

## Correlational Study of Grit with Life Satisfaction, Subjective Happiness, and Burnout in Young Adults

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### ABSTRACT

Grit, a non-cognitive predictor of academic achievement and success in life gained impetus in the last decade. Numerous studies show that grit has many positive consequences. But there is a lack of research on grit in India, which is a non-WEIRD country with a collectivistic culture. This study examined the relationship of Grit with Life Satisfaction, Subjective Happiness, and Burnout in young adults. The researcher hypothesized that Grit will be positively related to Life Satisfaction and Subjective Happiness and negatively related to Burnout, and will have a significant impact on each. 149 (M= 49; F=98; NB=2) young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 participated. Correlation analysis and regression analysis was conducted on the gathered data. The statistical analysis of the data revealed that grit was positively correlated with Life Satisfaction and Subjective Happiness, and it was negatively correlated with burnout. It was also found to have a significant impact on the variables.

**Keywords:** *Grit, Life Satisfaction, Subjective Happiness, Burnout, Young adults*

Researchers in positive psychology have strived for decades to answer the question about how one can increase happiness and wellbeing. One of the many things that can be done, includes being gritty, hardworking, deliberately putting in efforts and persevering till goals are reached. Numerous researches show that success is associated with increased levels of happiness, wellbeing, productivity, and satisfaction. It also shows lower levels of stress as direct result of success. How does one achieve success? Plethora of self-help on the continuum of life improvement teaches how to do *smart work* and not *hard work*. But the real key to success lies in *perseverance* along with passion.

### Grit

The personality trait of grit is defined as, “the tendency to pursue long-term goals with sustained zeal and hard work, has been shown to predict achievement in academic, vocational, and avocational domains ((A. Duckworth et al., 2007); (A. L. Duckworth & Quinn, 2009).

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### *Life Satisfaction*

Subjective well-being is a broad concept that includes experiencing pleasant emotions, low levels of negative moods, and high life satisfaction. (Diener et al., n.d.)

Subjective well-being is a broad category of phenomena that includes people's emotional responses, domain satisfactions, and global judgments of life satisfaction. (Diener et al., n.d.)

“An overall assessment of feelings and attitudes about one’s life at a particular point in time ranging from negative to positive”(Beutell, 2006)

“Life satisfaction is the degree to which a person positively evaluates the overall quality of his/her life as a whole. In other words, how much the person likes the life he/she leads” (Veenhoven, 2012)

“Life satisfaction, in particular, is an overall assessment of feelings about, and attitudes toward, one’s life at a particular point in time and ranges from negative to positive; it comprises the desire to change one’s life, satisfaction with past achievements, optimism for the future, significant others’ perceptions of one’s life, etc.” (Diener 1984).

### *Subjective Happiness*

In her 2007 book ‘The How of Happiness’, positive psychology researcher Sonja Lyubomirsky defines happiness as “the experience of joy, contentment, or positive well-being, combined with a sense that one’s life is good, meaningful, and worthwhile.”

In his book ‘Authentic Happiness’, the founder of Positive Psychology Martin Seligman gave an equation of happiness.

$$H=S+C+V$$

There are rather two traditions to research happiness than two distinct types of happiness according to Diener. (Biswas-Diener et al., 2009). The hedonic happiness view and the Eudaemonic happiness view.

### **Burnout**

Burnout is a psychological syndrome emerging as a prolonged response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job. (Maslach & Leiter, 2016)

Burnout is a psychological syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, feelings of cynicism and reduced personal accomplishment. (Koutsimani et al., 2019)

### *Grit, life satisfaction, happiness and Burnout*

In Norway, 107 coaches were examined to see how grit, neuroticism, perfectionism, and perceived stress were associated with well-being and burnout. The first regression analysis showed that neuroticism, perfectionism, and perceived stress predicted wellbeing negatively, showing 69% of variance on wellbeing, while grit predicted wellbeing positively. A second regression analysis showed that the three variables accounted for 30% of burnout, predicting it positively. (Moen & Olsen, 2020)

In another study, 222 medical residents took questionnaires based on grit, burnout, and wellbeing. The analysis showed that those with high grit scores were low on burnout and high

