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The relationship between human rights victimization and happiness of university students: Mediating effect of grit and Moderated mediating effect of growth mindset

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Abstract---The purpose of this study was to provide an intervention model to prevent the decrease in happiness caused by human rights victimization by analyzing the moderated mediating effect of the growth mindset on the path of human rights victimization to happiness through grit for university students. A total of 233 university students who took part in this survey were selected through purposive sampling. We did data analysis using SPSS PC + Win. Ver. 25.0 and SPSS PROCESS macro Ver. 4.0. Frequency, reliability, correlation, and moderated mediating effect analysis were applied. First, human rights victimization was negatively and significantly correlated with grit, growth mindset, and happiness. Second, the moderated mediating effect of a growth mindset on the path from human rights victimization to happiness via grit was verified. The human rights victimization of university students affects happiness through grit, and the growth mindset increases the effect of human rights victimization → grit → happiness path. This result will be used a new model to enhance happiness for university students.

Keywords---Human rights, victimization, happiness, grit, growth mindset.

Introduction

All human beings want to live a happy life. Happiness is one of the important goals of life that mankind has essentially pursued, transcending time and culture

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(Lyubomirsky & Sheldon, 2005). However, the happiness level of 19-24 year-olds in Korea is the lowest (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2017). In previous studies related to happiness, it is worth noting that human rights victimization negatively affect happiness (Lee et al., 2018) and that the human rights of adolescents affect happiness (Ramos, 2019).

In particular, adolescents are socially, emotionally, and economically weak compared to adults, and although human rights such as developmental rights and protection rights must be guaranteed, they are overlooked (Korea Youth Policy Institute, 2015). Moreover, the importance of university students' awareness of human rights is being emphasized in that they can become the subjects of the future society and can become an important factor in predicting the development of society (Kim, 2016).

In order to find a way to enhance happiness in such a situation, we intend to explore by using the growth mindset and grit, which are positive psychological variables. In order to live a happy life, one must be able to fully utilize one's strengths and achieve goals (Seligman, 2002), and there is 'grit' in this regard. Grit is the strength of the mind to continuously strive for the goal pursued no matter how difficult it is to face, and it means perseverance and passion for the long-term goal (Duckworth et al., 2007). In particular, university students are the time when they are preparing to set and realize long-term goals in life, so they should be able to achieve their goals without giving up despite adversity and hardship through grit and lead a happy life (Park et al., 2020). In addition, the growth mindset also affects the enhancement of happiness, and the higher the growth mindset of university students, the higher the sense of happiness (Lee & Hwang, 2018).

Recently, studies have been conducted on the relationship between grit and psychological factors such as happiness. Existing previous studies partially examined the relationship between human rights victimization, grit, growth mindset, and happiness, but these relationships were not comprehensively verified through a single model, and there is a limit to the fact that the roles of the major variables 'when' and 'how' are not properly identified.

The research questions for this are as follows.

First, what is the correlation between human rights victimization, grit, growth mindset, and happiness?

Second, does growth mindset moderate the mediating effect of grit in the effects of human rights victimization on happiness?

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to provide an intervention model to prevent the decrease in happiness caused by human rights victimization by analyzing the moderated mediating effect of the growth mindset on the path of human rights victimization to happiness through grit for university students.

Theoretical Background

Subsection 1 The relationship between human rights victimization and happiness

Human rights means 'the right to live like a human being' beyond a simple right, and includes the right to be respected as a human being (UNESCO Korean Commission, 2020). Specifically, human rights are natural rights that a person has from birth, and are guaranteed because he or she is a 'human' regardless of personal conditions or social environment such as race, gender, religion, etc (Yoo, 2013). Therefore, human rights are the right to be recognized for their dignity and to live like a human being, a natural right that cannot be surrendered to anyone, and an absolute right that cannot be violated (Kwon, 2006).

On the other hand, human rights victimization refers to the deprivation or restriction of basic rights and freedoms that humans deserve. Specifically, it refers to acts that discriminate or infringe on human rights protected by law or international law, not legal restrictions (Ministry of Legislation, 2021). In other words, human rights victimization is an act in which the protection of human dignity and rights is not definitively justified (Seo & Lee, 2018).

