The Structural Relationship between the Possibility of Socioeconomic Class Elevation of Workers and Related Variables

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to analyze the structural relationship between the possibility of socioeconomic class elevation of wage earners, happiness and organizational commitment, and life satisfaction. **Research design, data and methodology:** Data from the 24th fiscal year (2021) of the Korea Labor Panel data were used for analysis. Only wage earners who measured job satisfaction and organizational engagement were analyzed, and a sample of 9,138 respondents was finally used, excluding missing values. Structural Equation Modeling was performed using AMOS 23.0, and Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE) was used as a model estimation method. **Results:** First, the hypothetical structural model set up for the study was found to be suitable. Second, the Possibility of Socioeconomic Class Elevation of wage earners, happiness, and organizational commitment were found to have a direct impact on life satisfaction. Third, the possibility of improving the socio-economic status of wage earners affects life satisfaction, and happiness and organizational commitment appear to have a partially mediating effect. **Conclusions:** This study is significant in that it has increased interest in organizational participation and life satisfaction, which were not covered in previous studies on the possibility of wage workers moving up the socioeconomic class.

Keywords : The Possibility of Socioeconomic Class Elevation, Organizational Commitment, Happiness, Life Satisfaction

JEL Classification Code: I21, I22, I25

1. Introduction

A hopeful evaluation of whether socioeconomic status can be improved is an important factor in determining the happiness level of an individual and a country (Kim & Han, 2021). In the current situation, the improvement of one's socioeconomic status means hope for life, which is the driving force for happiness and life. Social or economic status can be given by occupation, education level, income, etc., but if you recognize the possibility of change rather than a fixed perception, you will have a positive life attitude even if your current socioeconomic status is low.

However, according to the results of the '2021 Social Survey' announced by the National Statistical Office, among the population over the age of 19, only 25.2% of the people who thought that the social and economic status of individuals in their generation were 'highly likely' to rise if they made efforts in our society.

People's perception of the ladder of social advancement is getting worse and worse. The possibility

of rising up the social class affects the behavior and attitude of social members in the social context, and also determines the subjective class perception, fairness perception, individual perception of fair compensation (Kelly & Kelly, 2009), and attitude toward redistribution policy (Alesina & Giuliano, 2009; Benabou & Ok, 2001; Ravallion & Lokshin, 2000).

In addition, it has been found that the possibility of improving socioeconomic status (possibility of class advancement) is a factor that determines human happiness, and the subjectively evaluated socioeconomic status provides happiness (Kim, 2019; Yoon & Kim, 2008). In particular, in a study related to social class, both objective class and subjective class consciousness had a significant effect on happiness, but the subjective class consciousness had a relatively greater influence (Lee & Lee, 2017). The possibility of an increase in subjective socioeconomic status has a significant positive effect on organizational commitment (Yang & Shim, 2021). These results suggest that the recognition of the possibility of improvement is more important than the objective socioeconomic status given by the class system. Since subjective evaluation can affect individual happiness and life satisfaction, it is necessary to have a positive perception of the possibility of socio-economic improvement.

On the other hand, happiness is a description related to human positive emotions, and is a general satisfaction with daily life and life as a whole (Veenhoven, 1994), or an overall positive evaluation of the current life (Graham & Felton, 2006). As social beings, the individual's happiness depends on their relative position and evaluation in society. Relative social position in society also includes subjective perception. This happiness is influenced by the individual's subjective social and economic position. In addition, happiness can affect not only individual life, but also organizational performance such as job satisfaction and job immersion, and it also affects the acceptability of creative thinking and behavior in work. As a result, interest in the happiness of members is increasing in companies and workplaces. Achor (2012) called the privilege of happiness the most important principle among the seven secrets of a pleasant workplace. Organizational commitment has been considered as a major variable in organizational performance, with attachment to a specific organization, feeling strong pride in the organization to which one belongs, and wanting to remain in the organization as a member.

Along with domestic industrialization, the 1997 foreign exchange crisis changed the job value of workers. It aroused interest in well-being and a balanced life between work and family. Well-being has emerged as a key factor for the survival and growth of companies (Spreitzer & Porath, 2012). As life satisfaction is emphasized among the key factors of well-being, interest in life satisfaction has increased in the organizational field.

