

Influence of Human Rights Victimization on Happiness of College Students: Mediating Effect of Self-esteem and grit

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Abstract

Background/Objectives: Our purpose in this study was to verify the mediating effect of self-esteem and grit in the link between human rights victimization and happiness. **Methods/Statistical analysis:** A sample of 233 students was purposively recruited from two universities in South Korea. SPSS PC + Win. Ver.25 and PROCESS macro Ver.3.5 were used for data analysis. Frequency analysis, reliability analysis, correlation analysis and multiple mediating effect analysis were performed. **Findings:** Results were as follows. First, human rights victimization had a significant negative effect on happiness, self-esteem and grit. Grit had a positive correlation between self-esteem and happiness. Second, self-esteem and grit mediated in the link between human rights victimization and happiness. This study can be applied as a new model to prevent college students from human rights victimization. **Improvements/Applications:** Our findings also demonstrated that self-esteem and grit are useful buffers to happy individuals.

Keyword

Grit, Happiness, Human right victimization, Macro process, Mediating effect, Self-esteem

I. INTRODUCTION

Human rights is defined as the rights inherent to all

human beings, regardless of nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, race, religion, language, or any other status [1].

The Human right gives a sense of freedom to live

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in a society without any victimization [1]. According to the United Nations conceptual analysis, these rights are fundamental and are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible, whether they are civil and political rights, such as the right to life, equality before the law and freedom of expression; economic, social and cultural rights, such as the rights to work, social security and education, or collective rights, such as the rights to development and self-determination. Therefore, the improvement of one right facilitates advancement of the other. Likewise, the deprivation of one's right adversely affects the others.

The conception of human right victimization is of universal concern because it has a human psychological effect and development. Thus, victimization is central in the influence of psychological disturbance in human growth and development [2].

In an apparent circumstance, personal achievements brings happiness in individual life but this aspect could be stalled by experience of human rights victimization, and however, a person who is passing through rights victimization believes that through hard work, perseverance and consistency could lead to happiness at the end [3]. Moreover, people who are confined within the system of rights abuses are tend to have depressive symptoms and personal instability which prevent them from attaining success and pursuit of happiness.

In the context of personal motivation, persons despite circumstances could achieve more in life with strong grit desire [4]. Hence, grit is determination and perseverance towards a long term goal which requires working spiritedly and vigorously towards challenges, maintaining constant effort and interest over years despite some disappointments, adversity, and hindrances.

Individuals who have a strong grit continue to progress to the end which makes them successful [5]. Lee et al. [5] study portrays that human rights victimization had an effect on grit and then grit had an effect on happiness. Therefore, grit has a mediating relationship between human rights victimization and happiness of an individual.

Likewise, self-esteem which is an indicator of psychological wellbeing is defined as personal value such as self-respect, and worthiness [6]. Self-esteem is an important element of successful psychological development in terms of achievement of ego-identity status.

In the study of Park and Lee [7], human rights victimization reduces self-esteem, which means that discrimination or right abuses can affect the mental status of the victimized person and thereby decreases

the person's ego and such a person would remain unhappy in life. In addition, one could say that those with high self-esteem have self-control and remain stable compared to those who do not have high self-esteem [8].

Consequently, individuals with high self-esteem are more likely to dispel negative criticisms than individuals with low self-esteem as a result of their rights violations [9]. Thus, self-esteem also has a mediating effect on human rights victimization experience and happiness.

Therefore our purpose in this study was to determine if self-esteem and grit mediate in the association between human rights victimization and happiness.

In order to accomplish the purpose of this study, the following research questions were addressed; First, what are the correlations between the variables? Second, does self-esteem and grit mediate in the link between human rights victimization and happiness?

II. METHODS

A. Research model

The research model for this article is on figure 1. Based on the previous article, the proposed research model is that: human rights victimization would negatively predict happiness while self-esteem and grit would positively predict happiness because a person with a higher self-esteem and grit will experience higher happiness.

