



# Gender-Responsive Needs and Vulnerabilities among Incarcerated Mothers in Japan: Comparisons with Non-Mothers and Fathers

Ayako Sasaki<sup>1\*</sup>, Daiki Yoshihara<sup>1</sup>, Akemi Mochizuki<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Pediatrics, University of Yamagata, Tokyo, Japan

<sup>2</sup>Department of Astellas Pharma, University of Otemae, Nishinomiya, Japan

## INTRODUCTION

Women's pathways to prisons can be typically characterized by running away from home, drug abuse as self-medication, or prostitution as survival strategies to escape abuse and socioeconomic disadvantage [1-5]. In addition, given that many incarcerated mothers are unmarried, have minor children and bear parental responsibility as the primary caregivers of their children [6], gender-responsive needs and vulnerabilities caused by the role of parenting should be given particular attention. In the international context, the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women (the Bangkok Rules) provide global standards with regard to the distinct considerations that should apply to women prisoners and offenders, based on the assumption that "women prisoners are one of the vulnerable groups that have specific needs and requirements". Among the women covered by the Bangkok Rules, incarcerated mothers are especially vulnerable.

## DESCRIPTION

Thus, comprehensive research is needed to clarify how gender, parental status and their interactions impact the gender-responsive needs and vulnerabilities of incarcerated mothers, by comparing them with fathers and non-mothers. Upon analyzing data on the incarcerated population in Japan, we found that incarcerated mothers had greater gender-responsive needs and vulnerabilities in such areas as drug addiction, childhood adversity (as measured by ACEs) and socioeconomic status, which may be affected by their dual status as being women and being mothers.

Specifically, our study suggested that drug addiction should be prioritized as one of the critical target areas of intervention for incarcerated mothers, who reported a history of drug abuse at a significantly higher rate than fathers and non-mothers. In other words, effective gender-responsive substance abuse treatment may take

into account the special needs of mothers, including how maternal addiction, a negative self-perception and/or stigmatization as drug-addicted mothers may deteriorate the quality of parenting.

Additionally, a rehabilitative and trauma-informed approach should be an essential part of prison-based parenting programmers, considering that women in our study experienced greater childhood victimization than men, and the largest discrepancy was observed between mothers and fathers. Also, incarcerated mothers experienced domestic violence by their own mothers in childhood at a higher rate than non-mothers, suggesting that the abusive relationship with their own mother and its influence on current parenting should be another consideration in performing trauma-informed treatment in prison settings.

Moreover, intensive interventions are needed to minimize the detrimental effects of socioeconomic disadvantage that incarcerated mothers may have to endure upon release, considering that incarcerated mothers in our study had lower economic status and lower educational attainment. We recently conducted a follow-up analysis using the same data, which found that early motherhood may be associated with less probability of obtaining a high school diploma. Thus, the socioeconomic disadvantage specific to incarcerated mothers should also be a critical consideration in prison-based vocational and educational programmers.

## CONCLUSION

Finally, it is worth mentioning that gender-responsive needs and vulnerabilities may be interconnected and compounded to exacerbate mothers' vulnerabilities. For instance, drug addiction may encourage those women, who are already economically marginalized, to seek even more money to obtain drugs [2], while victimization often leads to self-medicating behavior by abusing drugs, and those activities may subject those women to further victimization [3]. Therefore, comprehensive services are needed to address

**Received:** 29-June-2022

**Editor assigned:** 01-July-2022

**Reviewed:** 15-July-2022

**Revised:** 20-July-2022

**Published:** 27-July-2022

**Manuscript No:** ipjda-22-14085

**PreQC No:** ipjda-22-14085(PQ)

**QC No:** ipjda-22-14085

**Manuscript No:** ipjda-22-14085

**DOI:** 10.36648/2471-853X.10.8.105

**Corresponding authors** Ayako Sasaki, Department of Pediatrics, University of Yamagata, Tokyo, Japan, E-mail: mickeym\_3oct@hotmail.com

**Citation** Sasaki A, Yoshihara D, Mochizuki A (2022) Gender-Responsive Needs and Vulnerabilities among Incarcerated Mothers in Japan: Comparisons with Non-Mothers and Fathers. J Drug Abuse. 8:105.

**Copyright** © Sasaki A, et al. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

those multiple needs, and future research may be directed towards understanding the interrelated nature of gender-responsive needs and vulnerabilities of incarcerated women, especially in the context of parenting.

## NOTE

In this article, “gender-responsive needs” refer to any potential factors that are influenced by gender or may produce gendered effects, and the term “vulnerabilities” is defined as having greater gender-responsive needs. Thus, those who are more vulnerable should be provided more intensive treatment to achieve outcomes equivalent to those with fewer vulnerabilities.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

None

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

## REFERENCES

1. Arnold RA (1990) Processes of victimization and criminalization of black women. *J Soc Justice* 17(314): 153-166.
2. Chesney-Lind M, Rodriguez N (1983) Women under lock and key: A view from the inside. *Prison J* 63(2): 47-65.
3. DeHart DD (2008) Pathways to prison: Impact of victimization in the lives of incarcerated women. *J Soc Work Pract Addict* 14(12): 1362-1381.
4. Gilfus ME (1992) From victims to survivors to offenders: Women's routes of entry and immersion into street crime. *Women Crim Justice* 4(1): 63-89.
5. Sugar F, Fox L (1989) Nistum peyako seht'wawin iskwewak: Breaking chains. *Disabil Soc* 3(2): 465-482.
6. Covington SS, Bloom BE (2006) Gender-responsive treatment and services in correctional settings. *J Subst Abuse Treat* 29(3): 9-33.