Organizational commitment and life satisfaction of workplace workers cannot be viewed in isolation from the structural factors of the organization and the influence and relationship of individual workers' lives in terms of work-life compatibility.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the structural relationship and influence between the possibility of improving the socioeconomic status of wage earners and the variables of individual workers' happiness, organizational commitment, and life satisfaction.

This study differs from previous studies in several respects. First, only a few studies have examined the possibility of improving the socioeconomic status of wage earners. Studies examining the possibility of improving the socioeconomic status of wage earners and their life satisfaction are lacking. There is a difference from previous studies in examining the influence of the possibility of change in socioeconomic status on life satisfaction through happiness and organizational commitment. Second, studies on wage earners' organizational commitment and life satisfaction have limitations in the generalizability of the research results, as they are conducted with a small sample of people. In this study, there is a difference in that the possibility of generalization of the research results can be increased by conducting the research using the large-scale sample data of the Korea Labor and Income Panel Survey.

The research questions set for the research are as follows. First, is the structural model of the possibility of socioeconomic class elevation of wage earners, happiness, organizational commitment, and life satisfaction appropriate? Second, do wage earners' the possibility of socioeconomic class elevation, happiness, and organizational commitment directly affect life satisfaction? Third, do happiness and organizational commitment have a mediating effect on the possibility of socioeconomic class elevation of wage earners and their impact on life satisfaction?

2. Theoretical Background

This study analyzes the relationship between the possibility of socioeconomic class elevation of wage earners and happiness, organizational commitment, and life satisfaction. The Possibility of Socioeconomic Class Elevation means the possibility of rising in the social class, which is an individual's subjective class consciousness. Subjective class identification is an evaluation of each individual's self-perceived social status, and is a personal perception of what class and rank one is in the social

hierarchy. Recognition of the possibility of a subjective rise in class expects that one's efforts and achievements can be justly evaluated and justly distributed in social relationships (Lee, 2013), and that one's social status can be raised higher than the present during one's lifetime. In addition, the possibility of improving socioeconomic status is positive and optimistic about social mobility opportunities, motivates people to improve their current status, and gives them positive hope and will. Therefore, as a psychological phenomenon, it can be said to be an individual's perception and evaluation of his or her status, including a sense of belonging to a class, status in individual aspects reflected by objective conditions such as income, education, and occupation, and their interactions.

Regarding the improvement of socioeconomic status, the higher the socioeconomic status, the higher the life satisfaction (Ka, 2006; Kim, 2013; Seo, 2014).

A positive perception of improving one's socioeconomic status leads to life satisfaction and an optimistic perception of the future. As a subjective emotion about life, happiness is used together with terms such as well-being and quality of life. An individual's life satisfaction is highly related to happiness, and a positive perception of the possibility of improving socioeconomic status is a factor influencing happiness.

On the other hand, as for organizational commitment, which is a representative variable influencing workers' organizational performance, the higher the worker's happiness, the higher the organizational commitment. There is a study that looked at corporate management performance with workplace happiness as an independent variable and it was found that workplace happiness of employees of child protection agencies had a significant positive effect on organizational commitment as organizational effectiveness (Shim & Choi, 2019). In the working situation, the positive emotions of individual workers induce not only work performance but also individual life and satisfaction with life. This study aims to analyze the relationship between the possibility of socioeconomic class elevation, happiness, organizational commitment, and life satisfaction based on the preceding studies and theoretical contents. [Figure 1] shows the research model of this study.

3. Research Method

3.1. Research Materials

This study used data from the Korea Labour Research Institute's Korea Labour Panel for analysis. The Korean Labor & Income Panel Study is a longitudinal survey that tracks labor market movements, economic activity, consumption, income activity, vocational training, education, and social life for a representative sample once a year. Data from the 24th fiscal year (2021) of the Korea Labor Panel data were used for analysis.

