Abstract

This study aims to inquiry the moral injury or some moral wounds in military situation. In addition, this research presents new approach to overcome moral injury in military war, illustrating the conflict between the performance of his mission and the damage of civilians, and a problem solution to treatment method of the moral injury. Recent research has provided compelling evidence of mental health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), related to the war-experience.

In the theoretical background, we also looked at some previous research on approaches to moral injury. Then this is going to approach to moral injury, while sharing some soldiers’ experiences attended in battles. A healing program for soldiers who are morally hurt by future wars should go beyond the existing psychological-based PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) healing program. The moral injury of each soldier should be explained in a series of moral conflicts throughout whole lives. This paper shows some soldiers real testimony of moral injury caused by war experiences are presented as cases. These cases, including Vietnam Veterans who reported killing were twice, are well-understood examples to represent the moral injury of psychological trauma related to war-experiences.

In this article, we propose a possible solution for moral injury-related psychological trauma in military based on the concept of moral injury. As a result, this research will contribute to give an implication to create a general community made by civil and military mutual understanding.

[Keywords] Moral Injury, War, Soldiers, Community, Psychological-Based PTSD

1. What is the moral Injury?

The moral injury refers to the severely damage to self-esteem that is morally worn away as a kind of wound. The level and depth is much severe than the very serious psychological injury in the face of certain situations. In other words, moral wounds are otherwise “transgressively deeply held moral beliefs and expectations”[1].

In order to clarify the concept of moral injury, it is necessary to define morality. The morality has to hold the whole concepts as follows: 1)as human being, 2)universally desirable, 3)complex competence that could be regulated by himself or herself to the situation of the problem. The moral injury is a serious self-rebuke to the outcome of moral reasoning that he or she chooses in this encountered the moral dilemma situation. Because the moral reasoning is a kind of verification of well function of human brain, moral injury is a kind of breaking the chain of moral reasoning process. In moral education, to protect the expected moral injury and to promote the moral competence, moral education teachers have tried to mobilize critical thinking. Critical
thinking is that mode of thinking about any subject, content, or problem in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully analyzing, assessing and reconstructing it. As critical thinking is self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking, it is very helpful to support and keep morality or moral competence of himself or herself.

In the midst of war, soldiers start with many moral conflicts. Individual soldiers may have anti-warism thoughts, and participate in war due to various multi-level reasons in the house. In an individual war, a soldier has a fate to determine the death of his enemy as result of his or her own duties. This fate provides an inevitable environment when individual soldiers experience a moral dilemma. This composition ultimately leads to individual soldiers being morally hurt regardless of their success or failure.

2. Approaches to Moral Injuries in Previous Studies

Previous researches generally have understood moral injury as a kind of general psychological behaviors. So the moral injury has been understood as measures to avoid PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). Moral injury has been posited to result in the re-experiencing, emotional numbing, and avoidance symptoms of PTSD[1][2]. Several studies demonstrate an association between killing in war and mental and behavioral health problems, which may be proxies for moral injury[2][3][4][5][6][7][8].

Examples of these extension lines are as follows.

• Across eras (for example Vietnam, Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield, Operation Iraqi Freedom [OIF], Operation Enduring Freedom [OEF]) those who kill in war are at greater risk for a number of mental health consequences and functional difficulties, including PTSD, after accounting for a number of demographic variables and other indicators of combat exposure[2][5].

• In returning OIF Veterans, even after controlling for combat exposure, taking another life was a significant predictor of PTSD symptoms, alcohol abuse, anger, and relationship problems[3].

• Vietnam Veterans who reported killing were twice as likely to report suicidal ideation as those who did not, even after accounting for general combat exposure, PTSD and depression diagnoses. In OIF Veterans, the relationship between killing and suicidal ideation was handled by PTSD and depression symptoms[2][5].

• Killing in war may be an important indicator of risk for developing frequent and severe PTSD symptoms. Those who endorsed killing a non-combatant or killing in the context of anger or revenge were more likely to belong to the most symptomatic PTSD class, compared to those who did not kill[2][9].

