Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of this paper is to analyze the characteristics of Generation MZ in the reality of the Korean armed forces where most of the enlisted soldiers are Generation MZ, and consider the task of improving the barracks culture for them.

**Method:** Literature study and empirical data were carried out including books, academic journals, and dissertations related to the barracks culture’s improvement and generation MZ in order to analyze the justification and promotion strategy of barracks culture improvement and a barracks culture improvement plan appropriate for the characteristics of the military organization and Generation MZ.

**Results:** In order to improve the barracks culture appropriate for the characteristics of Generation MZ, the Korean armed forces need such measures as the strengthened authority and responsibility of the soldiers and allowed use of mobile phones. Furthermore, as a measure to establish military discipline, punishment for human rights, security, and negligence related issues need to be strengthened. Generation MZ lack personal experiences, and hence, group counseling ought to also be facilitated. Such policies targeting Generation MZ will be meaningful policies for the Generation Alpha who will enlist in the military in the future.

**Conclusion:** Given the nature of the Republic of Korea, which has adopted the conscription system, the military ought to be able to play the role of the last public education institution. The military ought to be able to help the Republic of Korea take a large leap toward becoming a world-class nation by recovering the hopes and dreams which Generation MZ, called the Generation of 7 Losses, lost, and developing on their own. If the military promoted barracks culture improvement can create synergies in tandem with the independent and enterprising characteristics of Generation MZ, the Republic of Korea will not only be able to take a new leap forward comparable to the miracle of the Han River, but will also become a leading nation qualified to spearhead the future of the world.

**Keywords** Barracks Culture, Military Organization, Generation MZ, Soldiers of New Generation, Soldiers’ Human Rights

1. Introduction

When it is determined that a member of an organization has failed to act in conformity with and accepted the values or norms of the organization, or when it is determined that there is an imbalance in terms of the behavioral patterns of interpersonal relationships or the organization’s environment, the relevant member would be said to be in a state of maladaptation. Most of the soldiers comprising the current military are Generation MZ[1]. Generation MZ, who live in the military as soldiers, have the consciousness that they are serving only for a certain period of time as mandatory service, and they are in conflict with the special organizational culture of
the military given numerous difficulties[2]. Most of the soldiers of Generation MZ are emotionally sensitive and fall into later phase of adolescence, which is a life cycle by which they are dissatisfied with the existing order[3]. In this psychologically unstable period, all soldiers are very likely to face psychological conflicts and maladjustment[4].

Generation MZ often have different standards of satisfaction for each individual unlike previous generations, and their acceptance of personal sacrifice for organizations is generally lower than those of the previous generations. Furthermore, since they are sensitive towards the value of fairness, military commanders and those who have to command a large number of troops at the same time control the soldiers of Generation MZ who rebel against even minor issues, and feel personal emotions which the soldiers easily resist[5]. This can lead to the barracks conflicts. Such issues make the soldiers feel difficult in military life, and at the same time, the trauma and barracks conflicts they feel are socially reproduced and negatively influences the cultural foundation of society, requiring sacrifice from the Korean society[6]. It is essential to improve the barracks culture which can help alleviate the difficulties experienced by Generation MZ, meet the needs of the increased society, and also improve the combat power of the military. Accordingly, in this study, after examining the characteristics of the Korean military organization and Generation MZ that soldiers of Generation MZ face, the present conditions of the Korean military's barracks culture are sought to be examined and improvement measures are sought to be presented.

2. Military Organization and the Characteristics of Generation MZ

2.1 Characteristics of the military organization

The purpose of the organization called military is to prevent war in advance in order to protect the people's lives and property, and respond to security threats, including war, in the event of emergency. Hence, while the structure of the military organization may resemble that of a social organization, several different characteristics can be observed. The general characteristics of the military organization can be roughly classified into four categories. These are the absoluteness of the organizational purpose, authoritative and hierarchical organization, collectivity of the organization, and the coercive and normative nature of the organization[7]. Examining each characteristic, first is the absoluteness of the organizational purpose. The military's activities are focused on protecting the people's lives and property. The military has the legal authority for the use of 'violence' for carrying out their activities to protect the people's lives and property, and unlike other organizations in society, the importance of values and norms such as loyalty, devotion, honor, and unity are emphasized. Based on such characteristics, the members of the organization are united and highly cohesive.

