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FACTORS AFFECTING KOREAN MILITARY CADETS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS DIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify the significant factors affecting the Korean military cadets' attitude towards diversity. Two hundred twenty-one (221) military cadets of Korea Army Academy at Yoengchoen (KAAY) were sampled from the Cadets' Corps and completed a battery of questionnaires from May 23, 2018, to June 2, 2018. The multiple regression results revealed that the experience of multicultural education at pre-transfer college had significant effects on the Korean military cadets' attitude toward diversity. Furthermore, group activities and interactions with civilians in the military academy demonstrate the most significant effects on Korean military cadets' attitudes toward diversity. The results suggest that school administrators and instructors of a military academy should consider offering formal classes on diversity of military cadets. Encouraging the cadets to participate in various activities to deepen the understating for diverse members and to continue to communicate with civilians is strongly needed.

Contribution/Originality: This study is one of very few studies which have investigated the Korean Military Cadets' attitude. It is a pioneering study to have introduced the variables like gender orientation and parental's influence on the attitude towards diversity.

1. INTRODUCTION

A military organization is a melting pot in which members of diverse gender identity, educational background, socioeconomic status, and political inclinations unite together to accomplish common missions. Because members of an organization often experience conflicts due to their different backgrounds, a positive attitude toward diversity and inclusiveness of a group are crucial for harmonious cooperation (Harris, 2017). The Korean army, especially, has more than half a million members whose diversity is growing more and more in terms of religion, sexual orientation, educational background, and ethnicity.

Diversity has been defined as having different attributes, experiences, and backgrounds of soldiers, civilians and family members that enhance global capabilities and strength (Department of the US Army, 2016; Fanning, 2016). Leaders' attitude toward diversity in an organization plays a substantial role for creativity, cooperation, and productivity (Buttner, Lowe, & Billings-Harris, 2007). Salazar, Feitosa, and Salas (2017) reported that leaders with

higher acceptance of diversity gain more productivity and trust from their subordinates than their counterparts with lower perception. The leaders with higher perception of diversity tend to work for their members with more consideration of racial, religious and gender orientation and to gain voluntary devotion from their subordinates. Leaders with lower awareness of diversity, on the contrary, tend to hurt their self-esteem by neglecting their members' personal background (Takayama, Kaplan, & Cook-Sather, 2017).

Military cadets are being trained to become commissioned military officers and serve the army in various branches and areas. As they would command private soldiers in the basic units, they need to have a strong influence on their subordinates' welfare and morale. Continuous globalization and a growing percentage of non-native immigrants have made forces increasingly diverse in terms of nationalities, religious beliefs, and cultural tendencies (Rosenauer, Homan, Christiane, & Voelpel, 2015). This means military leaders must have cognitive, affective, and behavioral readiness for handling diversities in the organization. So far, the issue of military cadet's attitudes toward diversity, has not been studied in Korean context. This study, therefore, intends to identify facilitating factors affecting the Korean military cadets' attitude towards diversity. The research question formulated for this study is: what is the significant factor affecting the Korean military cadets' attitude towards cultural diversity?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Parental Influences

Parental influence is one of the key factors for an individual to form his or her attitude towards other people or groups (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). People tend to accept their parents' inclination of political, economic, social, and cultural matters when they are in toddler, youth, and adolescent ages. Parenting style affects children's interpretation of social norms and helps them to develop their value system (Nilsson, 2000). Children of aggressive or repressive parents tend to develop negative and exclusive viewpoints for other people while on the contrary the counterparts of democratic and generous parents incline to have receptive and open posture towards heterogeneous groups or persons (Schaffer, Clark, & Jeglic, 2009).

In Piaget's developmental theory, hypothetical reasoning and abstract thinking start from adolescence (Berk & Myers, 2016). If parents make judgment on a specific group of people with respect to their political, economic, social, or cultural affiliation, their children tend to agree with that evaluation without objection. Adolescents, however, who have had the opportunity of adequate communication and emphatic understanding, will demonstrate a higher level of susceptive attitude toward diversity (Bowman & Brandenberger, 2012). Booth-Butterfield and Sidelinger (2009) reported that family communication type, parental style, and socio-economic status have a significant influence on children's openness to other people.