All human beings seek a happy life. In general, happiness refers to a positive emotional state in which one feels satisfaction and joy in daily life and perceives that one's life has meaning and value (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008). In addition, happiness is defined as experiencing positive emotions through immersion and control by fully utilizing one's strengths and potentials (Seligman, 2002).

Looking at the characteristics of these happy people, they maintain close relationships with family and friends, appreciate everything they have, help others first, and think optimistically about the future (Park et al., 2019). In addition, happiness enhances social and emotional intelligence as well as productivity and strengthens, and influences on people around us (Seppala, 2016). Furthermore, happy people are more flexible and creative in thinking, more productive at work, and recover more easily from adversity (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008).

Looking at the previous studies on the effect of human rights victimization on happiness, human rights victimization had a negative effect on happiness in university students (Lee et al., 2018). In addition, the relationship between human rights and happiness of adolescents was revealed in the study of the components related to the quality of life, which are the prerequisites for adolescent happiness (Moon et al., 2000), and a positive relationship in the effect of human rights activities on happiness could be confirmed (Oh & Lee, 2017). A similar study is a study on the effect of human rights victimization on life satisfaction among university students (Lee & Jang, 2020). As such, it was confirmed that human rights victimization is an important variable that affects happiness. The relationship and roles between them in the present study are to be dealt with in an integrated way.

Subsection 2 The mediating role of grit

Grit is the power of the mind to continuously strive to achieve the goal set no matter what obstacles it faces, and it means passion and persistence for the long-term goal (Duckworth et al., 2007). This is an important factor for a high level of success in any field, and it is attracting attention from the pedagogical and psychological circles as it can be changed with individual effort (Duckworth, 2016).

Looking at the study in the relationship between grit and human rights victimization, human rights victimization had a negative correlation with grit, and grit had a mediating effect in the relationship between human rights victimization and self-esteem (Lee et al., 2019). Also, the mediating effect of grit on the effect of human rights victimization on happiness (Lee & Park, 2018) and on the relationship between human rights victimization and self-esteem (Lee et al., 2017) were verified.

Existing studies that revealed the relationship between grit and happiness (Kim & Kim, 2018) show that grit has a positive effect on happiness, and people with high grit continue to immerse themselves in problem situations to improve their mind and body. The result of feeling happy from effective management was confirmed (Seo & Um, 2019). Similarly, happiness was found to have a positive effect on grit (Choi et al., 2020), and happiness had a significant positive effect on grit (Kwon & Jeong, 2019). As such, grit has a positive effect on happiness.

There are few studies analyzing the mediating effect of grit on the relationship between human rights victimization and happiness, but there have been a few studies in which grit moderates the relationship of other variables. According to previous studies, a study on the mediating effect of grit on the relationship between happiness and personality (Kim & Kim, 2019) and a study on the effect of the tendency to pursue happiness on life satisfaction through grit (Choi et al., 2020) have been found to play a mediating role. Also, regarding the effect of grit and achievement, a study on the mediating effect of grit between academic achievement satisfaction and academic enthusiasm (Kwon, 2021) and a study on the effect of social relationship on academic achievement through grit (Choi & Yoon, 2021) have been found. Next, on the relationship between adaptation to the environment and grit, a study on the mediating effect of grit on the relationship between stress and university life adaptation (Park & Woo, 2021) and grit in the relationship between mindset and university life adaptation Through the results of a study on the mediating effect of (Hong & Kim, 2021) and a study on the effect of self-esteem on the quality of life through grit (Lee & Yang, 2021) were confirmed as a mediating effect of grit. Looking at these studies, it is inferred that there is a mediating effect in the relationship between human rights victimization and happiness, and we intend to verify this.

Subsection 3 The moderating role of growth mindset

The mental framework that an individual applies based on their understanding of the environment and experience is called a 'mindset'. Among them, a growth mindset, which means a positive belief, affects many areas of life. In other words,

a growth mindset refers to a personal belief that changes in human intellectual ability are possible and can be improved through effort (Dweck, 2017). As an existing study examining the relationship between a growth mindset and human rights victimization, in a study examining the mediating effects of a growth mindset and grit, human rights victimization had a significant negative correlation with a growth mindset (Lee et al., 2017).