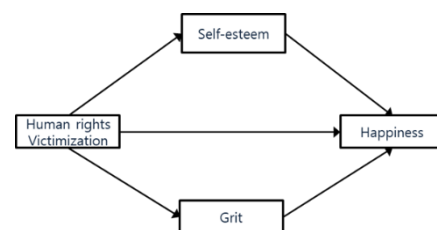


Fig. 1. Research model

B. Participants

A total of 233 University students took part in the survey and were selected using the purposive sampling. Their Universities were located in the Southern city of Chungcheongnam province and in Mupo city, Jeonnam province in South Korea.

A total of 149 females representing (63.9%) and 84 males, representing (36.1%) participated in the survey with an average mean age of 22.6 ranging from between 19-30 years.

Of these 233 students, 106 of them lived in the metropolitan city, representing 45.5% while 88 students representing 37.8% are in urban city. The

remaining 39 students of 16.7% live in the rural area.

C. Research Tools

Human rights victimization

The scale developed by National Human Rights Commission in 2014 was used. The original scale had 25 questions about victimization and discrimination. Of these 25 questions, 15 items suitable for University students were used in this study.

Each question was measured in a 5-point Likert scale. Higher scores indicate higher human rights victimization. In this study, the reliability of human rights victimization scale used in this study was high with Cronbach’s α value of 0.935.

Self-esteem

To measure self-esteem, the scale developed by Rosenberg [10] was used in this study. The scale consisted of 10 items, positive or negative.

Each item was measured with a 5-point Likert scale. Higher scores indicate greater self-esteem. The reliability of self-esteem scale used in this study was good with Cronbach’s α value of 0.854.

Grit

The grit (Grit-O) scale developed by Duckworth & Quinn [4] was employed in this study with the sub-areas for the scale involving consistency of interest and persistence of effort directly related to grit.

The scale has 12 questions in total. The measurements are recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, and the higher the score was an indication of higher level of grit. Cronbach’s α value for grit reliability was 0.835.

Happiness

The shortened happiness scale developed by Seo et al. [11] was used in this study. It consists of three items in measuring the satisfaction of individual aspects (personal accomplishment, personality, health, etc.), relational aspects (such as relationships with others), and collective aspects (my group workplace, community, etc.).

These three items were measured in a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “not at all” (1 point) to “very much” (7 points). In addition, six questions about feelings during the past one month were asked.

They were also evaluated with a 7- point Likert scale ranging from ‘not agree at all’ (1 point) to ‘agree very much’ (7 points). The higher the score the higher the level of happiness. The reliability of the happiness scale used in this study had a Cronbach’s value of 0.808.

D. Data analysis

SPSS PC + Window Ver. 25 and SPSS PROCESS

macro Ver. 3.5 proposed by Hayes [12] were used for data analysis. Frequency analysis, reliability analysis, and double mediating effect analysis were performed. Bootstrap method was used to determine the mediating effect.

III. RESULTS

A. Correlation and descriptive statistics

Table 1 shows the results of Pearson correlation analysis and descriptive statistics. There was a significant correlation between all variables. Grit had a positive correlation between self-esteem and happiness. Self-esteem had a negative correlation with human rights victimization and a positive correlation with happiness.

Human rights victimization had a negative correlation with happiness. The correlation coefficient between self-esteem and happiness was the highest at $r=.654$ ($p<.01$), followed by the correlation coefficient between self-esteem and human rights victimization, $r=-.452$ ($p<.01$).

As a result of the frequency analysis, the average of happiness was $M=4.5225$, which was high, and the self-esteem and grit exceeded the median value. And human rights victimization was $M=2.0616$, which was lower than the median value.

