

A Study on Influential Relations between Happiness and Military-Life Satisfaction Among Korea Solders: With A Focus on The Mediating Effect of Self-Compassion and Gratitude

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Abstract

The research aimed at identifying the impact of Korean soldiers' happiness on military satisfaction and verifying the dual mediation effect of self-compassion and gratitude. 374 Air Force soldiers in Gyeonggi Province were used for analysis. Regression, SPSS Macros, and bootstrapping methods were applied to verify the dual mediation effects. The results were as follows: First of all, the higher the happiness of soldiers, the more satisfied they were with their military life. Second, the higher the self-compassion and gratitude of soldiers, the higher the satisfaction level of military life. Third, it was revealed that the happiness of soldiers indirectly influences the satisfaction level of military life through the dual mediation of self-compassion and gratitude. Based on these findings, it suggests the need for a positive intervention program to enhance the satisfactory life in the military.

Keywords: *Happiness, Self-compassion, Gratitude, Military-Life Satisfaction*

1. Introduction

Recently, various studies and empirical researches have explained the relationship between happiness and success. In particular, Boehm and Lyubomirsky suggested that happiness became a driving force for success. In 2018, they once again proved that happy people were successful in various areas through a longitudinal study, a cross sectional study and an 2experimental research[1]. These studies show that happiness have a positive effect on various areas. Then, in the military, does happiness come with a successful life?

The military is a special group where soldiers are required to act in accordance with a military hierarchy as well as positions and to obey rules and commands[2]. The average age of Korean soldiers in military service amounts to 22 years, corresponding to post-adolescent. The soldier in this period could face challenges in the military due to conflicts and anxiety between autonomous needs and controlling rules. In particular, as the majority of soldiers are drafted into the army under the conscription system, they could not be satisfied with the military life. Therefore, empirical and practical studies on enhancing military life satisfaction among soldiers are required.

American forces designed the program of adjusting emotions for mental health[3]. The positive sentiment helps to be resilient to threats. It also improves problem-solving skills,

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resilience and physical health[4]. Lyubormirsky also suggested to help solders with the use of mindfulness and gratitude in order to reduce stress levels[1]. This allows revealing whether solders’ happiness affects military life satisfaction and what kind of its psychological mechanism is.

Self-compassion is about being warm towards oneself when encountering pains and failures, rather than ignoring them or hurting oneself with self-criticism[5]. According to preceding studies, self-compassion has a positive correlation with self-esteem, forgiveness, optimism, psychological wellbeing and happiness. It has a negative correlation with depression, anxiety and perfectionism[6]. In light of this result, self-compassion, the generous attitude toward oneself and the world as well as the attitude of showing inner love and kindness toward pain, would enhance gratitude.

Gratitude is about realizing the benefit from others and experiencing thankfulness of it. People feeling more gratitude are related with life satisfaction, hope as well as ego resilience and they can adapt to their lives[7]. Teens showed more gratitude with self-compassion as a mediator[8] and attachment anxiety affects body appreciation with self-compassion as a mediator[9]. Children suffering from physical maltreatment and negligence reduced depression symptoms with the help of self-compassion and gratitude [10].

To this end, this research established study questions as follows: Firstly, which relations do happiness, self-compassion, gratitude and military life satisfaction have among soldiers? Secondly, what kind of mediating roles do self-compassion and gratitude have in the relationship between happiness and military life satisfaction?

To deal with study questions, the study model was presented as follows Figure.1:

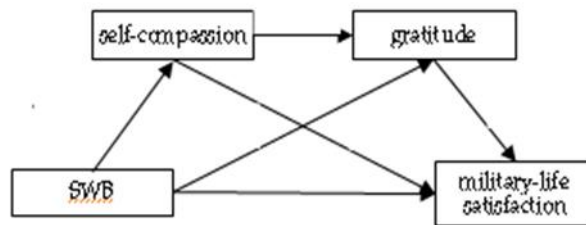


Figure. 1. Research model

2. Research Method

2.1 Study Subjects

The researcher carried out questionnaires toward the soldier in the air force unit located in Gyeonggi Province. Excluding insincere questionnaires of 20 copies, a total of 374 ones were used as final analysis materials. The average age of subjects amounts to 21.61 years (SD=1.57) and their period of service corresponds to 17.24months (SD=4.17) on average. In terms of educational backgrounds, 22(5.9%) soldiers are high school graduates, 316(84.3%) are undergraduate students, 27(7.2%) are college graduates and 7(1.9%) are in graduate schools or more.