Looking at the results of previous studies that revealed the relationship between the growth mindset and happiness, it can be seen that the higher the growth mindset of university students, the higher the happiness (Lee & Hwang, 2018). Also, in a study of middle school students, growth mindset and self-esteem double mediate the relationship between stress and happiness (Hwang & Lee, 2018). In addition, a growth mindset for clinical nurses has a significant positive correlation with happiness (Park & Choi, 2021).

In many studies, the growth mindset is used as a predictor of success in physical health, emotional health, and academic achievement (Dweck, 2012). People with a high growth mindset see challenges as opportunities to learn, and when faced with obstacles, respond to them as part of learning (Blackwell & Trzesniewski, 2007), and create a positive combination of resources and expect positive results (Lee & Kwon, 2016). Also, in the case of a company with a high growth mindset, employee satisfaction, the degree of ownership, and the degree of willingness to take risks and innovate were high (Lee & Kim, 2019). Conversely, people with high fixed mindsets tend to fear and avoid challenges because they fear that their incompetence will become known (Dweck & Yeager, 2019).

There are few existing studies dealing with the moderating effect of the growth mindset on the relationship between human rights victimization and happiness, but similar studies include a study on the relationship between family abuse experience and school adjustment (Lee *et al.*, 2019) and on the relationship cyberbullying victimization and adolescent depression (Niu *et al.*, 2020). Also, looking at previous studies that moderate the relationship of other variables, it was found that growth mindset has a moderating effect in the effect of positive psychological capital of early childhood teachers on subjective career development success (Taek, 2020). In addition, the moderating effect of the growth mindset was confirmed in the effect of failures and difficulties encountered in academic situations on the self-esteem of university students (Gal, 2021), and the moderating effect of the growth mind set was verified in the effect of support for teacher-student relationship on grit (Kang & Lee, 2019). Looking at these previous studies, it was predicted that there would be a moderated mediating effect of the growth mindset in the relationship between human rights victimization and happiness through grit for university students.

Methods

Subsection 1 Research model

In order to verify whether grit mediates the relationship between human rights victimization and happiness, and whether the growth mindset moderates the mediating effect, a research model was presented as shown in

Figure 1 according to the analysis procedure of Model 58 of the PROCESS macro of Hayes (2017).

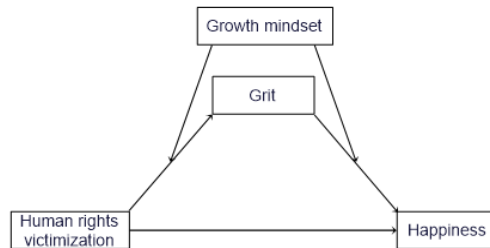


Figure 1. *Research model*

Subsection 2 Research subjects and data collection methods

A total of 233 university students who took part in this survey were selected through purposive sampling. Their universities were in Seosan city, Chungcheongnam Province and in Mupo city, Jeonnam Province in South Korea. Of these students, 149 (63.9%) were females and 84 (36.1%) were males. Their mean age was 22.6 years (range, 19 to 30 years). Of these 233 students, 106 (45.5%) lived in metropolitan city, 88 (37.8%) lived in urban city, and the rest 39 (16.7%) lived in rural area.

Subsection 3 Research tools

Human rights victimization

Human rights victimization consisted of 15 items that met the purpose of this study out of 20 items on human rights victimization and discrimination used by the Institute for Social Development at Seoul National University (2011) for the national human rights survey, and the measurement was 5 points. It was measured on the Likert scale, and the Cronbach's α reliability in this study was .935.

Grit

The grit (Grit-S) abbreviated scale developed by Duckworth and Quinn (2009) was used. The composition of the items consists of 4 items measuring the consistency of interest and 4 items measuring the persistence of effort. The higher the score, the higher the grit, and the credibility of the grit was Cronbach's α of 0.835.

Growth mindset

To measure the growth mindset, it was developed by Dweck (2006) and adapted by researchers. This scale consists of 8 items in total, 4 items measuring beliefs about changes in intelligence and 4 items measuring beliefs about personality changes. Each item is composed of a Likert 5-point scale ranging from 1 point for 'not at all' to 5 points for 'strongly agree', and a higher score means a higher growth mindset. In this study, the reliability of the growth mindset was Cronbach's α =0.798.