In this regard, the latest solution comes from psychological approach. It has two approaches. The first intervention is a six-session module called Impact of Killing in War (IOK), developed to augment existing EBT (Evidence-Based Treatment) or PTSD (for example, IOK is used in conjunction with existing EBT for PTSD interventions, in those who have conflict related to killing in war). Preliminary data from pilot testing demonstrated significant improvements for participants on overall psychiatric symptoms, anxiety, and depression, compared to a control group, as well as greater community involvement and increased ability to share personal thoughts/feelings with others[2][10][11].

The second treatment is Adaptive Disclosure (AD), an eight-session intervention that takes into account unique aspects of the phenomenology of military service in war in order to address difficulties such as moral injury and traumatic loss that is explicitly not addressed in EBTs[2][12].

Thus, therapeutic measures for moral wounds have proceeded as if they were surgical treatments for physical wounds. In this case, the object of treatment is limited not only to the wounded individual soldiers but also to the level
of suturing, rather than overcoming the moral wounds of individual soldiers without solving the fundamental problem.

3. A New Approach to Moral Injury

The war has many aspects like the god of Hindu Shiva. This research would like to give four examples of the psychological situation that individual soldiers could have an experience in such a war. These examples have been somewhat abridged for research purposes. The blind name was anonymously processed. The first example comes from the testimony of a veteran who fought as a communication soldier in the Korean War in 1950. This example illustrates the conflict between the performance of his mission and the damage of civilians.

• [Example 1] I was hiding in the woods for a long time, and I was worried about the comfort of a comrade-in-arms. I first had to know the current situation and it seemed to be possible that I could respond to whether or not to save him. I was afraid, but I felt that guilty would disappear a little. If I had shot them then I would have killed innocent civilians. I just recalled myself who was really ready to shoot them and who was ready to pull the trigger. The ugliness of the war seemed to regenerate within me, and I did not know what to do[13: 80-81].

This first example contains the attitude of one’s performance of duty and conflicts in peer relations. It is a story of a soldier who died soon after leaving a handwriting. And here next we have second example that can show some implications in terms of moral injury of soldiers during war.

• [Example 2] My comrades killed dozens of enemies, but they are proud of it, but I kill one person, and I am amazed at my dreams. I feel myself poor, being in the midst of my own stupidity. “Have not we already a few dozens of our brothers die? It is a shameful thing for a fellow man to kill one enemy such a hand.” However, if I reminisce about the enemy, shooting, hit, kill, check, dream, and ghost that does not exist headless, I am an innocent student until now. I can only think that I am a young man who has not been able to go to the other’s cheek once. I was born in a quiet village in the sea, sun and evergreen South Jeju 20 years ago. I spent my childhood in my dreams. I spent my youth as a boy in longing for something. My destiny who kill anyone in war is the same to anybody’s destiny[14: 94].

The protagonist in this second example can be guessed that he was mobilized as a student. This protagonist reveals the conflict between his appearance as a soldier and his appearance as a natural person. Then we want to show the 3rd example. The participant joined to the war as a student by voluntary conscription. In his mind, there were so many relationship with his family or friends. Those variables were the reason why he joined the war.

• [Example 3] The sick enemies appeared before my eyes. He seemed to lift his hands with a gun. I was out of my mind. I pulled the trigger in unison. He fell. The battle is over. It was painful. The appearance of the dead enemy in my gun has come up. ‘Would not he have been trying to surrender?’ If I were calm, I would not have shot him ... ' It was to kill the enemy soldiers who pretended to be injured or dead. If there were some strangers in the dead who were lying down or sitting on the trenches, they kicked their feet and pulled the trigger. Then the mouth turned white. It is dead. ... ... It was a long time after dinner that normal human beings returned to their eyes. Then it was regrettable that the wounded enemy soldiers were killed. 'Then I would have been able to live if I had sent it back. Now, come and look back, if you said, "throw your weapons down and put your hands up," they may have. At that time, hostility was also hostility, but I was scared too. ... ... In the battle on the Imjin River, I think I really killed many enemies. He crouched in his head and killed innumerable enemies who could not resist. I had never seen such an enemy. It was a terrified eye. I just pulled the trigger. It was my age when I saw the fallen enemy. At the moment, I went to school immediately after 6.25
and thought that I was going to go to the military without knowing my hand. I thought, 'He might be a similar person to me,' and he thought, 'Does his parents know he's dead like this?' As I grew older, my thoughts always hurt my mind. In retrospect, killing a person who is not willing to resist is not murder, but murder[15: 207-212].