2.2 Measuring Instruments

Happiness The Satisfaction With Life Scale(SWLS) and Subjective Well-Being (SWB) are adopted to measure happiness. The SWLS is developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen and

Griffin[11] and SWB uses the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) which is developed by Watson, Clark and Tellegen[12]. In this study, the Cronbach's α of the SWLS, the positive sentiment and the negative sentiment represents .86, .85, .89 respectively.

Self-Compassion The Self-Compassion Scale (SCS), which was created by Neff[5] was used to measure self-compassion. In this study, Cronbach's α amounts to .89.

Gratitude The Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form (GQ-6), which was created by McCullough and others [7].

Military life satisfaction Military life satisfaction is measured by one question: How much do you satisfy with your military life?

Control variable Age, service period, academic background and family circumstances were asked.

2.3 Data Analysis

The collected data in this study were analyzed with SPSS 20.0. Descriptive statistics analysis was conducted to find out demographic descriptors and Pearson's correlation analysis was adopted to find out the correlation among variables. The multiple regression analysis was conducted by controlling the demographic variable in order to find out the independent variable's impact on the dependent variable. The bootstrapping was used to find out the significance of a mediation effect. In this study, the research model of a mediation effect was verified with the use of SPSS Macro presented by Hayes and Preacher [13] to verify an indirect effect of the variable. The number of extracting samples for bootstrapping amounted to 5,000 and a medication effect was verified at a 95% of confidence interval.

3. Result

3.1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation among Study Variables

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics result and correlation among variables with regard to subjective well-being, self-compassion, gratitude tendency and military life satisfaction. The absolute value of variables' skewness is below .62 and the absolute value of the kurtosis is .49 and less. Firstly, subjective well-being has a significantly positive correlation with self-compassion ($r=.71$, $p<.001$), gratitude tendency($r=.66$, $p<.001$) and military life satisfaction ($r=.49$, $p<.001$). In other words, higher subjective well-being leads to higher levels of self-compassion and gratitude tendency and military life satisfaction. Self-compassion is highly correlated with gratitude($r=.56$, $p<.001$) and military life satisfaction($r=.39$, $p<.001$). In other words, higher tendency of self-compassion and gratitude contributes to higher satisfaction in military life and higher levels of self-compassion result in higher gratitude tendency.

Table 1. Correlation between Variables and Mean, Standard Deviation

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.SWB	1. 00							
2.Self-compassion	. 71***	1. 00						
3.Gratitude	. 66***	. 56***	1. 00					
4.Military-life Satisfaction	. 49***	. 38***	. 44***	1. 00				
5.age	. 01	. 02	. 02	. 12	1. 00			

6.service period	-. 06	. 00	. 00	-. 08	. 03	1. 00						
7.education	. 10	. 06	. 10	-. 01	. 10***	. 04	1. 00					
8.class	-. 17**	-. 10*	-. 11*	-. 04	. 01	. 01	-. 01	1. 00				
M	. 00	3. 54	5. 50	6. 43	21. 61	17. 24	2. 05	2. 90				
S.D.	2. 32	. 51	1. 14	2. 32	1. 57	4. 17	. 45	. 66				

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

3.2. The Mediation Effect of Self-Compassion and Gratitude in the relations between Subjective Well-Being and Military Life Satisfaction

In this study, a dual mediation analysis was conducted with 4-step multiple regression analysis in order to find out a mediation effect of self-compassion and gratitude in the relations between subjective well-being and military life satisfaction. Age, service duration, academic background and family circumstances were controlled. Table 2 shows the result.