2.2. Influence of Educational Experience

Researchers have reported that a person's educational experience in-and-out-of school has a strong influence on the attitude towards political, economic, social, and cultural issues. For instance, Koukounaras-Liagis (2011) reports that multicultural education program in the secondary education course significantly enhances adolescent students' understanding and positive attitude toward ethically, religiously different groups. College education courses on cultural diversity also have positive effects on undergraduate students' openness to other ethnic, religious, and cultural groups. Enyeart-Smith, Wessel, and Polacek (2017) demonstrate longitudinal effects of collegiate multicultural education and they find that college graduates who took multiculturalism course have demonstrated higher competency in working in multicultural situations and in dealing with social conflicts in their working processes.

Previous research indicates that although the family influence is large on children's development of social viewpoint toward others, education also exerts a great impact on their belief system. Students in high schools and colleges still have more room to change their attitude to diversity by the influence of education because they are old

enough to develop their independent value system (Whitbourne, Sneed, & Sayer, 2009). For example, curriculum plays a central role in college students' thinking on diversity-related issues as students who have taken culture and diversity courses tend to understand out-groups more easily (Hogan & Mallott, 2005) while less educated people are more likely to develop negative feelings toward people who are culturally different (Vollebergh, Iedema, & Raaijmakers, 2001). Another study conducted by Hogan and Mallott (2005) indicate that college courses on diversity reduce college students' racial prejudices and gender discrimination.

Students' interaction with peers at colleges allows them to positively understand culturally and religiously different groups (Keehn, 2015). The college students were asked about their personal experiences in culturally diverse groups and how much those experiences affected their attitude toward heterogeneous groups. Most of the survey respondents agreed that they are more likely to empathize with heterogeneous groups of people if they listen to their personal stories. In another study, college students who have more diverse experiences with ethnically, religiously, culturally different groups are also found to show higher satisfaction with college education (Bowman & Denson, 2012). Saenz (2010) also found out that college students who have increased interaction with ethnically, culturally, and religiously diverse groups demonstrate higher academic performance and leadership efficacy. The study found out that college students who have more interaction with diverse groups are able to expand and apply their knowledge in creative ways.

Overall, the body of research literature on educational influence on the attitude towards diversity shows a positive impact of college learning on attitude towards diversity. Colleges with limited racial diversity could compensate their shortages with more instructional courses on cultural diversity and that may broaden the students' views.

2.3. Diversity in Military and Leader's Role

Diversity in military is inevitable because it is ethnically, religiously, sexually, and culturally diverse (Segal, 1999). In the US, the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, the Congress had mandated the creation of a Military Leadership Diversity Commission (MLDC) tasked with conducting "a comprehensive evaluation and assessment of policies that provide opportunities for the promotion and advancement of minority members of the Armed Forces, including minority members who are senior officers."(Kamarck, 2017).

The Congress reaffirmed a commitment to maintaining a diverse military stating:

Diversity contributes to the strength of the Armed Forces. It is the sense of Congress that the United States should— (1) continue to recognize and promote diversity in the Armed Forces; and (2) honor those from all diverse backgrounds and religious traditions who have made sacrifices in serving the United States through the Armed Forces.

The diversity in the military, however, has been argued that it has double-dimensional to the army in the beneficiary or harmful effect (O'Brien & Gilbert, 2013). Richard and Miller (2013) reported that diversity in gender, culture, and ethnic composition enhanced the creativity and group problem-solving ability.

The handling of diversity by a leader is another critical factor to utilize the positivity emitted from diversity because if a leader in a larger group fails to understand the group or individual differences, the group members will be marginalized within the organization and then they tend to show less involvement and negativity might lead to less group productivity. A leader and his or her members' open attitude toward diversity also imbue creativity and cohesion in an organization in a positive way but, if the leader fails to harmoniously deal with heterogeneous members in the group, the diversity may degrade the group effectiveness.