Happiness

For happiness, the shortened happiness scale developed by Seo Eun-guk and Koo Jae-seong (2013) was used. This scale consists of three items measuring satisfaction in individual aspects (achievement, health, personality, etc.), relational aspects (relationships with family, friends, co-workers, etc.), and group aspects (school, workplace, community, etc.); It consists of 3 positive (PE) questions and 3 negative (NE) questions asking about emotions experienced during the month, with a total of 9 questions. Each item was composed on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 point of “strongly disagree” to 7 points of “strongly agree”. A higher score means higher happiness, and the reliability of happiness in this study was Cronbach's $\alpha=0.808$.

Subsection 4 Data analysis

Data analysis is performed using SPSS PC+ Win. Ver. 25.0 and SPSS PROCESS macro Ver. 4.0 was used. For statistical analysis, frequency analysis, reliability analysis, and correlation analysis between major variables were performed using SPSS. And the mediation effect analysis was conducted using the model 58 of PROCESS macro. In addition, the bootstrap method was used to verify the moderated mediating effect, and the number of samples was designated as 5,000 and the confidence level was set at 95% during the bootstrap verification. The conditions for confirming the conditional effect were set to M and $M \pm SD$, and the independent and moderating variables were analyzed after centering the mean.

Results and Discussions

Subsection 1 Correlation and descriptive statistics between major variables

Pearson's correlation analysis was performed to understand the correlation between major variables, and the results are shown in <Table 1>. Human rights victimization is significantly correlated with grit ($r=-.197$, $p<.01$), growth mindset ($r=-.219$, $p<.01$), happiness ($r=-.362$, $p<.01$). Grit showed a positive correlation with growth mindset ($r=.210$, $p<.01$) and happiness ($r=.471$, $p<.01$), and growth mindset showed a positive correlation with happiness ($r=.342$, $p<.01$). Among them, the correlation coefficient between grit and happiness was the highest at .471 ($p<.01$), and the correlation coefficient between human rights victimization and grit was the lowest at $-.197$ ($p<.01$). Studies that human rights victimization had a negatively significant correlation with happiness (Lee *et al.*, 2018), that showed a high correlation between grit and happiness (Park & Choi, 2021), and that there is a significant correlation between a growth mindset and a sense of well-being (Lee & Hwang, 2018) support this result.

As a result of calculating the average of each variable, human rights victimization scored 2 points, which was lower than the median score, and grit, growth mindset, and happiness were higher than the median score.

Table 1
Correlation analysis and descriptive statistics of main variables

	Human rights victimization	Grit	Growth mindset	Happiness
Human rights victimization	1			
Grit	-.197**	1		
Growth mindset	-.219**	.210**	1	
Happiness	-.362**	.471**	.342**	1
M	2.0616	3.1786	3.3385	4.5225
SD	0.73486	0.51454	0.58597	0.90729

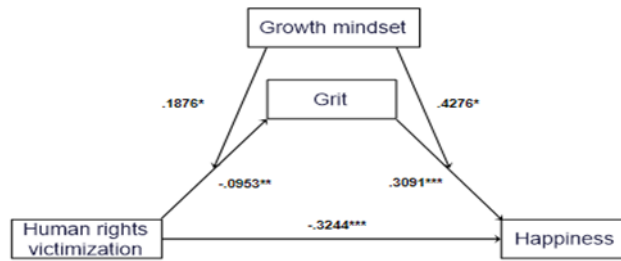
** $p < .01$

Subsection 2 The moderated mediating effect of growth mindset

In order to verify whether the growth mindset moderates the mediating effect of grit in the relationship between human rights victimization and happiness of university students, we analyzed using model 58 of the PROCESS macro proposed by Hayes (2017). Bootstrap was used to verify the moderated mediating effect, and the number of samples was designated as 5,000 and the confidence interval was 95% during the verification of the bootstrap, and the values of growth mindset, grit, and human rights victimization were averaged.

In the mediating model, the interaction term of human rights victimization and growth mindset was significant (.1876, $p < .05$), and there was a moderating effect. The conditional effect of human rights victimization of university students according to the growth mindset value was significant when the growth mindset value was low (M-1SD) and average (M), and was not significant when the growth mindset value was high. Also, looking at the conditional effect significance area of human rights victimization of university students according to the growth mindset, it was significant when the growth mindset value was lower than .0262 and was not significant when it was higher. Therefore, when the growth mindset was low, the conditional effect of human rights victimization of university students on grit was significant.

