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Results of Dating Violence Prevention Education for Japanese High School Boys

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Abstract

We conducted a class on domestic violence (DV) prevention for 234 high school boys (intervention group: 154 boys, non-intervention group: 80 boys) and verified its effect on the boys. The program dealt with respect, relationships and types of violence. The factor analysis of a questionnaire survey conducted before the class on DV prevention revealed that the high school boys' understanding of "a relationship" and "a coercive behavior" was weak. Therefore, after conducting the class on DV prevention, we tested whether there was an improvement in their understanding of the terms "relationship" and "coercive behavior". To understand whether boys' understanding of "relationships" showed any change after the class, a comparison of the intervention and the non-intervention groups was carried out at four different time points—before the class on DV prevention, after the class, after a month, and after six months. A 2-factorial analysis of variance (repeated measures) was conducted. The results revealed that no mutual points of interaction were seen with the different measurement times based on the presence or absence of intervention ($F(3,696) = 0.995$, *n.s.*). To understand whether the term "coercive behaviors" changed boys' understanding of the term after the class, the comparison from the results before the class till six months later showed significant mutual interactions with the measurement times based on the presence or absence of intervention ($F(3,696) = 4.48$, $p < 0.01$). From this study, it is clear that interventions such as a single class on DV prevention can help boys understand the term "coercive acts" and have an impact on their minds for a long time. However, the same may not be true in their understanding of "relationships".

Keywords

DV, Prevention Program, Boys High School Students in Japan

1. Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines "dating violence is an early

form of partner violence, occurring primarily in adolescence and early adulthood, and experienced within a "dating relationship" [1]. Smith *et al.* of the United States emphasized that dating violence often leads to further domestic violence (DV) later in life [2]. Exner demonstrated that youths, who had been victims of dating violence, have problems with suicidal ideation, depression symptoms, and drug or alcohol dependency [3]. The Egyptian researchers observed that DV is a serious problem, so they need for development of DV education/prevention program [4]. In Brazilian researchers emphasized that the adolescents who are victims of maltreatment need to be careful not to be caught up in DV [5].

Faced with this statistics, the US and Canada have begun research into dating violence prevention. In Canada, Lavoie *et al.* (1995) conducted a short-term dating violence prevention program with 279 high school students [6]. The program focused on learning about relationships and the party that bears the responsibility for abuse. Crooks *et al.* (2011) also implemented a program called "The Fourth R" with 1722 students aged 14 to 15 years, and reported that it bore immediate results in these same areas of relationships and responsibility [7].

Meanwhile, in the US, Antle *et al.* administered the "Love U2" program to 233 ninth graders [8]. They conducted questionnaires before and after the program and reported observing a violence-reducing effect after the program. On the account of the difficulties in rehabilitating boys and men after they have become abusers, Miller *et al.* divided 2006 boys high school athletes into an intervention group and a control group [9]. Then, they conducted a 60-minute program teaching the dangers of violence against women and effective communication techniques. They reported a post-program effect on the intervention group in terms of gender-equitable attitudes.

After the studies in the United States demonstrated the effectiveness of boys-only high school DV prevention programs, I decided to conduct a similar program in Japan as well. This study divided students into an intervention group that participated in the program and a control group, and surveyed them at four points in time: before, after, one month after, and six months after, in order to verify whether there are differences at these points.

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

The subjects of the study were 234 boys in Japan lives in Kanto region (154 in the intervention group and 80 in the control group) in their second or third year of high school from July 2014 to January 2015 (average age 17.4 years). We selected the normal boys.

2.2. Preliminary Survey

The questionnaires, "Knowledge of DV" (**Table 1**) and "Ways of Thinking Associated with DV" [10] (**Table 2**), were administered to all 234 high school boys. Both questionnaires used a four-point scale for each question, and requested

Table 1. Knowledge of DV.

1) I know the term "domestic violence (DV)."
2) I know what types of behavior are DV.

"Agree" = 4 points, "Somewhat Agree" = 3 points, "Somewhat Disagree" = 2 points, and "Agree" = 1 point.