The direct effects of diversity on group performance and effectiveness however still have disputable issues. Many researchers agree that a leaders' ability in using diverse workforce plays a decisive role in group performance. Therefore, recent diversity management philosophies focus on building organizational culture and policies to better attract a diverse workforce and to accommodate career development for employees with different backgrounds (Ferguson & Porter, 2013). The U.S. Army leadership also tries to include more minority groups to enlist in the

officer corps. Hence, the race and ethnic representation in the active duty and selected reserve is almost proportional to the real U.S. population.

The Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) also expects to increase the ethnic variety as marriages with migrant have increased. The total number of immigrant marriages were 25,182 in 2001, but it rapidly increased to 152,374 in 2016 (Kim, 2016). As a result, enlisted army men from a multicultural family also increased from 52 in 2010 to 404 in 2015 and the estimated enlisted army men will be more than 9,000 after 2027 (Republic of Korea Ministry of National Defnse, 2014). These statistics reveal that military leaders ought to be equipped with multicultural sensitivity.

The variety in gender, religion, and sexual orientation has challenged both the U.S. and the Korean Army. In the U.S. Army, the proportion of female enlisted as officers to the total military manpower is almost 34%. Furthermore, according to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1994, the US Congress allowed women to serve as permanent crew on combat vessels and did not enact restrictions on women's assignment on combat aircrafts. It took more than 40 years even for the U.S. Armed Force to allow female personnel occupying 30% of total military manpower. Female manpower has also been increasing in ROKA every year. Currently, female officers occupy 5.5% (about 10,000) of the total military personnel and they will increase up to 8.8% (about 17,000) in 2020. Even so, the U.S. Army had not allowed the female personnel to be assigned to a ground combat unit until 2013. On December 3, 2015, Secretary of Defense Carter ordered the military to open all combat jobs to women with no exceptions. This most recent policy change followed extensive studies on issues such as unit cohesion, women's health, equipment, facility modifications, propensity to serve, and international experiences with women in combat (Kamarck, 2017). Following this development, the Republic of Korea Defense Ministry also announced that they will abolish all restrictions on female officer's assignment into the Frontline area (Ministry of National Defense, 2018). Therefore, military leaders need to have knowledge and an open attitude toward gender equality and inclusion.

The review of the literature above indicates three points: First, the parental style has a strong influence on children's attitudes toward diversity. Second, educational experiences, especially in high school and college also play important roles in the development of value systems during the adolescent period. Third, diversity is beneficial to organizational productivity if a leader is capable to effectively use the energy of a diverse population. A good example is set by the military where leaders have understood the need to recognize their diverse population.

3. HYPOTHESIS

Based on the literature review, three research hypotheses are addressed:

H^1 *Parental style will significantly affect the Korean military cadets' attitudes toward diversity.*

H^2 *The educational experiences of pre-admission will significantly affect Korean military cadets' attitudes toward diversity.*

H^3 *Educational experiences in the military academy will significantly affect Korean military cadets' attitudes toward diversity.*

4. METHODS

4.1. Participants

There were 221 participants of this study comprising both junior and senior military cadets of Korea Army Academy at Yeongcheon (KAAY). The senior cadets were admitted to the institution in 2017 and have been educated for almost 2 years while junior cadets were admitted in 2018 and have one year education. The participants' demographic characteristics are summarized in Table 1.

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Table-1. Demographic characteristics of survey respondents (N=221).

Academic Year		Sex		Pre-Transfer College		Religion	
Junior	50(22.6%)	Male	201(90.9%)	4-year institution	149(67.4%)	Yes	151(68.3%)
Senior	171(77.4%)	Female	20(9.1%)	Junior college	72(32.6%)	No	70(31.7%)

As Table 1 demonstrates, 22.6% of the respondents were junior, 77.4% of the respondents were senior cadets; 90.9% of whom were male, and 9.1% of them were female cadets. The cadets of KAAY normally transfer to the institution after they have completed at least 2-academic years from a 4-year university undergraduate program or a junior college. Of the total respondents, 67.4% were from the 4-year university programs while 32.6% of them were from junior colleges.