In order to contribute to the improvement and change of the environment related to domestic labor, empirical data on labor, economic status, and life satisfaction are collected and provided to households and household members. In this study, only wage earners were analyzed, and a sample of 9,138 people was finally used, excluding missing values.
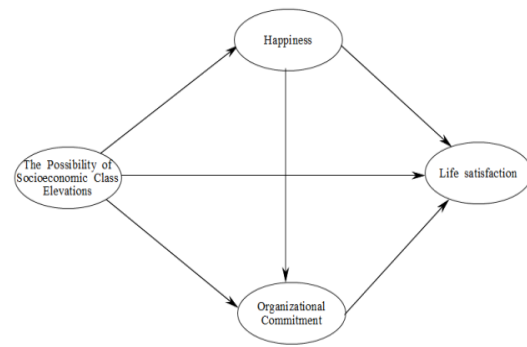

Figure 1: The Research Model of the Study

3.2. Measuring Tools

3.2.1. The Possibility of Socioeconomic Class Elevation

The possibility of socioeconomic class elevation, which is an independent variable, asks, "Do you think that in our society, if everyone works hard, the socioeconomic status of individuals can be improved? We used a question that asked. It consisted of a 4-point scale (1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = adequate, 4 = high). The reliability was found to be .697.

3.2.2. Happiness

To measure happiness, it is necessary to ask the individual, "All things considered, how happy are you?" Questions were used. The questions asked individuals to express their subjective state and all of them consisted of an 11-point scale, and the reliability of the variables was found to be .636. The questions consisted of an 11-point scale (0 = worst state ~ 10 best state), and in this study, 0 = not at all, 1 ~ 3 not at all, 4 ~ 6 moderate, 7 ~ 9 yes 11 = very much, and 5 points were converted and used. The reliability was found to be .636.

3.2.3. Organizational Commitment

The Organizational Commitment of the Korea Labor Panel Survey is a selection of excellent questions from Porter et al. (1974). It was measured on a 5-point Likert scale, and the higher the score, the higher the organizational engagement (1: not at all, 5: very) and the reliability was .632.

3.2.4. Life Satisfaction

Six measures of life satisfaction, which is the dependent variable, were used for family income, leisure activities, housing environment, family relationships, and satisfaction with relatives and social relationships. It was measured on a 5-point Likert scale, and the higher the score, the higher the life satisfaction (1: not at all, 5: very). The confidence was found to be .598.

3.3. Data Analysis

In this study, the AMOS 23.0 program was used to analyze the structural relationship between the variables of the possibility of socioeconomic class elevation, happiness, organizational commitment, and life satisfaction of wage earners. The SPSS 23.0 program was used to perform frequency analysis, descriptive statistics and correlation analysis, and reliability coefficient (Cronbach's). Then, using the AMOS 23.0 program, structural equation model verification and path analysis were performed. The mediating effect was tested for statistical significance by bootstrapping. Parameters were estimated, and model fit was confirmed by RMSEA, NFI, IFI, and CFI. Each path coefficient of the estimated model was tested for statistical significance at a significance level of .05. A total of 9,138 samples were used for analysis by selecting the Listwise method for missing value processing.

Table 1: Question Composition and Reliability of Research Variables

Variation	Questions	Questions number
The Possibility of Socioeconomic Class Elevation	Do you think that in our society, if everyone works hard, their socioeconomic status can be improved?	p246601
Happiness	All things considered, how happy are you?	p248141

	Organizational Commitment 1	The job you're working at right now is a great place to go	p244201
	Organizational Commitment 2	I came into this job I'm glad I did.	p244202
Organizational Commitment	Organizational Commitment 3	If you have a friend who is looking for a job I would recommend this job	p244203
	Organizational Commitment 4	I have a job (job) You can brag about it to others	p244204
	Organizational Commitment 5	Unless there's something else going on, this job (job) I want to keep going	p244205
Life satisfaction	Life satisfaction 1	Family income	p246501
	Life satisfaction 2	Recreational activities	p246502
	Life satisfaction 3	Housing Environment	p246503
	Life satisfaction 4	Family relationships	p246504
	Life satisfaction 5	Kinship	p246505
	Life satisfaction 6	Social acquaintance	p246506