Table 2. Ways of Thinking Associated with DV (adapted from Suga, Morita and Saito, 2013).

*1) The victim of the violence bears some of the blame for the situation.
*2) If you love someone, you should forgive them for being violent to you.
3) Using cruel words and yelling loudly at someone are forms of violence.
4) Throwing things or deliberately making loud noises in order to threaten someone is a form of violence.
5) Forcing/imposing your own thoughts on others is a form of violence.
*6) If a loved one says, "Let's always be alone together and not hang out with other people," you should comply.
*7) The man should always lead the woman.
*8) I don't want the person I love to hate me, so it's best if I go along with their opinions.
*9) If you love someone, it's only natural to prioritize them, no matter what happens.
10) If someone does something to hurt me, it's okay for me to say "No," even to a superior or loved one.

"Agree" = 4 points, "Somewhat Agree" = 3 points, "Somewhat Disagree" = 2 points, and "Agree" = 1 point.
*Scored inversely.

participants to select one of the four answers. Responses were scored as follows: "Agree"= 4 points, "Somewhat Agree" = 3 points, "Somewhat Disagree" = 2 points, and "Agree"= 1 point. However, items with asterisks (*) were scored inversely.

2.3. Development of a Prevention Education Program for High School Student

I considered the results of the preliminary survey as I developed a preventative education program. To create the content that is easily understood by Japanese high school students, I based it on situations that actually happen in schools. I also introduced the topics on the cycle of violence [11] and the effects of abuse on children [12]. The main objective of the program was that as people respect each other, there would be no violence or DV; therefore, I named it "A Program for Mutual Respect: Learning about Domestic Violence in Order to Value Our Relationships." This program is composed of the following fifteen parts (**Table 3**).

Lesson 1, "Meeting People," provides students with an introduction to human relationships by discussing how feelings like "I'm glad I met this person" or "Being with this person makes me tired" are all normal, and that these feelings are important.

Table 3. Content of the DV preventative education program.

Lessons
1. Meeting People
2. What Does It Mean to Respect Others?
3. What Kind of Person Can't Respect Others?
4. What Would You Do? (As a Boy, As a Girl)
5. Relationships
6. What Is Violence?
7. Types of Violence.
8. The Cycle of Violence
9. What Is Domestic Violence?
10. DV by the Numbers
11. What Should I Do if Someone I Know Is Experiencing DV?
12. DV Counseling Hotlines
13. How Violence Affects Children
14. Creating Mutually Respectful Conversations
15. Roleplay (Students Roleplay Conversations They Created)

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

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

Lesson 4 includes narrative examples DV happening 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 both boys and girls are capable of becoming victims.

Lesson 5, "Relationships", 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?" teaches that in essence violence is about control. Violent people tend to deny their violence or make light of its effects.

In Lesson 7, "Types of Violence," instructors list and explain different types of violence and abuse: physical, psychological, sexual, and economic. Lesson 8 covers "cycle of violence [11]". The Acute Battering Incident is where violence occurs, after which the abuser feels a sense of relief from 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, and violence occurs again. Instructors explain that this pattern is dating violence.

In Lesson 9 "What Is Domestic Violence?" DV is defined specifically. It is 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.

In Lesson 10 "DV by the Numbers," students are told that in a 2012 study by the Japanese government, 29.1% percent of women and 15.6% of men reported that they had been brutally abused at least once. This is to help students understand using statistics that DV is something that can happen close to home.

Lesson 11, "What Should I Do if Someone I Know Is Experiencing DV?" explains that DV is not something that you would ignore or treat as "not my business," as well as the importance of noticing that the abuse is taking place.

Lesson 12 introduces Japan's DV counseling hotlines; and Lesson 13, "How Violence Affects Children," which showed that while some children who are victims of DV or other abuse do sometimes go on to become victims or perpetrators of violence later in life, providing care for these children breaks this chain of abuse [12].

Finally, in Lesson 14, "Creating Mutually Respectful Conversations," and Lesson 15, "Role-play," students create conversations themselves and roleplay them to the class, fostering empathy among participants. In terms of the program format, it was a combination of lectures with the opinion exchange on the role-plays.