3.2. Measures

Four scales were employed in this study: Attitude towards Diversity Scale (ADS), Family Influence Scale (FIS), Educational Influence Scale (EIS), and Social Activity Influence Scale (SAIS). The ADS comprised 12 items originally developed by Montei, Adams, and Eggers (1996). The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) utilized three major factors namely (a) understanding others' identity, (b) accepting other's viewpoints, and (c) making efforts to communicate with others. Among the 12 items, 4 items were loaded to the first factor, 3 items to the second, and 5 items to the third factor. The three-factor structure was validated by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and demonstrated a decent model fit (χ^2=95.67, df=63, CFI=.92, NFI=.91, TLI=.91). The ADS showed an acceptable reliability of Cronbach's alpha. 91.

The FIS comprised 4 items measuring the parenting style of democratic or authoritative, and communication style of receptive or directive attitude. The EIS consisted of 3 items measuring the experience of multiculturalism course, extra-curricular activities, and contacting foreigners. The SAIS comprised 4 items measuring the respondents' experiences of communicating with elders, people having heterogeneous sexual orientation, foreigners, and people with heterogeneous political ideas, etc. The reliability of the measures was assessed by Cronbach's alpha coefficients and all the subscale demonstrated acceptable reliability: FIS showed Cronbach's alpha .88, EIS .89, and SAIS .90.

3.3. Survey Procedure

The participants were selected through a convenient sampling method comprising cadet officers; class of Educational Science and class of Communication. The researcher notified the participants' right to quit and received informed assent from all participants. The researcher all received the class instructors' permission to visit five classes from May 28, 2018 to May 30, 2018 and participate in survey responses.

3.4. Data Analyses

Multiple regression analysis was employed to test the research hypotheses. In concrete terms, two parental styles were employed as independent variables and attitudes towards diversity as a dependent variable to test the first hypothesis. The first regression model served as a baseline model for subsequent analyses. Second, the variables of educational experience were employed as an additional independent variable over and above the baseline model. Third, variables of educational experiences were added to the independent variables in the multiple regression model and the attitudes towards diversity as a dependent variable. Fourth, the attitude towards diversity was employed as an independent variable in a simple regression model and aspiration of the job served as a dependent variable. The effect size of each regression model was assessed by the magnitude of multiple R^2 and each model's difference of R^2. The researcher mainly used SPSS 20.0 for the regression analyses and EFA, and AMOS 18.0 for CFA.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Prior to the test, all variables' descriptive statics and their correlation matrix were segregated and placed in (Table 5). All variables were in the range of mean of 3.01~4.20 and diverse thinking showed most significant correlation coefficient with diverse value ($r=.51$).

4.2. Test of the First Research Hypothesis

The results of the first multiple regression model are presented in Table 2. The standard regression analysis method was employed to measure the magnitude of each independent variable's effect on the dependent variable. Two variables representing the influence of parents served as independent variables in the standard multiple regression models.

Table-2. Results of the first regression model (Influence of Parental Style).

IV	DV	β	t	ΔR²	R²	F
Autonomous Parental Style	Attitude towards Diversity	.05	.05	.07	.07	.77
Authoritative Parental Style		-.08	-.92			

As demonstrated in Table 2, two independent variables of parental styles did not show statistically significant effect on the dependent variable. Both of the autonomous parental style ($\beta=.05$, $p>.05$) and authoritative parental style ($\beta=-.08$, $p>.05$) were not statistically significant. Based on the above results, the first research hypothesis was not statistically supported.

4.3. Test of the Second Research Hypothesis

The results of the second multiple regression model are presented in Table 4, and this model hypothesized the effect of college education on diversity. The standard regression analysis method was employed to measure the magnitude of each independent variable's effect on the dependent variable over and above the parental influence variables.

Table-3. Results of the second regression model (Influence of College Experience).

	IV	DV	β	t	ΔR²	R²	F
Pre-transfer College Experience	Multicultural Education	Attitude towards Diversity	.17	2.40*	.03	.10	2.69*
	Experience in foreign countries		.09	1.22			
	Interaction with foreigners		.02	.21			
Parental Style	Autonomous Parental Style		.02	.32	.07		
	Authoritative Parental Style		-.06	-.17			

Note: *$p<.05$.