Second, military is an authoritative and hierarchical organization. Another characteristic of the military organization is that it maintains a strong and authoritative hierarchical order system. In the military, responsibilities and authorities are assigned according to their rank and position, and tasks to be performed are determined accordingly[8]. Hence, even if the commander, or his or her superiors die, the agency task system is clear. Furthermore, subordinates are obligated to obey orders from their superiors, and even within the same class, there is a characteristic that there is a hierarchy provided by laws and regulations.

Third is the collectivity of the organization. The members of the military organization share a sense of unity with the organization's goals, and based on which, they perceive the organization as a group, unlike other organizations of society[9]. It strengthens the sense of solidarity within the military organization and offers justification for group actions. Hence, it carries the characteristics of controlling or limiting the individuals' desires or activities.
Fourth are the organizational compulsion and normative nature. In general, organizations may be classified into compulsory organizations, normative organizations, and utilitarian organizations. A coercive organization is a type of organization where members act reluctantly because the authority of the organization originates from coercive power, whereas a normative organization is a type of organization where members participate in the organization's activities based on such normative values as honor, recognition, and respect. A utilitarian organization is an organization where the authority of the organization is exercised through rewards for actions, and is also an organization whose members have such a great desire to pursue economic rewards for themselves. The military organization has a normative character in terms of goals and values, yet carries on a coercive character in terms of command and leadership. The military organization has different characteristics from the general organization of society, and the detailed classification is illustrated as follows.

Table 1. Comparison of the characteristics of social and military organizations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Society</th>
<th>Armed forces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Individual purpose oriented</td>
<td>Common purpose oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of purpose</td>
<td>National welfare oriented</td>
<td>Social stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of activity</td>
<td>Vastness</td>
<td>Narrowness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>Active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>Equivalence</td>
<td>Absolute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life</td>
<td>Heterogeneity</td>
<td>Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal relationship</td>
<td>Horizontal relationship oriented</td>
<td>Vertical relationship oriented</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Kang JS & Chung WH. The influence of military organizational culture on organizational effectiveness Korean association for organizational studies (2019).

According to Table 1, the military organization is an organization which prioritizes organizational goals rather than individual needs, and command and control are much stronger than general social organizations, and the military members are determined by rank and position, unlike organizations in society where the relationship between superiors and subordinates is determined by academic background and age. It is characterized as an organization that forces leaders and subordinates to lead by example and sacrifice. The military is a group which exists to pursue a common purpose and satisfy the purpose of protecting the lives and property of the people. Hence, members of the organization are required to have a sense of belonging, responsibility, mission, and spirit of dedication and service to the organization.[10]

2.2. Key characteristics of generation MZ

The largest reason that the emergence of Generation MZ comes as a shock to the military organization compared to the previous generation is that it demonstrates a big change from the previous generation in the light of the existing generational change[11]. The past generations made significant efforts to adapt to the military organization, but Generation MZ seem to have difficulty assimilating into the military organization with facility. It may be said that this appearance is different from previous generations. Since they prioritize individual satisfaction rather than being conscious of the views of others, the standards of success and happiness that each individual pursues are different[12]. They question the society’s stereotypes, and if society is not what they want it to be, they try to change it. Their appearance is also different from those of the previous generations who tried to adapt to society. They believe that society can change
with their active participation. Generation MZ has a strong repulsion against the fragmentary and uniform experiences pursued by the previous generations, and are interested in pursuing special experiences that are highly sophisticated and differentiated from others[13].

The most prominently observed characteristics of Generation MZ is fairness[14]. They are particularly sensitive towards fair compensation[15]. They have an opinion that ‘it is natural for those who are well compensated to do much work.’ The reason as to why they are so sensitive towards the fairness of compensation is that, first, they have grown up in an era of economic stagnation and low growth since the currency crisis, preferring visible rewards of the present to uncertain future rewards. Second, in the midst of fierce competition, the value of fairness was the same as survival for them. This will be a feature which can be observed in the upcoming ‘Alpha generation.’ Finally, it is so because they have the experience of being able to accuse unfairness at any time online and easily gather people who agree with their opinion.