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4. Analysis Results

4.1. General Characteristics of the Object of Study

In this study, the general characteristics of the research subjects are as shown in the Table 2. In terms of gender, 3,991 (43.7%) were females and 5,147 (56.3%) were males, and 275 (2.9%) were 18 to 25 years old, 2,704 (26.7%) were 26 to 39 years old, 3,532 (41.5%) were 40 to 55 years old, 1,636 (18%) were 56 to 65 years old, and 991 (10.9%) were 65 years of age or older. In terms of educational background, 4,056 (44.4%) graduated from high school or less, 4,597 (50.3%) graduated from 2~4-year universities, and 484 (5.3%) graduated from graduate school or higher. In terms of the type of employment, 5,661 (62%) were regular workers and 3,471 (38%) were non-regular workers.

Table 2: General characteristics of the subjects studied (N=9,138)

Division	content	frequency (people)	ratio (%)
Gender	woman	3,991	43.7
	man	5,147	56.3
Age	Age 18~25	275	2.9
	Age 26~39	2,704	26.7
	Age 40~55	3,532	41.5
	Age 56~65	1,636	18
	65 years of age or older	991	10.9
Education	Graduated from high school or below	4,056	44.4
	Graduated from a 2~4-year university	4,597	50.3
	Graduate degree or higher	484	5.3
Forms of employment	Haul	5,661	62.0
	Contingent Workers	3,471	38.0
Amount		9,138	100.0

Note: Missing values are excluded

4.2. Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Key Variables

In order to verify the normal distribution conditions of the measurement variables used in this study, the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis were calculated, and the results are shown in the Table 3.

The mean values of the variables remain median, and skewness and kurtosis are well assumed to be the normal distribution of the data. In the structural equation model test, the standard index of skewness, which is an indicator for determining whether the normality assumption is satisfied, has an absolute value of not exceeding 3.00, and the standard index of kurtosis is considered to be the data of normal distribution if the absolute value does not exceed 8.00. The data used in this study meet the basic assumptions of structural equation model verification as the variables satisfy the standard exponential criteria of skewness and kurtosis.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Variables		Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
The Possibility of Socioeconomic Class Elevation		2.410	.619	-.296	-.405
Happiness		3.562	.564	-.621	-.337
Organizational Commitment	1	3.356	.656	-.085	.029
	2	3.358	.646	.120	.137
	3	3.240	.706	-.041	.120
	4	3.278	.686	-.006	.204
	5	3.635	.661	-.398	.381
Life satisfaction	1	3.154	.618	-.145	.247
	2	3.267	.589	.047	.014
	3	3.549	.587	-.537	-.104
	4	3.679	.551	-.738	.473
	5	3.477	.565	-.165	-.440
	6	3.473	.556	-.009	-.673

In the case of the possibility of improving socioeconomic status, the average value of the 1~4 response results, excluding the value of the response "I don't know"

Table 4: Correlation Analysis of Key Variables

Variables	The Possibility of Socioeconomic Class Elevation	Happiness	O.C.	Life satisfaction
The Possibility of Socioeconomic Class Elevation	1			
Happiness	.293**	1		
O.C.	.315**	.395**	1	
Life satisfaction	.382**	.484**	.466**	1

**p<01

In order to confirm the correlation between the major variables and the multicollinearity between the variables, the results of the correlation analysis are shown in the Table 4. As a result of the analysis, it was found that there is no multicollinearity because the absolute value of the correlation coefficient is not greater than .80. The correlation index between the variables showed that the correlation between happiness and life satisfaction (r = .484, p<.01) was highest when viewed from statistically significant static correlations.

4.3. The Results of the Measurement Model's Goodness-of-Fit and Parameter Verification

A. Conformity and validation of structural relationships of measurement models

Table 5 :   Model Fit Index of Measurement Model

Category	X2	P	Df	CFI	GFI	AGFI	IFI	TLI	RMP	RMSEA
Fit Index	10567.910	.000	61	.932	.929	.893	.932	.913	.006	.077
Best Practices	-	>.05	-	> .90				<.05	< .08	

Prior to the analysis of the research model of this study, the goodness and path coefficient were confirmed through the analysis of the measurement model. Specific results are presented in the Table 5 and Table 6. CFI, GFI, AGFI, IFI, TLI, RMR, and RMSEA were analyzed to evaluate the fit of the structural model. The goodness-of-fit index of the measurement model was found to be at an acceptable level as shown in the Table 5.