As demonstrated in Table 3, only one independent variable (multicultural education) among the three variables representing pre-transfer college experiences had statistically significant effect on the dependent variable over and above the family influence. Among the three additional independent variables of college experiences, multicultural education ($\beta=.17$, $p<.05$) demonstrated significantly positive effect. However, experience in foreign countries ($\beta=.09$, $p>.05$) and interaction with foreigners ($\beta=.02$, $p>.05$) did not show significant effect on the attitude towards diversity. The second regression model was statistically significant ($F=2.69$, $p<.05$) and accounted for 10% of the variance in the dependent variable. The result means the second model additionally accounted for 3% of the variance in the dependent variable over and above the first regression model. Based on the above results, the second research hypothesis was partially supported.

4.4. Test of the Third Research Hypothesis

The results of the third multiple regression model are presented in Table 4, and this model hypothesized the effect of military academy experiences on diversity. The standard regression analysis method was employed to measure the magnitude of each independent variable's effect on the dependent variable over and above the family influence variables.

Table-4. Results of the third regression model(Influence of military academy experiences).

Classification	IV	DV	β	t	ΔR^2	R^2	F
Military Academy Experiences	Study Group Activities	Attitude toward Diversity	.25	3.52**	.17	.22	5.74***
	Interaction with officers		.07	.59			
	Autonomous Activities		.23	.30			
	Interaction with Civilians		.31	3.84***			
Pre-transfer Experiences	Multicultural Education		.16	2.28*	.05		

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

As demonstrated in Table 4, only two independent variables (study group activities and interaction with civilians) representing military academy experiences influence had statistically significant effect on the dependent variable over and above the second regression model. The two additional independent variables of military academy experiences, study group activities (β=.25, p<.01) and interaction with civilians (β=.31, p<.001) demonstrated significantly positive effect over and above the college experiences and family influence. The third regression model was statistically significant (F=5.74, p<.001), accounted for 22% of the variance in the dependent variable, implying that the third model additionally accounted for 17% of the variance in the dependent variable over and above the second regression model. Based on the above results, the third research hypothesis was statistically supported.

5. DISCUSSION

The first hypothesis was not statistically supported. Among the family-related variables, autonomous parental style or authoritative parental style did not show significant effect on the Korean military cadets' attitude towards diversity. This result is inconsistent with the previous study reported by Darling and Steinberg (1993) that parental style had positive effect on children's social and psychological development. Mensah and Kuranchie (2013) also claimed that children had more critical and defensive attitude under authoritative parental style while autonomous parental style enabled children to hold more receptive attitude to others. In this study, however, those two types of parental style were not significant, which suggested that Korean military cadets may have already developed socio-psychological viewpoint toward heterogeneous groups independent from their parents. Those contrasting results could be understood by Dewey's (1959) theory of social development that daily experiences are valuable for change of cognitive and psychological understanding. Although parental style is known to have a strong influence on children's attitudes toward others, the effect gradually decreased as children internalize and interpret their new experiences independently from their parents.

The results also indicated that the educational experiences functioned as an instrument which is used to change the college students' cognitive and psychological development. Chickering (2010) insisted that college education promotes students to have higher level of awareness to social justice as well as responsibility. Among the pre-transfer college experiences, multicultural education turned out to uniquely contribute to enhance the Korean military cadets' attitude toward diversity. The result is strongly supported by many previous studies (Moroye, 2017; Pagani, Robustelli, & Martinelli, 2011; Rios & Wynn, 2016). There is an agreement among these studies that school is a natural context to absorb political, ethnic, religious, cultural, and gender diversity. Moroye (2017) reported that students and teachers reciprocally reformulate their interpretations of daily experience and instructors in higher education are responsible to foster the productive interactions.

Interactions with civilians demonstrated most significant effect on the Korean military cadets' attitude toward diversity. This result has valuable implications for educational system of military academies in Korea as the military cadets are prospective leaders in the military units and their attitude towards diversity may play a decisive role to maximize the military personnel's involvement and cooperation.