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on wellbeing, and those with low grit scores were high on burnout and low on wellbeing. (Dam et al., 2019)

### Objectives

1. The study aimed at understanding the relationship between Grit, life satisfaction, happiness, and burnout in young adults
2. To study how grit correlates with life satisfaction in young adults
3. To measure the correlation between grit and subjective happiness in young adults
4. To find out the relationship between grit and the components of burnout in young adults
5. To see the effect of grit on other variables in young adults

### Hypotheses

1. There will be a positive relationship between grit and life satisfaction in young adults
2. There will be a positive relationship between grit and happiness in young adults.
3. There will be a significant relationship between grit and burnout in young adults.
4. Grit will have a significant level of impact on life satisfaction, happiness, and burnout.

## METHODOLOGY

### Sample

The sample consisted of 149 participants, who were high-school, undergraduate, graduate, and post graduate students belonging to streams of Science, Arts, and Commerce. The sample was collected by employing the convenient sampling method and was from India.

*Table 1 showing sample details*

Age Group	Male	Female	Non binary	Total
18 to 25	49	98	2	149

### Tools

The tools used to measure each variable are as follows:

**The Grit Scale:** the grit scale by Angela Duckworth consists of 12 items on perseverance and passion for long term goals. The items are answered on a 5-point likert scale, ranging from 'very much like me' to 'not at all like me', scored 5 to 1, for items 1, 4, 6, 9, 10 and 12, and 1 to 5 for items 2, 3, 5, 7, 8 and 11 respectively. Sum scores for all ten items, and higher score means higher grit, and lower scores means lower grit. This is the first scale to be developed on grit and is widely accepted and used. Studies show Cronbach alpha values of overall scale,  $\alpha = 0.85$ ; perseverance of effort,  $\alpha = 0.68$ ; interest,  $\alpha = 0.74$ . Previous studies reported a direct and positive relationship between grit and various permutations of performance ranging from academic success/performance (Duckworth and Quinn, 2009; Jachimowicz et al., 2018; Nelson and Baltes, 2019), and training performance in sports (Cazayoux and DeBeliso, 2019), to job performance (Jordan et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2019; Webster-Wright, 2019), operational productivity (Steuber et al., 2019), and even task performance (Vogelsang, 2018).

**The satisfaction with life scale:** developed by Diener et al., The Satisfaction with Life Scale was developed to assess satisfaction with people's lives as a whole. The scale does not assess satisfaction with specific life domains, such as health or finances, but allows subjects to integrate and weigh these domains in whatever way they choose. It is a 5-item scale designed to measure global cognitive judgments of one's life satisfaction (not a measure of either

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positive or negative affect). Participants indicate how much they agree or disagree with each of the 5 items using a 7-point scale that ranges from 7 strongly agree to 1 strongly disagree. The scores are added and interpreted using the table provided by the developers.

**Subjective happiness scale:** developed by Dr. Sonja Lyubomirsky, the SHS is a 4-item scale of global subjective happiness. Two items ask respondents to characterize themselves using both absolute ratings and ratings relative to peers, whereas the other two items offer brief descriptions of happy and unhappy individuals and ask respondents the extent to which each characterization describes them. The SHS has been validated in 14 studies with a total of 2,732 participants. Data has been collected in the United States from students on two college campuses and one high school campus, from community adults in two California cities, and from older adults, as well as from students and community adults in Moscow, Russia. Results have indicated that the SHS has high internal consistency, which has been found to be stable across samples. Test-retest and self-peer correlations have suggested good to excellent reliability, and construct validation studies of convergent and discriminant validity have confirmed the use of this scale to measure the construct of subjective happiness.

**The Maslach Burnout Inventory:** The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is a psychological assessment instrument comprising 22 symptom items pertaining to occupational burnout. The original form of the MBI was developed by Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson with the goal of assessing an individual's experience of burnout. Test-retest reliabilities for EE, DPext, and PA were  $r=.81$ ,  $r=.65$ , and  $r=.72$  respectively over a 12 months period. The scale has satisfactory construct, discriminant, and predictive validity. The scores are to be added and interpreted using the table provided in the manual. Overall and separate domain scores are calculated and interpreted.