2.4. Research Design (Figure 1)

The design of this research is shown in **Figure 1**. The study ran from July 2014 to January 2015, with 154 second- and third-year high school boys as the intervention group, and 80 as the control group. The intervention group underwent a one-time, 100-minute class. A "Ways of Thinking Associated with DV" questionnaire was conducted four times: before the class, directly after the class, one month after the class, and six months after the class. The class took 100 minutes in total, and I taught it alone.

2.5. Data Analysis

The "Knowledge of DV" and "Post-Class Opinions" questionnaires were descriptive statistics and with the "Ways of Thinking Associated with DV" questionnaire, I conducted factor analysis to clarify the internal structure. In order to compare the intervention group and control group, I performed 2-factor analysis of variance (repeated measures) for the before, after, one month, and six months comparisons. I used IBM SPSS 22.0.

2.6. Ethical Considerations

Before seeking permission to conduct this study, I explained everything about the study to the head of the school and students obtained consent in writing.

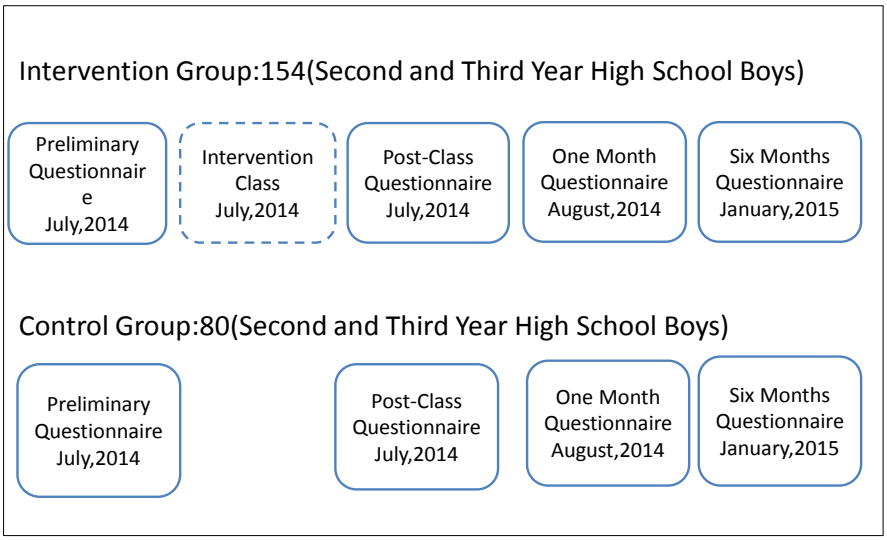

Figure 1. Research design.

Student questionnaires were anonymous, and came with a written explanation that participation in the study was voluntary. The questionnaire clearly stipulated that any data provided would not be used for any purpose outside of this research study. Further, the intervention class was conducted during the special activities period, as were the before, after, one month, and six months questionnaires. I administered these in school classrooms, and I distributed and collected them personally. This study was conducted with the permission of the Ibaraki National College of Technology Research Ethics Committee.

3. Results

3.1. Knowledge of DV (Figure 2)

I questioned the students about their knowledge of DV. 95.0% answered the Question 1 "I know the term "domestic violence (DV)" with "Agree" or "Somewhat Agree," and 88.1% answered the Question 2 "I know what types of behavior are DV" with "Agree" or "Somewhat Agree". These results demonstrate that a large percentage of high school boys know about DV.

3.2. Factor Analysis of High School Boys' Way of Thinking Associated with DV (Table 4)

I conducted factor analysis on "Ways of Thinking Associated with DV." Question 10 produced a ceiling effect, so it was omitted. I performed factor analysis on the other nine survey questions (principal factor method, Promax rotation). The factorial structure of Questions 1 and 2 was two-point, so I omitted them. After reanalyzing Question 3, two factors were extracted (I used an eigenvalue of 1 or more as a benchmark). The cumulative contribution ratio was 58.68%, and the correlation between factors was −0.16.

