

Research Department Report 58

Research on Desistance among Juvenile Training School Parolees in Japan

Outline

This follow-up study focused on the desistance process of juvenile training school parolees in Japan, defining non-incarceration after release as an operational index of desistance. The purpose of the study is to provide useful material for considering enhancement of correctional education in institutional settings and probationary treatment in the community for delinquents, and for conceptualizing a new means of supporting their recovery from delinquency after their probationary supervision periods, through empirically exploring factors which promoted some of them not to be reincarcerated.

Participants were juvenile training school parolees who were released from January to March 2013 nationwide. The study followed up on them for about four years, adopting a mixed research approach: examination of official incarceration records, self-report questionnaires and in-person interviews.

Examination of official incarceration records (Chapter 3)

This study examined official incarceration record of 806 parolees (727 males and 79 females), who participated in the study, for about four years until the end of year 2016. 80.3% of them were free from reincarceration both in juvenile training school and in prison. 19.7% of them were reincarcerated either in juvenile training school or in prison. Among those who were reincarcerated in a juvenile training school, about half of them were detained within one year after their release. This suggests parolees' need for intensive supervision and/or rehabilitation support immediately after release. Also, the study revealed certain tendencies in higher risks of reincarceration and possibility of earlier rehabilitation from delinquency, depending on parolees' individual attributes.

In addition to empirically known risk factors such as gender, age at the index offense, type of offense, time of being involved in delinquency for the first time, parolee's experience of rewards-winning and/or having imposed disciplinary actions as a juvenile training school inmate were revealed to be an index predictive of the future. It suggests the importance of making the juvenile training school inmates acquire a law-abiding attitude, allowing them to deal with things seriously, and of giving them fair and precise feedback on their efforts and deeds. Also,

coordinating their family relationships appears to be effective for their recovery after release, since among the participants, those who were not anxious about their family relationships on their release were likely not to be reincarcerated later.

Results of self-reported questionnaires (Chapter 4)

69 juvenile training school parolees, who were not reincarcerated and were eager for rehabilitation, filled in a questionnaire on their daily lives and on their thoughts in June 2014, shortly after one year from their release (“desistance group”). 47 parolees who were reincarcerated at the time of filling in the questionnaire (“reincarcerated group”) and 260 non-delinquent youth who filled in the questionnaire (“non-delinquent youth group”) were set as the control groups.

Some features of the desistance group were clarified through comparison with the other two groups.

In comparison to the reincarcerated group, the desistance group lived better and sounder lives in terms of employment, schooling and their practice in daily routines. In comparison to the non-delinquent youth group, both the desistance group and reincarcerated group were likely to feel difficulty in their living, especially in maintenance of their employment and/or schooling. To support their rehabilitation, it seems that continuous support should be available for them, even after their starting of work or schooling.

As regards their family, unlike the reincarcerated group, the desistance group had better relationships with their families, both in terms of quantity and quality. Likewise, while the reincarcerated group tended to rely on association with delinquent peers, the desistance group had non-delinquent peers. It appears that prioritizing the family through fostering positive feelings towards and keeping in touch with them is important in the desistance process, as well as breaking off with delinquent friends.

Regarding psychological features, the desistance group had higher self-esteem and self-control in comparison to the reincarcerated group. Although the differences in baseline features between the two groups may have an effect, it can be said that the treatment provided at juvenile training schools successfully enhances inmates’ self-control.

Results of in-person interviews (Chapter 5)

In-person interviews were conducted among the parolees three times, namely the first batch: 18 parolees who were not reincarcerated about two years after their release, the second batch: 35 parolees who were reincarcerated about two years after their release and the third batch: 11 parolees who were not reincarcerated about four years after their release. Some participants of the first batch took part in the third batch. Based on the interview results, cognitive features of

recovering parolees, on what happened to them in the past, on themselves and on their process of desistance, were explored through comparison with those who were reincarcerated, focusing also on chronological changes. Findings are as follows:

Many of the recovering parolees recognized that their past experience as juvenile training school inmates and then as parolees under probationary supervision fostered their internal growth and supported their desistance. They also highly evaluated the kind and dedicated commitment that their treatment providers rendered to them. It appears that juvenile treatment, which is based on a trusting relationship between the treatment provider and the inmate or parolee, functions well.

Family relation was shown to be important as a factor promoting recovery. Also, there are other favorable factors on desistance such as building up sound achievement experience, good relations at the worksite and presence of a role model.

Conclusion (Chapter 6)

This study analyzed empirical data which was collected through a mixed research approach; examination of official incarceration records, self-reported questionnaires and in-person interviews. Exploring and considering betterment of correctional education in institutional settings and probationary treatment in the community, the study took an overview of the process of desistance of juvenile training school parolees for about four years and discussed issues such as the timing of intervention after release, the significance of individual treatment, key points in daily life and in psychological features, the meaning of acquisition of intimate relationships and social roles, how to support such acquisition, and the importance of fostering internal growth in recovery from delinquency.

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