### *Procedure for data collection*

The primary method of data collection was online survey form. The form consisted of self-report questionnaires that quantify grit, life satisfaction, happiness, and burnout in young adults.

### *Plan for statistical analysis*

The statistical analysis that was carried out were descriptive statistics, bivariate correlational analysis, and linear regression.

## **RESULTS**

### *Correlation and Regression Analysis*

#### **Grit and Life Satisfaction**

*Table 4.3 showing correlation between grit and satisfaction.*

Spearman's rho	Satisfaction
Grit	.373 **

\*\* correlation is significant at the level 0.01 level ( 2-tailed)

The spearman correlation between Grit and Life satisfaction is 0.373, which is significant at 0.01 level, meaning that there is a positive relationship between grit and life satisfaction in young adults. The significance at 0.01 level denotes that the results are true 99% times out of 100 cases with 1% mark for error.

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**Table 4.4 showing model summary of regression**

<i>Model Summary</i>				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.369 <sup>a</sup>	.136	.130	6.87160

a. Predictors: (Constant), Grit

**Table 4.5 ANOVA**

<i>ANOVA<sup>a</sup></i>						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1093.605	1	1093.605	23.160	<.001 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	6941.174	147	47.219		
	Total	8034.779	148			

a. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Grit

**Table 4.6 coefficients**

<i>Coefficients<sup>a</sup></i>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	
1	(Constant)	7.401	2.929		2.527	.013
	Grit	.360	.075	.369	4.813	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction

The regression analysis of Grit as predictor variable and satisfaction as dependent variable from shows that grit accounts for 13% of variance in satisfaction of young adults.

**Grit and Happiness**

**Table 4.7 showing the correlation between grit and happiness.**

Spearman's rho	Happiness
Grit	.292**

\*\* correlation is significant at the level 0.01 level ( 2-tailed)

The spearman correlation between Grit and Happiness is 0.292 which is significant at 0.01 level, meaning that there is a positive relationship between grit and happiness in young adults. The significance at 0.01 level denotes that the results are true 99% times out of 100 cases with 1% mark for error.

**Table 4.8 showing model summary of regression**

<i>Model Summary</i>				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.294 <sup>a</sup>	.086	.080	5.11035

a. Predictors: (Constant), Grit

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**Table 4.9 ANOVA**

*ANOVA<sup>a</sup>*

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	362.866	1	362.866	13.895	<.001 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	3838.999	147	26.116		
	Total	4201.866	148			

a. Dependent Variable: Happiness

b. Predictors: (Constant), Grit

**Table 4.10 coefficients**

*Coefficients<sup>a</sup>*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	10.119	2.178		4.645	<.001
	Grit	.207	.056	.294	3.728	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: Happiness

The regression analysis of Grit as predictor variable and happiness as dependent variable shows that grit accounts for 8% of variance of happiness of young adults.

**Grit and Exhaustion**

**Table 4.11 showing the correlation between grit and exhaustion**

Spearman's rho	Exhaustion
Grit	-.339**

\*\* correlation is significant at the level 0.01 level ( 2-tailed)

The spearman correlation between Grit and exhaustion component of burnout is -0.339 which is significant at 0.01 level, meaning that there is a negative relationship between grit and exhaustion in young adults. The significance at 0.01 level denotes that the results are true 99% times out of 100 cases with 1% mark for error.

**Table 4.12 showing model summary of regression**

*Model Summary*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.365 <sup>a</sup>	.133	.127	10.90277

a. Predictors: (Constant), Grit

**Table 4.13 ANOVA**

*ANOVA<sup>a</sup>*

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2684.642	1	2684.642	22.585	<.001 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	17473.935	147	118.870		
	Total	20158.577	148			

a. Dependent Variable: Exhaustion

b. Predictors: (Constant), Grit

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**Table 4.14 coefficients**

*Coefficients<sup>a</sup>*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	
1	(Constant)	49.802	4.647		10.716	<.001
	Grit	-.564	.119	-.365	-4.752	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: Exhaustion

The regression analysis of Grit as predictor variable and exhaustion as dependent variable shows that grit accounts for 12.7 % of exhaustion in young adults.