The results of the analysis were =10567.910, df=61, p

= .000, which did not adopt the zero hypothesis that the model conforms to the data. However, since the value is a goodness-of-fit index that is sensitive to the influence of the number of cases, additional analysis of other goodness-of-fit indices showed a relatively good fit (CFI: .932, GFI: .929, AGFI: .893, IFI: .932, TLI: .913, RMR: .006, RMSEA: .077). In order to verify the validity of the structural path set in the research model, structural path estimates were calculated, and the results are shown in the Table 6..

Table 6 : Path Coefficients in Structural models

Path			B	β	S.E.	C.R.
The Possibility of Socioeconomic Class Elevation	→	Happiness	.280	.301	.006	47.858***
The Possibility of Socioeconomic Class Elevation	→	Organizational Commitment	.081	.144	.004	20.651***
Happiness	→	Organizational Commitment	.126	.207	.004	29.712***
Happiness	→	Life satisfaction	.276	.435	.005	56.890***
The Possibility of Socioeconomic Class Elevation	→	Life satisfaction	.122	.206	.004	31.426***
Organizational Commitment	→	Life satisfaction	.159	.152	.007	23.009***
Organizational Commitment	→	Organizational Commitment 1	1.000	.854		
Organizational Commitment	→	Organizational Commitment 2	1.005	.870	.006	168.793***
Organizational Commitment	→	Organizational Commitment 3	1.073	.850	.007	162.482***
Organizational Commitment	→	Organizational Commitment 4	1.039	.848	.006	161.750***
Life satisfaction	→	Life satisfaction 1	1.000	.567		
Life satisfaction	→	Life satisfaction 2	1.046	.624	.014	73.360***
Life satisfaction	→	Life satisfaction 3	1.171	.717	.015	80.235***
Life satisfaction	→	Life satisfaction 4	1.199	.766	.014	83.436***
Life satisfaction	→	Life satisfaction 5	1.235	.792	.015	84.943***
Organizational Commitment	→	Organizational Commitment 5	.810	.686	.007	117.572***
Life satisfaction	→	Life satisfaction 6	1.186	.775	.014	84.001***

***p<.001

In this study, the significance test criterion for the pathway of the model was a two-sided test, and the absolute value of C.R. at the significance level p<.05 was greater than or equal to 1.96. The results of the analysis

showed that the likelihood of improving socioeconomic status had a statistically significant negative effect on happiness (β=.301, C.R.=47.858), organizational engagement (β=.144, C.R.=20.651) and life satisfaction (β=.206, C.R.=31.426) at the significance level p<.001. Happiness has a statistically significant static effect on organizational engagement (β = 207, C.R. = 29.712) at the significance level p<.001, and organizational engagement has a significant static effect on life satisfaction (β = .152, C.R. = 23.009).

B. Decomposition of the effects on the structural path of the structural model

The structural pathways between the variables of the structural model and their effects are shown in [Figure 2].
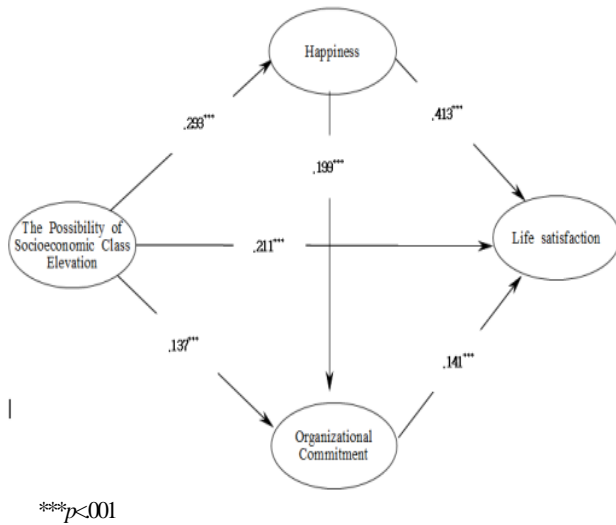