6. CONCLUSION

Encouraging the cadets to participate in various activities to deepen the understating for diverse members and to continue to communicate with civilians is strongly needed. Extracurricular activities and study groups are productive gateways for the military cadets to contact diverse ideas and views to various issues. They could develop productive postures to diversity in a group and ways to cooperate with such groups. As the Korean society becomes more and more diverse in the context of ethnic, cultural, political composition, and gender orientation, the military personnel also became diverse. The military cadets, therefore, must prepare themselves to develop psychological and social readiness for diverse subordinates. This study suggests that school administrators and instructors of a military academy should consider offering formal classes on diversity of military cadets.

Although this study is a pioneering attempt to empirically investigate the factors affecting the Korean military cadets' attitude toward diversity, it has some limitations: First, the results of this study can be applied only to the KAAY because it is the only institution as a transfer military academy. Second, this study used self-report questionnaires responded by relatively small sample. It is known that the self-report measure is vulnerable to contamination of social desirability. Therefore, in future studies, researchers need to solicit other military academies and use mixed data of self-report measures and observational records to enhance the conclusion of the current study.

Table-5. Correlation matrix (*N*=221).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1																				
2	.51**																			
3	.29**	.42**																		
4	.37**	.35**	.27**																	
5	.25**	.22**	.19*	.31**																
6	.18*	.24**	.15	.35**	.38**															
7	.28	.29	.33	.16	.19*	.43**														
8	.02	.13	.21*	.12	.15*	.17*	.38**													
9	.34**	.41**	.17*	.13	.12	.33**	.43**	.28**												
10	.30**	.26**	.22**	.22**	.07	.18*	.35**	.24**	.26**											
11	-.26**	.39**	.26**	.29**	.13	.32**	.30**	.14	.51**	.36**										
12	.18*	.06	.24**	.06	.11	.02	.05	.01	.02	.10	-.17*									
13	.35**	.34**	.27**	.26**	.17*	.18*	.21**	.30**	.19*	.22**	.49**	-.11								
14	-.01	-.02	-.10	.07	-.02	-.21**	-.30**	-.05	-.25**	-.06	-.21**	.32**	-.47**							
15	.37**	.42**	.40**	.27**	.17*	.12	.19*	.24**	.18*	.21**	.15*	-.07	.20*	-.10						
16	.15*	.10	.19*	.20*	.16*	.10	.11	.22**	.20*	.19*	.11	.07	.13	.10	.15*					
17	.09	.05	.07	.11	.08	.04	.07	.09	.10	.29**	.27**	-.17*	.18*	.08	.18*	.22*				
18	.13*	.09	.17*	.19*	.18*	.09	.20*	.12	.17*	.09	.06	.16*	.09	.21**	.10	.09	.11			
19	.17*	.15*	.14*	.10	.15*	.18*	.10	.09	.06	.16*	.06	-.16*	.05	.06	.28**	.16*	.25**	.05		
20	.09	.07	.11	.05	.09	.10	.11	.09	.06	.07	.04	.09	.10	.09	.06	.04	.10	.04	.08	
M	4.08	4.18	4.43	3.72	3.28	3.77	4.37	4.72	4.23	4.30	4.31	3.90	3.87	3.01	3.17	3.39	3.24	3.84	3.65	3.76
SD	.78	.70	.65	1.18	1.28	.78	.89	.90	.66	.78	.74	.62	.69	..73	.46	.98	.63	.72	.77	.71

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01

Variables legacy1=diverse thinking, 2=diverse value, 3=diverse culture, 4=diverse religion, 5=diverse sexual orientation, 6=understanding gender difference, 7=understanding personality difference, 8=understanding disabled, 9=settling dispute, 10=communication with peers, 11=autonomous parenting, 12=authoritativparenting,13=experiences in foreign countries, 14=communication with foreigners, 15=multiculturalism education, 16=dating, 17=interaction with experts, 18=study group activities, 19=interaction with civilians, 20=attitude toward diversity.

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