**Grit and Depersonalisation**

**Table 4.15 showing the correlation between grit and depersonalisation**

Spearman's rho	Depersonalisation
Grit	-.267**

\*\* correlation is significant at the level 0.01 level ( 2-tailed)

The spearman correlation between Grit and depersonalisation component of burnout is -0.267 which is significant at 0.01 level, meaning that there is a negative relationship between grit and depersonalisation in young adults. The significance at 0.01 level denotes that the results are true 99% times out of 100 cases with 1% mark for error.

**Table 4.16 showing model summary of regression.**

*Model Summary*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.242 <sup>a</sup>	.059	.052	5.98651

a. Predictors: (Constant), Grit

**Table 4.17 ANOVA**

*ANOVA<sup>a</sup>*

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	329.016	1	329.016	9.181	.003 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	5268.232	147	35.838		
	Total	5597.248	148			

a. Dependent Variable: Depersonalization

b. Predictors: (Constant), Grit

**Table 4.18 coefficients**

*Coefficients<sup>a</sup>*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	
1	(Constant)	19.091	2.552		7.481	<.001
	Grit	-.198	.065	-.242	-3.030	.003

a. Dependent Variable: Depersonalization

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The regression analysis of Grit as predictor variable and depersonalisation as dependent variable shows that grit accounts for 5.2% of exhaustion in young adults.

### Grit and Personal Accomplishment

**Table 4.19 showing the correlation between grit and personal accomplishment**

Spearman's rho	Personal Accomplishment
Grit	.262**

\*\* correlation is significant at the level 0.01 level ( 2-tailed)

The spearman correlation between Grit and personal accomplishment component of burnout is 0.262 which is significant at 0.01 level, meaning that there is a positive relationship between grit and personal accomplishment in young adults. The significance at 0.01 level denotes that the results are true 99% times out of 100 cases with 1% mark for error.

**Table 4.20 showing model summary of regression**

#### Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.283 <sup>a</sup>	.080	.074	7.17312

a. Predictors: (Constant), Grit

**Table 4.21 ANOVA**

#### ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	656.276	1	656.276	12.755	<.001 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	7563.697	147	51.454		
	Total	8219.973	148			

a. Dependent Variable: PersonalAccomplishment

b. Predictors: (Constant), Grit

**Table 4.22 coefficients**

#### Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	
1	(Constant)	18.270	3.058		5.975	<.001
	Grit	.279	.078	.283	3.571	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: PersonalAccomplishment

The regression analysis of Grit as predictor variable and personal accomplishment as dependent variable shows that grit accounts for 7.4% of personal accomplishment in young adults.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to understand the relationship of Grit with Satisfaction, Happiness, and Burnout and the effect of grit on these variables. For these purposes, the researcher selected young adults from 18-25 years of age, and the sample size was 149. The following tools were used to measure the variables: The Grit Scale by Angela Duckworth,



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The Satisfaction with Life Scale by Diener et al, The Subjective Happiness Scale by Lumboryuski, and The Maslach Burnout Inventory.

The researcher formulated three hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1 stated *that there will be a positive relationship between grit and life satisfaction in young adults*, was accepted. As shown in table 4.2, the results for Grit and Satisfaction show the values of  $\rho = 0.373$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Grit accounted for 13% effect on Happiness ( Tables 4.3, 4.4, 4.5) .As discussed in the review of literature, Grit in students is related to increased levels of life satisfaction and reduced stress. . (Kannangara et al., 2018). Previous research also shows that grit is a mediator between optimism and life satisfaction. The model explains 62% of life satisfaction's variance. (Oriol et al., 2020)

Hypothesis 2 stated that *there will be a positive relationship between grit and happiness in young adults*, was accepted. As shown in Table 4.6 Grit and Happiness show correlation values of  $\rho = 0.292$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Grit also has 8% effect on Happiness as shown by tables 4.7, 4.8, 4.9. There is a lack of literature on Grit and Happiness but these results are supported by previous research that show that grit mediated the relationship between happiness and social competence. (Ma et al., 2020).