The first step is to find out a mediation effect of self-compassion and gratitude in the relations between subjective well-being and military life satisfaction. Then the overall effect (c) where subjective well-being affects military life satisfaction is positive ($\beta = .50, p < .001$). In other words, happier soldiers are more satisfied with military life. In the second step, in terms of the effect of subjective well-being on self-compassion, higher levels of subjective well-being have a positive effect on self-compassion ($\beta = .72, p < .001$). This shows that higher levels of subjective well-being contribute to higher levels of self-compassion. In the third step, under the control of subjective well-being and self-compassion respectively, self-compassion (first mediation variable) has a positive effect ($\beta = .17, p < .01$) on gratitude (second mediation variable). Subjective well-being has a positive effect ($\beta = .54, p < .001$) on gratitude (second mediation variable). In the last step, under the control of subjective well-being, self-compassion and gratitude attitude, subjective well-being still has a positive effect ($\beta = .34, p < .001$) on military life satisfaction. However, self-compassion doesn't affect military life satisfaction. Gratitude tendency has a positive influence ($\beta = .20, p < .01$) on military life satisfaction. These results show that, when it comes to influence where subjective well-being has on military life satisfaction, mediation variables such as self-compassion and gratitude serve as dual mediations and partial mediations.

Table 3 shows the result on verifying a mediation effect of self-compassion and gratitude tendency where subjective well-being among soldiers influences military life satisfaction. In terms of a mediation process where subjective well-being affects military life satisfaction through self-compassion, its lowest and highest values included 0 and then it was not significant. However, a single mediation effect where subjective well-being affects military life satisfaction via gratitude and the dual mediation effect as an indirect process where subjective well-being has an effect on military life satisfaction via self-compassion and gratitude were significant. Figure.2 illustrates the final model of this study based on these results.

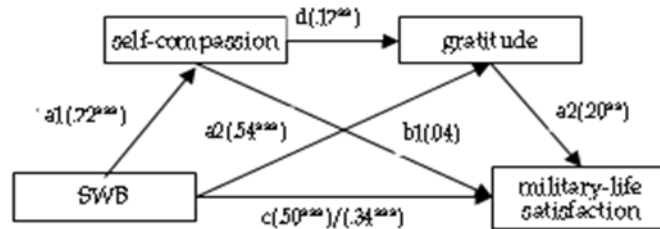


Figure. 2 Research Model Effect

4. Conclusion

This study aimed at finding out the mediation effect of self-compassion and gratitude under the influence where soldier's happiness affects military life satisfaction.

Analysis results and discussion are as follows:

Firstly, soldier's happiness has a direct effect on military life satisfaction. This result correlates with the advanced research which illustrates that happiness has a positive effect on life [1]. It is confirmed that the advanced study can be applied to the military. Therefore, it is recommended to introduce political and practical measures with the aim of enhancing soldiers' happiness in order to help their successful military lives.

Secondly, with regard to the relations among soldiers' happiness, self-compassion and military life satisfaction, happiness has a positive effect on self-compassion and military life satisfaction. However, self-compassion does not have a direct effect on military life satisfaction. Thirdly, happy soldiers recognize the benefits from others and then are satisfied with their military life with gratitude. This result is in line with the preceding research that the gratitude-mediation program helps to form a good relationship with others, to enhance optimism in life and to improve the meaning in hope and life. Lastly, this study found out dual mediating and partial mediation effects where soldiers' happiness affects military life satisfaction via self-compassion and gratitude. Happier soldiers are less harsh to them and have self-compassion while recognizing failure. Through this self-compassion, they get the attitude of gratitude and then they can well adapt to military life.

In conclusion, this study suggests the need for seeking ways to promote the environments and culture of happiness in the military. Furthermore, it also suggests the need for introducing the training of self-compassion mindfulness and positivity-mediating programs such as keeping a gratitude journal to promote satisfaction in the military where stress symptoms and the issue of personal relations take place.

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