Factor 1 involved four questions: "If a loved one says, 'Let's always be alone together and not hang out with other people,' you should comply," "The man

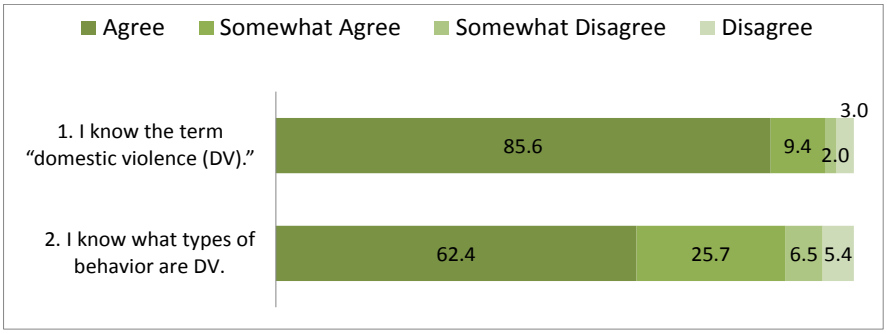

Figure 2. Knowledge of DV n = 234 (Numbers are Percentage).

Table 4. Factor analysis results for high school boys' ways of thinking associated with DV.

	F1	F2	Factor Name, Coefficient Alpha
*6) If a loved one says, "Let's always be alone together and not hang out with other people," you should comply.	**0.630**	−0.029	
*7) The man should always lead the woman.	**0.525**	−0.089	Relationship
*8) I don't want the person I love to hate me, so it's best if I go along with their opinions.	**0.633**	−0.020	α = 0.72 M: 12.34, SD: 2.14
*9) If you love someone, it's only natural to prioritize them, no matter what happens.	**0.683**	0.120	
3) Using cruel words and yelling loudly at someone are forms of violence.	0.017	**0.677**	
4) Throwing things or deliberately making loud noises in order to threaten someone is a form of violence.	−0.058	**0.729**	Coercive Behavior α = 0.73 M: 9.27, SD: 1.98
5) Forcing/imposing your own thoughts on others is a form of violence.	0.030	**0.651**	

*Scored inversely. n = 202. Correlation between Factors −0.16 Correlation between Factors −0.16 M and SD calculated with simple addition. "Relationship" had max value 16, min value 4; "Coercive Behavior" had max value 12, min value 3.

should always lead the woman," "I don't want the person I love to hate me, so it's best if I go along with their opinions," and "If you love someone, it's only natural to prioritize them, no matter what happens." Because Factor 1 is structured from questions that center on relationships with one's partner, I named it "Relationship".

Factor 2 involved three questions: "Using cruel words and yelling loudly at someone are forms of violence," "Throwing things or deliberately making loud noises in order to threaten someone is a form of violence," and "Forcing/imposing your own thoughts on others is a form of violence." Because this factor is structured from questions that ask whether threatening behavior is violence, I named it "Coercive Behavior".

Calculating the coefficient alpha for each factor, Factor 1's was 0.72 and Factor 2's was 0.73; therefore, I judged the internal consistency of each to be good. Additionally, because the alpha for each factor was confirmed to be high, I performed simple addition and calculated the mean and standard deviation. "Rela-

tionship" has a max value of 16, a min value of 4, and a higher mean indicates the healthier relationship awareness. "Coercive Behavior" has a max value of 12, a min value of 3, and a higher mean indicates a higher awareness that coercion is violence.

3.3. Comparison of Intervention Group vs. Control Group

I compared the intervention group (n = 154) and the control group (n = 80) using the mean "Relationship" and "Coercive Behavior" scores I obtained through factor analysis of the "Ways of Thinking Associated with DV" Questionnaire. I performed 2-factor analysis of variance (repeated measures), making the mean scores a dependent variable while the intervention or lack thereof (intervention group vs. control group) and time of measurement (before, after, one month, and six months) independent variables. Means are calculated using the scale of "Agree" = 4 points, "Somewhat Agree" = 3 points, "Somewhat Disagree" = 2 points, and "Agree" = 1 point. The "Relationship" factor consists of four questions. A mean value of 13.00 or more, when a participant scores four on at least one question, indicates high relationship awareness. On the other hand, we will consider that a mean of 7.00 or less, when a participant scores one on at least one question, indicates low relationship awareness. Values in between the two will be considered midrange. The "Coercive Behavior" factor consists of three questions, a mean value of 10.00 or more, when the participant scores 4 on at least one question, indicates high coercive behavior awareness. We will consider that a mean of 5.00 or less, when a participant scores 1 on at least one question, indicates low coercive behavior awareness. Values in between the two will be considered midrange.