Second, looking at the model in which happiness is the dependent variable, the interaction term between grit and growth mindset was significant (.4276, $p < .05$). Looking at the conditional effects of grit according to the growth mindset, it was significant when the growth mindset value was low (M-1SD), average (M), and high (M+1SD). Also, according to the conditional effect significance area of grit according to the growth mindset, it was significant when the growth mindset value was higher than -.6952, and was not significant when it was lower than -.6952. Therefore, the effect of grit on happiness was significant when the growth mindset was high, but was not significant when the growth mindset was low.



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

Figure 2. Statistical research model

Table 2
Moderating effect of grit in moderated mediation model

Classification		Mediating variable model: Grit			Dependent variable model: Happiness		
		Coeffect	SE	t-value	Coeffect	SE B	t-value
Model Summary	R ²	.0817			.3583		
	F	6.6981***			31.4024***		
Constant		.0170	.0335	.5076	4.4965	.0496	90.6164***
Independent var.	Human rights victimization	-.0953	.0457	-2.0863*	-.3244	.0688	-4.7156***
Moderator	Growth mindset	.2049	.0620	3.3068**	.3091	.0861	3.5913***
Interaction	Human rights victimization × Growth mindset	.1876	.0840	2.2339*	-	-	-
	Grit × Growth mindset	-	-	-	.4276	.1836	2.3287*
Mediator	Grit	-	-	-	.6403	.0990	6.4703***
Conditional effect of human rights victimization at the values of growth mindset							
Growth mindset		Effect(B)	se	t-value	LLCI	ULCI	
-.5872(M-1SD)		-.2054	.0651	-3.1565**	-.3337	-.0772	
.0000(M)		-.0953	.0457	-2.0863*	-.1853	-.0053	
.5872(M+SD)		.0148	.0693	.2139	-.1217	.1513	
Johnson-Neyman's significance region of conditional effect							
Growth mindset		% below			% above		

.0262		55.2174		44.7826	
Growth mindset	Effect(B)	se	t-value	LLCI	ULCI
-1.7120	-.4164	.1481	-2.8121**	-.7082	-.1246
⋮					
-.0245	-.0999	.0456	-2.1907*	-.1898	-.0100
.0262	-.0904	.0459	-1.9705*	-.1808	.0000
.1443	.0682	.0480	-1.4222	-.1628	.0263
⋮					
1.6630	.2166	.1496	1.4479	-.0782	.5114
Conditional effect of human rights victimization at the values of growth mindset					
Growth mindset	Effect(B)	se	t-value	LLCI	ULCI
-.5872(M-1SD)	.3892	.1580	2.4631*	.0778	.7006
.0000(M)	.6403	.0990	6.4703***	.4453	.8352
.5872M+SD)	.8913	.1336	6.6699***	.6280	1.1546
Johnson-Neyman's significance region of conditional effect					
Growth mindset		% below		% above	
-.6952		8.2609		91.7391	
Growth mindsett	Effect(B)	se	t-value	LLCI	ULCI
-1.7120	-.0917	.3449	-.2659	-.7714	.5879
⋮					
-.6995	.3430	.1747	1.9530	-.0031	.6854
-.6952	.3430	.1741	1.9706	.0000	.6860
-.5307	.4133	.1500	2.7556**	.1178	.7089
⋮					
1.6630	1.3513	.3049	4.4323***	.7505	1.9521

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

The moderating effect of the growth mindset has been verified, and the results of analyzing the slope by graphing it are shown in Figures 3 and 4. In Figure 3, the group with a high growth mindset showed a modest increase in grit even when human rights victimization increased, but in the group with a low growth mindset, the grit decreased sharply when human rights victimization increased. Looking at Figure 4, the group with a high growth mindset showed a steep increase in happiness when the grit increased, but the group with a low growth mindset showed a gradual increase in happiness when the grit increased.

