

A Comparison of Maltreated Children and Non-Maltreated Children on Their Experiences with Animals—A Japanese Study

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Abstract:

Recently, studies in the United States, Canada, and Europe have shown that child abuse and animal abuse can coexist in the same household. The implications of these studies are that attention to animal abuse might lead to early detection of, and intervention in, child abuse. Although a promising area of study, in Japan there are no published empirical studies which have examined the relationship between children in abusive families and their companion animals. This study examined the differences between maltreated and non-maltreated children in Japan on their experiences with animals. The Boat Inventory on Animal Related Experience (BIARE), a questionnaire on positive and negative experiences with animals, was used to survey a group of institutionalized, maltreated children (who could not live in their homes for various reasons including abuse) (group M, $n = 26$) and a group of children at an elementary school (non-maltreated children, group C, $n = 113$). Overall, compared with group C, children in group M engaged in more activities with animals and used animals as a source of support. At the same time, children in group M were more likely to report witnessing animal abuse and committing more serious animal abuse, compared with the children in group C. Implications of the results for Japanese child protection agencies are discussed. Currently, Japanese child protection agencies are aware of the benefits of animals for vulnerable children, but they should also be aware of the negative aspects of the relationship and take necessary measures for risk control.

Keywords: [ANIMAL ABUSE](#); [CHILD ABUSE](#); [HUMAN-ANIMAL RELATIONSHIP](#)

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