3.4. Changes in Relationship Scores (Figure 3)

The intervention group (n = 154) scored 12.30 ± 1.92 (hereafter M ± SD) on the preliminary survey, indicating midrange awareness; additionally, the post-class survey's scores were still midrange at 12.86 ± 2.76. After one month, they were also midrange at 12.60 ± 2.43, and after six months, they continued to be midrange at 12.56 ± 2.37.

The control group's preliminary survey scores were midrange at 12.32 ± 2.41, its post-class scores were midrange at 12.23 ± 2.47, it was midrange at 12.30 ± 2.50 after one month, and it was midrange at 12.39 ± 2.60 after six months. Over the period from the preliminary survey to the sixth month survey, there was no interaction between the time of measurement and the intervention or lack thereof ($F(3,696) = 0.995$, *n.s.*). This demonstrates that intervention or lack thereof did not produce a significant difference in the level of relationship awareness before, after, after one month, or after six months from the intervention. Since no main effect observed in either intervention or the lack thereof, the results show that there was no significant difference in relationship awareness based on intervention or the lack thereof ($F(1,232) = 3.15$, *n.s.*).

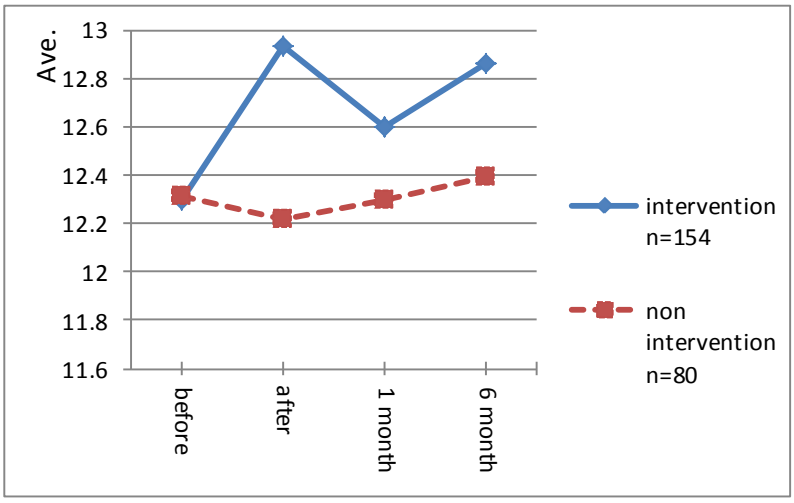

Figure 3. Changes in relationship scores.

Moreover, no main effect of time of measurement was observed, meaning there was no significant difference in relationship awareness between the four time periods of measurement (before, after, one month, six months) ($F(3,696) = 0.891$, *n.s.*).

3.5. Changes in Coercive Behavior Scores (Figure 4)

The intervention group (n = 154) scored 9.32 ± 2.25 on the preliminary survey, indicating midrange awareness while the post-class survey's scores were 10.75 ± 1.96, indicating high awareness. Awareness remained high after one month at 10.27 ± 2.01, and this high awareness was maintained after six months at 10.20 ± 1.80.

