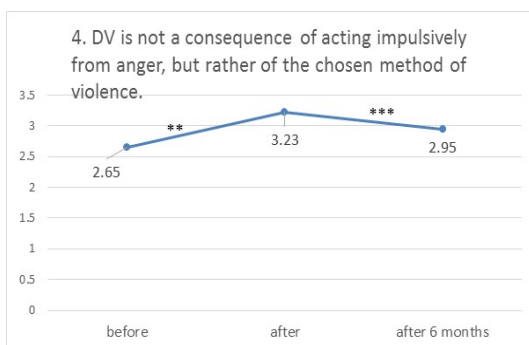




Figure 6. The true nature of DV is dominating one's partner.

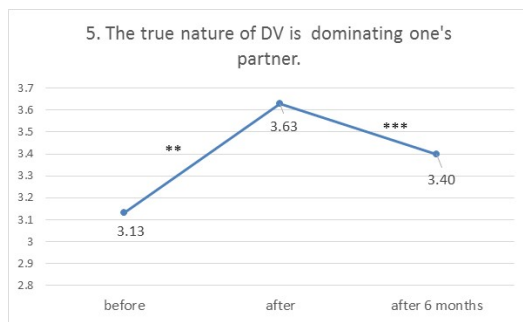


Figure 7. Even someone close to you could suffer from DV.

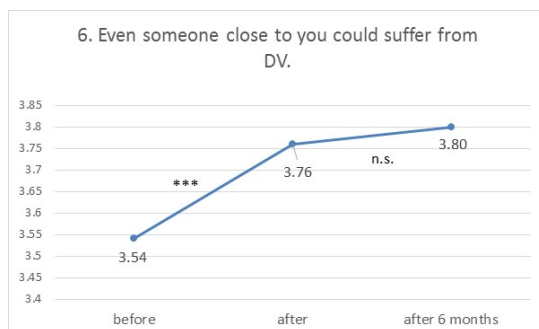
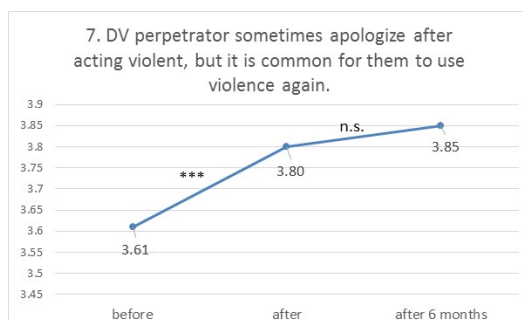


Figure 8. DV perpetrator sometimes apologize after acting violent, but it is common for them to use violence again.



#### 4. Discussion

In the preliminary survey, participants indicated that 21.5% knew of someone close to them who had suffered from DV or dating violence. The results of the survey were consistent with the results of the violence damage rate indicated by the Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office in 2018 (16.7% from a dating partner and 26.1% from a spouse). This reveals that the information about DV damage among Japanese university students is accurate. Of the students, it is positive to note that 51.3% had taken a class on DV. When compared with the approximately 30% of Japanese teachers (average age of 40) (Suga 2018) who have taken a DV class, the proportion of the younger generation who had attended classes was comparatively higher. In addition, it was found that 10.9% of students had learned about DV

from books. Overall, comparatively more teachers (34.0%) (average age of 40) had learned about DV from books. As many young university students were acquiring knowledge about DV from classes. Therefore, I implemented a DV prevention education program for university students and imparted them knowledge about DV.

As a result, the effect of the intervention was found to continue until six months later for the following. “3. Violence from a woman to a man is not DV,” “6. Even someone close to you could suffer from DV,” and “7. DV perpetrators sometimes apologize after acting violent, but it is common for them to use violence again”. Therefore, those DV contents were effective to educate about DV prevention program.

However, “4. DV is not a consequence of acting impulsively from anger, but rather of the chosen method of violence” and “5. The true nature of DV is dominating one’s partner” did not retain the effects of the program six months later. This appears to indicate that continuous education is necessary to address gaps in knowledge.

In Nigeria, 67.7% of married women are treated violently by their husbands (Izmirli et al. 2014). Turkey reports serious violence against females perpetrated by males (Uzuegbunam 2012). The Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office of Japan revealed in 2018 that although women are predominantly the victims at 31.3%, men are victims as well as 19.9% suffering violence perpetrated by a spouse. DV victims in Japan consist of both men and women. In a study conducted on American dating violence, alcohol use and marijuana use were found to have a strong relationship with physical and sexual violence (Shorey et al. 2015). Therefore it is necessary to include contents that address these aspects in DV prevention programs for university students.

## 5. Conclusion

The study results revealed the type of knowledge that continued to be important in the long term in the context of DV and established the importance of DV prevention programs in universities. As the study was conducted in only one Japanese university, it needs to be extended to other universities and departments.

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