TABLE 1. CORRELATION ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

	1	2	3	4
1. Grit	1			
2. Self-esteem	.404**	1		
3. Human rights victimization	-.170**	-.452**	1	
4. Happiness	.481**	.654**	-.362**	1
M	3.1398	3.4773	2.0616	4.5225
SD	.49678	.57224	.73486	.90729

** $p<.01$

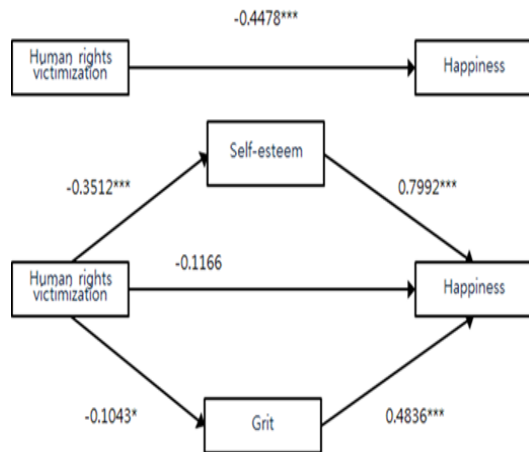
B. Multiple mediating effects of self-esteem and grit

As a result of analysis of each path coefficient, human rights victimization had a significant negative effect on self-esteem (-0.3512 , $p <.001$), and grit (-0.1043 , $p <.05$), but had no significant effect on happiness (-0.1166 , $p > .05$). Self-esteem (0.7992 , $p <.001$) and grit (0.4836 , $p <.001$) had a significant

positive effect on happiness.

In addition, the total effect of the path from human rights victimization to happiness was -0.4478 ($p < .001$), but the direct effect of the path from human rights victimization to happiness decreased to -0.1166 ($p > .05$) when grit and hope were put into as mediating variables.

This means that grit and hope perfectly mediate in the link between human rights victimization and happiness.



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

Fig. 2. The mediating effect of self-esteem and grit

C. Verification of mediating effect

Table 3 shows the results of the bootstrap analysis to verify the indirect effect of self-esteem and grit. The indirect effect of self-esteem, -0.2807 , was significant because it did not include 0 under 95% confidence level in 5,000 corrected bootstrap samples.

In addition, the indirect effect of grit, -0.0504 , is within the interval from -0.1019 to -0.0148 , and was significant because it did not include 0 within 95% confidence level in 5,000 corrected bootstrap samples. Therefore, indirect effects of self-esteem and grit were all significant.

On the other hand, the difference in indirect effect (C1) between self-esteem and grit was not significant.

Table 2. INDIRECT EFFECT OF SELF-ESTEEM AND GRIT

Classification	Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Total	-.3312	.0606	-.4622	-.2235
Self-esteem	-.2807	.0538	-.3966	-.1882
Grit	-.0504	.0219	-.1019	-.0148
(C1): Self-esteem minus Grit	-.2303	.0554	-.3478	-.1334

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Our purpose in this study was to determine if self-esteem and grit mediate in the association between human rights victimization and happiness. The discussion and conclusions based on the results of this study are as follows.

As a result of correlation analysis, human right victimization showed negative correlation with grit, self-esteem, and happiness. On the other hand, positive psychology-related variables such as grit, self-esteem, and happiness showed a positive correlation each other.

These results suggest that experiencing human right victimization lowers the level of grit, self-esteem, and happiness of college students, and can lead to extreme life choices such as depression or suicide. Therefore, human rights education for potential perpetrators and victims should be preceded so that university students do not experience human right victimization.

As a result of the double mediating effect analysis, self-esteem and grit double mediated in the link between human right victimization and happiness. This result was in context with the results that university students' grit mediates in the link between employment stress and well-being [13], and that in a study of adults grit mediated in the association between authentic leadership and organizational effectiveness [14].

These findings were found to lower the happiness when college students experienced human right victimization (direct effect= $-.4478$, $p < .001$). However, the effects of human right victimization on happiness after self-esteem and grit mediators were entered were not significant.

Human right victimization rather influenced happiness through two mediators. Therefore, even if college students experience human right victimization, it is predicted to maintain the level of happiness if they improve their self-esteem and grit.

In addition, it is necessary to develop and implement programs to improve self-esteem and grit for college students in case of emergency.

However, self-esteem and grit could not completely offset the negative effects of human right victimization on happiness. Therefore, a follow-up study is needed to find a way to maintain the level of happiness by inputting other mediators.

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