The control group's preliminary survey scores were midrange at 9.28 ± 1.62, and it post-class scores were midrange at 9.50 ± 2.15. In addition, it was midrange at 9.39 ± 2.30 after one month, and it was also midrange at 9.45 ± 2.16 after six months. Over the period from the preliminary survey to the six months survey, there was significant interaction between the time of measurement and the intervention or lack thereof ($F(3,696) = 4.48$, $p < 0.01$). This demonstrates that intervention or the lack thereof did produce a significant difference in the level of coercive behavior awareness after one and six months from the intervention. Because the main effect was also significant for intervention vs. non-intervention, it is evident that the intervention group's coercive behavior awareness is significantly higher than that of the control group ($F(1,232) = 24.45$, $p < 0.001$). The main effect of the time of measurement (before, after, one month, six months) was also significant (3,696) = 8.15, $p < 0.001$). When I conducted multiple comparisons, the post-class scores were significantly higher than the preliminary survey scores ($p < 0.001$), and the six months scores were significantly higher as well ($p < 0.001$). A simple main effect test showed no significant difference between the intervention group and the control group on the preliminary survey ($F(1,232) = 0.023$, *n.s.*). However, there was a significant difference

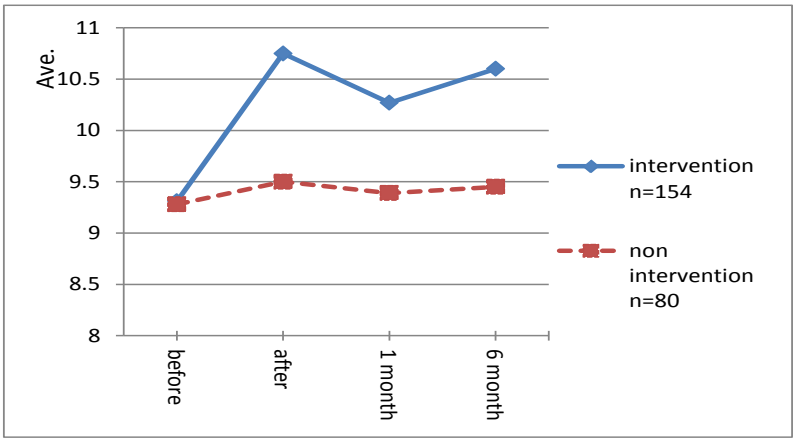

Figure 4. Changes in coercive behavior scores.

between the intervention group and control group on the "after" survey ($F(1,232) = 20.10$, $p < 0.001$), as well as on the survey after one month ($F(1,232) = 9.13$, $p < 0.01$). There was also a significant between the intervention group and the control group after six months ($F(1,232) = 18.55$, $p < 0.001$). These results clearly demonstrate that the intervention group that had taken the class had significantly higher coercive behavior awareness than the control group directly after, one month after, and six months after the class.

3.6. Post-Class Opinions (Figure 5)

The 154 boys who took the class were asked five questions immediately after the class. The percentages that represent the affirmative answers of Agree or Somewhat Agree were as follows. First, I think my experience in the DV class will be useful to me in the future: 90.4%. Second, if there is another DV class in the future, I would like to attend: 66.1%. Third, I learned that DV happens closer to home than I thought: 84.4%. Fourth, I want to tell my family and/or friends what I have learned in the DV class: 55.6%. Fifth, going forward, I want to act respectfully in my daily life in order to build better relationships with people: 92.1%. The responses show that the students rated the class highly.

4. Discussion

The preliminary survey asked about knowledge of DV among Japanese grades two and three boys high school students (average age 17.4 years). About 95.0% and 88.1% of the students recognized the term "DV" and understood its meaning, respectively. The result suggests that most Japanese high school students have knowledge of DV. However, even those with knowledge sometimes suffered from DV or were harming others subconsciously. Therefore, this research surveyed the "Ways of Thinking Associated with DV" among boy's high school students and analyzed what they were not able to recognize. The results of a factor analysis found that boy's high school students were not able to recognize "what is the (DV) relationship" and "what is coercive behavior".