Hypothesis 3 stated that *there will be a significant relationship between grit and burnout in young adults*. Burnout has three components: Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment. The results of correlation between Grit and Exhaustion show values of  $\rho = -0.339$ ,  $p < 0.001$  (Table 4.11). This means that there is a negative correlation or association between grit and exhaustion component of burnout. Grit accounts for 12.7 % effect on exhaustion (Tables 4.12, 4.13, 4.14). Results of correlation between Grit and Depersonalisation show values of  $\rho = -0.267$ ,  $p < 0.001$  (Table 4.15). This means that grit and depersonalisation have a negative relationship, where one increases, other decreases. Grit also accounted for 5.7% variance in Depersonalisation (Tables 4.16, 4.17, 4.18). Results of correlation between Grit and Personal Accomplishment component of burnout show values of  $\rho = 0.262$ ,  $p < 0.001$  (Table 4.19). This means that Grit is positively related with Personal Accomplishment. Grit has 7.4% effect on Personal Accomplishment (Tables 4.20, 4.21, 4.22). Previous research done on medical residents showed that higher grit scores were associated with lower burnout experience. Increasing grit was linearly associated with decreasing EE, decreasing DP, and increasing PA (all  $p < 0.05$ ). (Cortez et al., 2020). Thus, the hypothesis is accepted, there is a significant relationship between Grit and Burnout.

### CONCLUSION

1. Grit was positively correlated with Life Satisfaction
2. Grit accounts for 13% variation of Life Satisfaction
3. Grit was positively correlated with Subjective Happiness
4. Grit produced an effect of 8% on Subjective Happiness
5. Grit was negatively correlated with Burnout
6. Grit produced an effect of 12.7% on exhaustion component; 5.2% on Depersonalisation; and 7.4 % on Personal Accomplishment.

### Implications

As it is understood from the results that Grit has a positive association and impact on wellbeing of young adults, and it is negatively associated with burnout, it is now important to find out how grit can be used to reap its benefits.

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1. Teachers could encourage students to develop a growth mindset
2. Schools can foster an environment that encourages students to be gritty.
3. Even organisations can help their employees to work with grit
4. Students can be taught to inculcate the habit of deliberate practice
5. School counsellors can design psychoeducational interventions that promote grit

### Limitations

1. There is a possibility of social desirability effect
2. Snowball sampling method was used which does not guarantee representativeness of the sample.

### Suggestions For Further Research

1. Grit could be studied in a sample with more diverse backgrounds in education, socioeconomic status, and different types of employment, etc.
2. A wider age range can be implemented to understand the progression of Grit with age.
3. The potential “Inverted-U effect” or maladaptive effects could be explored within grit to see if too much grit has any disadvantages. (Grant & Schwartz, 2011)
4. Cross-cultural studies of Grit can give deeper understanding of how it operates in different cultural contexts. Difference in Grit in WEIRD vs non-WEIRD countries and the reasons why, can be studied.

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### Conflict of Interest

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## APPENDIX A

Within the current study the descriptive statistics results are as followed.

### Statistics

		Grit	Satisfacti on	Happines s	Exhausti on	Depersonaliz ation	Personal Accomplishm ent
N	Valid	149	149	149	149	149	149
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		38.4027	21.2349	18.0872	28.1275	11.5034	28.9866
Median		38.0000	21.0000	19.0000	29.0000	11.0000	28.0000
Mode		38.00 <sup>a</sup>	19.00	19.00	30.00	9.00	28.00
Std. Deviation		7.54618	7.36811	5.32832	11.67076	6.14974	7.45254
Skewness		.142	.118	-.462	.067	.789	.188
Std. Error of Skewness		.199	.199	.199	.199	.199	.199
Kurtosis		-.201	-.661	-.071	-.465	1.166	.402
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.395	.395	.395	.395	.395	.395
Percentiles	25	33.0000	16.0000	15.0000	19.0000	7.0000	24.0000
	50	38.0000	21.0000	19.0000	29.0000	11.0000	28.0000
	75	44.0000	26.0000	22.0000	36.0000	15.0000	34.0000

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

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Table 4.2 showing descriptive statistics of grit, satisfaction, happiness, exhaustion, depersonalisation, and personal accomplishment.

The normality of the data was tested using the values of skewness and kurtosis and it was found that the data was not normal and thus, non parametric method was employed and spearman correlation coefficient was used to find correlation values between the variables.