Table 2. Characteristics by generation in Korea.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification of generation</th>
<th>Generation of baby boomers</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation of millennials</th>
<th>Generation Z</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Share of population</td>
<td>28.90%</td>
<td>24.50%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>15.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of media</td>
<td>Analog centric</td>
<td>Digital migrant</td>
<td>Digital nomad</td>
<td>Digital native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tendency</td>
<td>Post war generation, ideological</td>
<td>Materialism, competitive society</td>
<td>Globalization, empiricism</td>
<td>Realism, ethics centric</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The emergence of Generation MZ is a new challenge and opportunity for many countries around the world. They have the ability to lead the consumption of others. They have the potential to become a generation which will lead the world in the future in that their ‘choices’ and ‘motivation of choice’ lead to social attention. In summary, Generation MZ are familiar with digital culture and IT devices[16]. They are very independent, optimistic, and willing to express their opinions[17]. They also have a clear tendency to act according to their judgement rather than the standards of others. They prefer bilateral communication and want to actively participate in work and tasks[18]. They are positive, have high autonomy and self-esteem, and a spirit of challenge, and have characteristics that value flexibility in thinking, social consciousness, social justice, and civic duty[19]. Above all, they are very sensitive towards the process of compensation. Hence, based on the understanding of such characteristics of Generation MZ, it is necessary to create an appropriate military culture to unlock their potential, and at the same time, achieve the purpose of military existence[20].

3. A Consideration of the Korean Armed Forces’ Barracks Culture

According to the government’s administrative affairs audit related data released in 2019, the number of inappropriate personnel for active duty service in the military increased from 1,057 in 2015 to 2,279 in 2018. Psychological maladjustment accounted for over 80% of the cause of inappropriateness for active duty service. A member of the National Assembly and the National Defense Committee, Byunggi Kim claimed that soldiers are experiencing rapid environmental changes and distress, which makes them susceptible to mental illness. At the same time, he claimed that the number of soldiers treated for mental illness in military hospitals surged from 14,661 in 2015 to 18,573 in 2018. Furthermore, a member of the National Assembly and the
National Defense Committee, Seongjoon Park claimed that over 30% of soldiers in the military are suffering from one or more mental health issues, and claimed that, “It proves the fact that the Ministry of Defense is not able to come up with measures of improvement given that mental illness of the military soldiers are deteriorating despite the status survey conducted each and every year.” The structural factors which make it difficult for the soldiers to adapt to the military have surfaced with the term ‘maladaptation’[21].

The improvement of the Korean armed forces’ barracks culture thus far may be seen as an incomplete success in numerical terms. As a result of the regular status survey, the number of barracks’ violence and barracks’ absurdity such as beating and acts of atrocity decreased, and the living conditions of soldiers, creation of conditions for self-development, and the welfare of the soldiers such as increase in sick pay enhanced due to the improvement of barracks facilities. Furthermore, the barracks management and unit management system such as the operation of the suicide and accident prevention system, operation of the interested soldier management system such as the development and operation of various inspection tools, and the improvement of the treatment system for the inappropriate for service have also been developed. Furthermore, the legal norms for human rights related protection such as the enactment of the Framework Act on Military Status and Service, and the feeling of resistance of military commanders and officers against human rights values was alleviated. However, as violations of the basic rights of soldiers such as verbal violence, invasion of privacy, private sanctions, and sexual violence still exist, it is now the time for fundamental changes and reform.

The soldiers of Generation MZ experience isolation from society and the fear towards the military organization[22]. What the soldiers enlisting in the post adolescence period ought to learn at the stage of development is to learn interpersonal skills to form new human relationships, and to be recognized by others, be inspired with courage, and redefine their self-concept. The barracks culture that the military ought to pursue is an environment where the soldiers can activate their own physical and emotional energy to indirectly express their desires and inner feelings to encourage self-exposure. The opportunity to practice self-control in such an environment reduces the risk factors that make members resist or embarrass them in the future society they will experience. The members fostered in such an appropriate environment can help to activate positive transference in society and make the whole society work as a therapeutic alliance[23]. If the military creates a holistic educational environment in a compassionate environment, the soldiers of Generation MZ could resolve the negative internal emotions of the private learning institute related culture[24][25]. Furthermore, through their self-receptive self-growth, they would be able to control the psychological pain they had in the past and their emotions that were dominated by passive emotions, thoughts, and actions. If they do, they will psychologically provide them with change and growth, and will have the opportunity to continuously grow while actively controlling their responses to external stimuli.