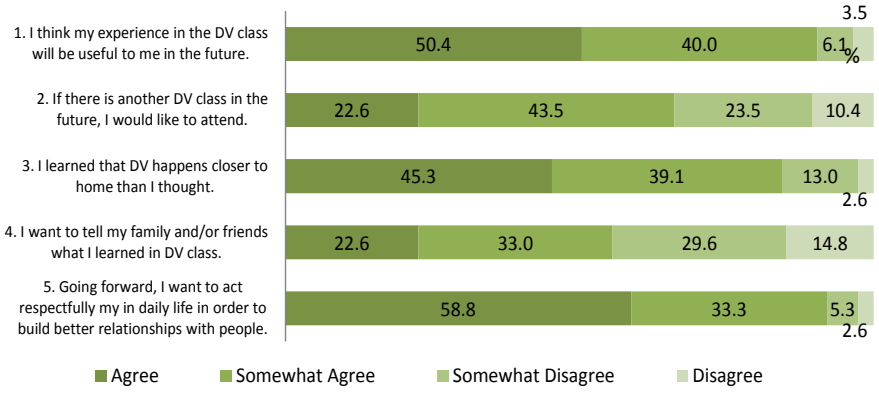

Figure 5. Post-class survey results, n = 154 (numbers are percentage).

In the US, a DV prevention educational program was conducted and its effectiveness was compared between two times, one before and one at one month after the program [8]. In addition, there was a program specifically aiming at boy's high school students [9]. Based on these previous studies, we investigated the retention effects of recognizing "what is the (DV) relationship" and "what is coercive behavior" in a sample of Japanese boys high school students by measuring the extents of their recognition at four points: 1) before, 2) immediately after, 3) one month after, and 4) six months after the lecture. The items in the relationship construct were: 1) "If a loved one says, 'Let's always be alone together and not hang out with other people' you should comply." 2) "The man should always lead the woman." 3) "I don't want to the person I love to hate me, so it's best if I go along with their opinions." and 4) "If you love someone, it's only natural to prioritize them, no matter what happens." The results found no difference between boy's high school students who took the lecture and those who did not take it. There also were no differences among their recognitions before, immediately after, one month after, and six months after the lecture. These results imply that it is difficult to embed recognition of the (DV) relationship in boy's high school students using DV prevention lectures. Considering that the average age of the participants was 17.4 years, recognition might have been better if DV prevention lectures were given at younger ages. It was reported that, in India, 19.2% of boys between 15 and 16 years old have experienced violence toward girls suggesting that early intervention with prevention education is required [13]. The items comprising coercive behavior were: 1) "swearing and shouting are part of violence" and 2) "throwing objects and making loud noises to threaten others are part of violence." The recognition of these items was significantly different between the intervention and non-intervention groups, suggesting that the lecture improved the recognition of "what is overbeating behavior". Moreover, the improvement was present immediately after, one month after, and six months after the lecture. Furthermore, it is believed that, although the recognition of coercive behavior was initially moderate among the students, the students were able to sustain high levels of recognition after taking the lecture.

Therefore, the recognition of coercive behaviors in boy's high school students could be sustained by the DV prevention educational program developed in this study. To prevent coercive behaviors, recent research was conducted on children in DV families in the US. The researchers distributed a textbook, entitled "Mom and Teens for Safe Dates," to children between 12 and 15 years old living in DV families, and they compared the children who read the textbook to those who did not read it. The children who finished reading the textbook had fewer experiences of physical abuse [14]. The results of the present study and the study conducted on children in DV families in the US teach us that recognition of coercive behaviors could be improved, even in boys high school students aged 17 years and children raised in DV families, by implementing DV prevention programs that prevent victims' and perpetrators' suffering from coercive behaviors.

Many of the boy's high school students reported that the prevention program used in this study was useful because about 90.4% of them reported, "Lectures about DV will be helpful for my future." Furthermore, it is expected that they will notice and act when they or other people are suffering from DV because about 84.4% of them reported, "I understand that DV is a more common problem than I expected." Moreover, the effectiveness of the program was recognized because about 55.6% of the students reported, "I want to inform my friends and family of the contents of DV lectures." More people will become interested in the problem of DV when these boys high school students inform their friends and families. Expanding recognition of the problem could reduce the number of people who suffer from and are perpetrators of DV. It could be effective to inform people that DV is a common social problem.

5. Conclusions

1) Japanese high school boys need to learn more about "What is a relationship?" and "What is a coercive behavior?"

2) After we did a class on DV prevention for Japanese high school boys, "coercive acts" had an impact on their minds for a long time, but "relationships" may be not easy to remember on their minds.

Acknowledgements

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