Now we are going to show the 4th example. The example came from old film Gladiator. This paper will focus on General Maximus in the film. He participated to the war based on good relationship with old king and his family. The book, Gladiator, was written by Dewey Gram. The screenplay by David Franzoni, John Logan, and William Nicholson was made into a very successful movie. The movie stars Russell Crowe as Maximus and Joaquin Phoenix as Commodus. British actor Oliver Reed(Proximo) died before the movie was finished, although almost all his scenes had been completed

• [Example 4] General Maximus, Commander of the Roman Army of the North, fights his last battle in the war against Germania. Then, he hopes to return to his farm and his family in Spain. But there are many serious problems in Rome and Emperor Marcus Aurelius knows he will soon die. Maximus realizes that he must perform another duty for the Emperor before he can go home. He knows it will not be easy, and he is right. Soon he is fighting for his life again, first as a prisoner, then a slave, and finally as a gladiator. One thought keeps Maximus alive: that he will finally meet and kill the man he hates most—the new Emperor, Commodus[16].

Through above 4 examples, we can understand what all participants joined the war. So we can think that all participants’ moral injury could be come from different base and reasons. The moral injury experienced by the soldiers through the war has revealed various aspects and types of surgical wounds that remain as traces in the body. The types of moral injuries are diverse and it is very limited to explore the solution on the extension of the existing psychological basis of PTSD. In other words, every soldier in a war situation experiences various forms of moral conflict regardless of the circumstance. We have a conflict on the choice of doing this or that. All options are based on value. Often, it is not moral conflict that we have a conflict over hamburgers and spaghetti. Moral conflict must be based on value of each option. A healing program for soldiers who are morally hurt by future wars should go beyond the existing psychological-based PTSD healing program. The moral wounds of a soldier in a war are not damaged by the trauma of a single blade or a psychological mechanism. The moral wounds of a soldier should be understood in a continuum of moral conflicts throughout life[17].

4. Conclusion

War is a paradoxical friend of happiness. War is not presentation of evil by itself. War includes all kinds of human disaster. However, quite paradoxically, the war originates from the assumption of all human happiness naturally. This paradoxical relationship is the cause of the moral dilemma experienced by the soldiers. All the soldiers are in the dilemma between two vivid values during the battle.

During war, all soldiers inevitably the moral injuries caused by the very complicated cause of the stratum from the disgust in the forgotten war to the friendship and humanity. Because of complicate reason of itself, the moral injury could not be cared by simple surgical operation or general psychological caring.

Therefore, we propose the implications of our conceptualization for current and emerging treatments for moral injury by presenting a kind of solution. The moral injury of the soldiers through the war should be regarded in the context of moral community of a particular war, and its measures for healing or caring must be taken in the process of general public attending ordinary citizen and soldiers of the own sides, and ordinary citizens and soldiers of the opposing
5. References

5.1. Journal articles


5.2. Books


5.3. Conference proceedings


5.4. Additional references

Lead Author
Park Gyun-yeol / Gyeongsang National University Professor
B.A. Gyeongsang National University
M.A. Seoul National University
Ph.D. Seoul National University

Research field

Major career
- 2010~present. Gyeongsang National University, Professor
- 2015~present. International Society for Military Affairs, Vice President
- 2017~present. Evaluation Member of Prosecutor, Korean Bar Association
- 2018~present. The Korean Association of Ethics, Vice President

Co-Lead Author
Seo Eun-sook / Dongguk University Professor
B.A. Seoul National University
M.A. Seoul National University
Ph.D. Seoul National University

Research Field

Major Career
- 2006~present. Dongguk University, Professor
- 2019~present. Institute for Multicultural Integration, Director

Corresponding Author
Shin Hee-jeong / Gwangju National University of Education Lecturer
B.A. Gyeongsang National University
M.A. Korea National University of Education
Ph.D. Korea National University of Education

Research field

Major career
- 2002~2006. Shinuh Middle School, Teacher
- 2007~2014. Jinyoung Middle School, Teacher
- 2015~present. Changwon-Jungang High School, Teacher
- 2019~present. Gwangju National University of Education, Lecturer