4. Barracks Culture’s Improvement Plan for Generation MZ

As examined earlier, the members of the military are being replaced by those of Generation MZ. Meanwhile, the bad practice of barracks in the Korean armed forces is still present, thereby forcing the members of the military to suffer.

Based on the characteristics of Generation MZ, it is necessary to create a barracks culture that does not cause inconvenience for anyone to demonstrate their combat power, and at the same time, it is necessary to change the reality where the existing barracks’s bad practices are eroding the Korean armed forces’ fighting power. It is intended to now consider such.
4.1. Permission of the use of mobile phones and the activation of anonymous reporting app

The largest characteristic of Generation MZ is that they are familiar with the use of IT devices and have such a strong dependence thereto[26]. Before enlisting in the military, most of the Generation MZ live in an environment where they could contact others online whenever they chose to do so. Hence, the situation where they are restricted in terms of the use of IT devices makes them feel a great sense of disconnection, thereby causing a great stress on themselves. Hence, just as officers freely use mobile phones, the use of mobile phones ought to be completely allowed for the soldiers. This will be a useful channel of communication for the soldiers who had to endure amidst the unreasonable barracks culture to date. This may further lead to security issues and dissatisfaction among officers over the short term, but is an issue that ought to be considered for the soldiers of Generation MZ and their human rights.

4.2. Practical improvement of the cyber knowledge information room

In the field of barracks culture of the National Defense Reform 2.0, the expansion of cyber knowledge information room has also been included. However, the cyber knowledge information room currently used by the soldiers is rarely used except for the lanterns for learning at night after the soldiers were allowed to use mobile phones on the premises. The reason as to why the soldiers do not use the cyber knowledge information room is that it is difficult to communicate smoothly with others by using the cyber knowledge information room’s personal computers. The soldiers of Generation MZ built friendships with friends and social experiences through computer games. It is at this point where games need to be allowed in the cyber knowledge room available for the soldiers. As they did before their enlistment, if the military guarantees a window through which they can naturally communicate with the world in the old way, it can help alleviate their sense of disconnection they feel from their military life and relieve the distress of military life on their own[27].

4.3. Strengthened criminal punishment related to human rights, security, and false accusation

Among the characteristics of the battlefield is uncertainty. The strict military discipline is absolutely needed in order to respond in a timely manner to situations on the battlefield which change every split second. Hence, the issue of criminal punishment for the members of the military organization for maintaining military discipline is also an issue that ought to be considered. The human rights of the soldiers are also important, but more important is the military’s purpose, the combat power. The reality is that the members of the military have avoided criminal punishment or received a lighter punishment by the determination of a compassionate commander. However, in order to establish the military discipline, it is necessary to take the measures to strengthen the penalties of the military’s Criminal Act for the human rights violations, security violations, and the acts of false accusation. This can be expected to bring about the effect of making the members of the military become aware of the military’s strictness regarding the human rights violations among the soldiers. They would be able to communicate freely, but will also be reminded of the value that ought to be respected as security. In particular, by declaring the will to strictly govern the members of the organization who reject the demands of legitimate superiors and make false submissions, it will be possible to guarantee the lawful command and measures of the commanders and officers.

4.4. Strengthened powers and responsibilities of soldiers

Soldiers have been discriminated against by and from the officers. After physical training and working hours, the officers were able to freely change their combat uniforms and wear whatever they chose to, but the soldiers could not. While the officers were able to move freely in and out of the unit, the soldiers had to form a comradeship and act to prevent accidents. Hence, the freedom to act alone has been suppressed, and the officers were free to carry their mobile
phones, but the soldiers could not. However, this reality does not match the characteristics of the soldiers of Generation MZ. The soldiers of Generation MZ prefer the organizations that are independent and the ones they can lead. The soldiers ought to also be reminded that if they do not do the right thing, they will be subjected to due punishment. This may be a way to improve the ‘organizational commitment’ of soldiers in terms of creating a culture appropriate for Generation MZ, and may also be a way to give themselves an opportunity to act as subjects in an organization called the military. This will be a necessary social experience for the inexperienced soldiers of Generation MZ.