***p<.001

Figure 2: Pathways between socioeconomic status improvement potential, happiness, organizational commitment, and life satisfaction

It has been shown that the possibility of improving the socioeconomic status of wage earners, happiness, and organizational engagement have a direct impact on life satisfaction. To analyze the mediating effects of happiness and organizational commitment, bootstrapping was performed and statistical significance was tested. Sobel and Bootstrapping are generally used in the significance test of mediated effects, but since it is difficult to say that the actual multivariate normality is completely satisfied, the bootstrapping method was judged to be appropriate to test the statistical significance of the indirect effect. As shown in [Table 7] analysis of the direct and indirect effects of research variables, it was confirmed that

happiness and organizational engagement showed mediating effects on the possibility of improving socioeconomic status and life satisfaction.

Table 7 : Analysis of pathways between socioeconomic status improvement potential, happiness, organizational commitment, and life satisfaction

Path	Direct Effects	Indirect Effects	Total Effects
The Possibility of Socioeconomic Class Elevation → Happiness	.293**		.293**
The Possibility of Socioeconomic Class Elevation → Organizational Commitment	.128**	.056**	.187**
Happiness → Organizational Commitment	.186*		.186*
Happiness → Life Satisfaction	.402*	.025*	.431*
Organizational Commitment → Life Satisfaction	.128*		.128*
The Possibility of Socioeconomic Class Elevation → Life Satisfaction	.201**	.146*	.354**

*p<.05 **p<.01, estimates of indirect effects are standardized coefficients (β)

The indirect effect of socioeconomic status increase on organizational engagement through happiness was β = .056, and the indirect effect of happiness on life satisfaction through organizational engagement was β =.025, confirming the partial mediating effect. In addition, the indirect effect of the possibility of socioeconomic status increase on life satisfaction through happiness and organizational engagement was analyzed as β=.146. This means that the possibility of increasing socioeconomic status affects life satisfaction through the medium of happiness and organizational commitment.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The purpose of this study is to analyze the structural relationship between the possibility of wage workers rising socioeconomic class and happiness, organizational commitment, and life satisfaction. To conduct the study, data from the 24th Labor Panel Survey of the Korea Labor Institute were used and a total of 9,138 samples were used for analysis.

As a result of the study, first, the hypothetical structural model established for the study was found to be appropriate. Second, the possibility of wage workers

rising to the socioeconomic class, happiness, and organizational participation were found to have a direct effect on life satisfaction. The possibility of improving socioeconomic status increases happiness and organizational commitment, and it has been confirmed that happiness and organizational commitment have a positive effect on life satisfaction. Third, the impact of the possibility of rising socioeconomic class of wage earners on life satisfaction was analyzed, and happiness and organizational participation were found to partially mediate the two variables. These results support previous research showing that the possibility of rising socioeconomic class increases happiness and organizational involvement and influences life satisfaction. Social inequality and socioeconomic gap are social problems that need to be urgently improved. Social inequality can be a motivation for individual efforts (Lee, 2018). Economic factors are factors that affect the possibility of socioeconomic class advancement, and it is necessary to secure the possibility of socioeconomic class mobility through psychosocial factors.

This study is significant in that it has increased interest in organizational participation and life satisfaction, which were not covered in previous studies on the possibility of wage workers moving up the socioeconomic class. In addition, unlike previous studies that mainly analyzed existing objective socioeconomic status indicators, it is significant in that psychological indicators such as the possibility of rising socioeconomic status were introduced. It is significant in that it examines the possibility of rising socioeconomic class in relation to an individual's happy emotions, life satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

Nevertheless, the limitations of this study are as follows. The explanatory power (R2) of the research model established in this study was overall low. This is because there was difficulty in setting up various explanatory variables. In the future, follow-up research should be conducted that additionally considers the variable of possibility of improving socioeconomic status, which is the independent variable of this study.

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