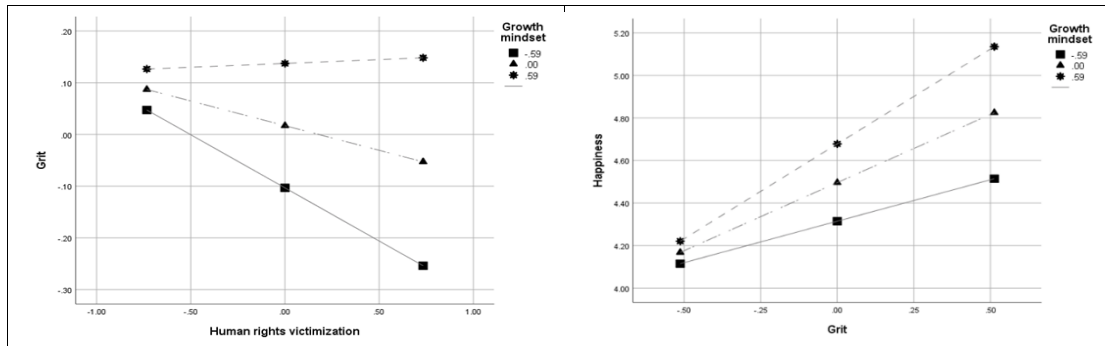


Figure 3. Moderating effect of growth mindset on the link between victimization and grit

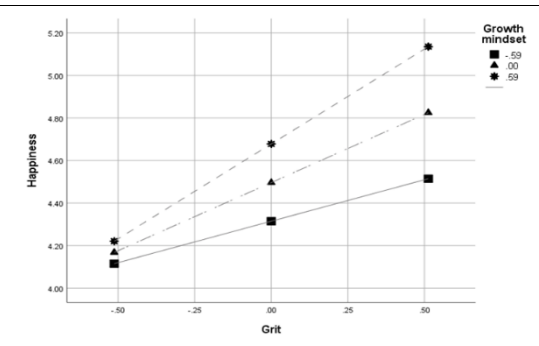


Figure 4. Moderating effect of growth mindset on the link between grit and happiness

In the effect of human rights victimization of university students on happiness through grit, the conditional indirect effect was significant when the growth mindset value was low (M-1SD) and when the value was average (M). Therefore, the moderated mediating effect of the growth mindset was verified in the effect of human rights victimization of university students on happiness through grit. This result is consistent with the results that the growth mindset played a moderating role in the effect of failures and difficulties encountered in academic situations on the self-esteem of university students (Gal, 2021), and in the effect of support for teacher-student relationship on grit (Kang & Lee, 2019).

Table 3
Direct and conditional indirect effects of human rights victimization on happiness in moderated mediation model

Direct effect of human rights victimization on happiness				
Effect(B)	se	T value	LLCI	ULCI
-.3244	.0688	-4.7156***	-.4599	-.1888
Conditional indirect effect of human rights victimization on happiness: human rights victimization → grit → happiness				
Growth mindset	Effect(B)	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
-.5872	-.0800	.0445	-.1728	-.0028
.0000	-.0610	.0322	-.1345	-.0091
.5872	.0132	.0601	-.1357	.1009

*** $p < .001$

Conclusion

The conclusions of the study are as follows

First, human rights victimization was negatively and significantly correlated with grit, growth mindset, and happiness. Second, the moderated mediating effect of a growth mindset on the path from human rights victimization to happiness via grit was verified. In other words, the human rights victimization of university students affects happiness through grit, and the growth mindset increases the effect of human rights victimization → grit → happiness path.

Suggestions for further studies focusing on the conclusion of the study are as follows.

First, this study comprehensively examined the roles of grit and growth mindset in the relationship between human rights victimization and happiness. For the further study it is necessary to develop and apply a practical happiness program using grit and growth mindset which serves as an alternative to increase happiness for university students.

Second, this study focused on mediating role of grit and moderating role of growth mindset. But it is expected that there are other variables to increase happiness like positive psychological variables. Therefore it is necessary to study other variables that can explain the relationship between human rights victimization and happiness.

Nevertheless, this study analyzes the moderated mediating effect of a growth mindset on the path to happiness of human rights victimization via grit, so it is not a dimension to reveal a causal relationship to a simple path, but rather a process to identify the process and suggest alternatives to academic research. It is meaningful in that it expanded the discussion and verified a new model for a happy life.

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