4.5. Facilitation of group counseling

Most of the barracks conflicts arising in the Korean armed forces are derived from the culture of bullying[28]. Hence, in most cases, the units where the barracks conflict occurs are divided into a small number of assailants and victims, and a large number of bystanders. A bystander is a member who tolerates the assailant’s actions and implicitly consents to the assailant’s actions. The reason as to why they could not stop the assailant even when they knew that they were wrong is because they know empirically that they can change from the status of a bystander to the status of a victim at any time. In the Korean armed forces' barracks conflict, the victim is not a specific person. In the extreme, arrows can be aimed at anyone. Hence, the everyday anxiety of ‘tomorrow is my turn’ is making the barracks conflict deeper than ever. This means that the barracks conflict can be changed in a form that is difficult for officers to identify. Hence, the barracks conflict of the Korean armed forces cannot be resolved by separating the victim from the assailant and treating the victim’s heart. This is why a program which can treat all members is necessary[29].

Group counseling is a dynamic interpersonal process which includes conscious thoughts and actions, and therapeutic functions such as purification, mutual trust, caring, understanding, acceptance and support, with a focus on permissive reality[30]. Group counseling is a realistic group therapy program for the Korean armed forces' barracks conflict, and provides an interactive experience necessary for the soldiers who undergo the later phase of the adolescent period and who need social experience[31]. Furthermore, group counseling is an effective treatment program for the vast majority of the soldiers who experience maladaptation but are reluctant to receive treatment programs from the barracks counselors because of the stigma of individual counseling. Above all, it is economic and efficient in that many members may be influenced by the treatment program in the reality where the absolute number of the counselors specializing in the barracks life is inadequate[32].

5. Conclusion

The soldiers of Generation MZ are independent and active. However, they are not able to demonstrate their talents in an authoritative, hierarchical, and coercive organization called “military.” Since they have grown up as ‘digital natives,’ they need to have a digital environment which is the same as their living quarters. Forcing the old-fashioned analog environment for the purposes of security upon those who made friends and felt a sense of identity in a digital environment is like forcing a vegetarian diet on a carnivore. Generation MZ enlisting in the military are mostly high school graduates, and hence, if they are educated on security, they will take full advantage of their freedom. Because they are ‘digital natives,’ while they are familiar with digital as such, they also have the dark scars imposed by the Korean private learning institute’s culture. They have been exposed to excessive competition and have always had to be compared with their classmates, and they could only survive by winning the competition. Furthermore, they experienced the harsh reality of being weak and strong in the ‘bullying culture’ through the sacrifices of their friends. For this reason, for the soldiers of Generation MZ, the military
ought to provide a place of education which enables the provision of holistic education. They have grown physically, but lack the holistic skills to balance their intelligence, emotions, and will. Hence, the military ought to help them achieve growth beyond inadequacy via programs such as group counseling.

The Jaein Moon administration selected the improvement of the barracks culture among the top 100 national tasks[33]. Furthermore, in the National Defense Reform 2.0, the improvement of the barracks culture was included among the 6 largest tasks[34]. This is probably because the military and society shared the recognition that the environment where the soldiers live is directly related to the military's combat power and is also an important social issue. For such countries as the Republic of Korea which maintains the conscription system given the characteristics of the security environment, the barracks culture is an important issue which requires a national consensus as it may lay out the cultural foundation of the country. Generation MZ in Korea are called the Generation of 7 Losses, namely, the losses of employment, marriage, childbirth, house, interpersonal relationship, dream, and hope. They believe that they do not have the "privilege to work hard and achieve through dreams" which the previous generations had. However, they have the power to escape from the trap of low growth, and only they can become the protagonists of the new era of hope for the Republic of Korea. The Korean armed forces ought to operate as the last public educational institution, just as the Israeli military[35]. It ought to be a place for taking a leap forward where young adults may regain their strength and pursue dreams and hopes[36]. Generation MZ are an independent and progressive generation[37]. The same would be true if and when they perform their duties in the military. We ought to not limit and control their possibilities in the name of Generation MZ. If the human rights of the soldiers are respected, and if a barracks culture where they can act as subjects can be established, it is believed that the Generation MZ of Korea will likely become a generation capable of breaking out of the military's nest and taking a leap forward.

6. References

6.1. Journal articles


### 6.2 Books


### 6.3. Additional references


### 7. Appendix

#### 7.1. Authors contribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial name</th>
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<td>-Set of concepts ☑</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Corresponding Author*</td>
<td>JY</td>
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