

An Exploration of Grit and Research Efficacy in Graduate Students

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Abstract

Grit, as a non-cognitive factor, has emerged as a concept of interest in relation to achievement in various groups such as employees, athletes, and students in both school and university. This research looks at grit and its relationship to research efficacy in graduate students. Two major objectives form the basis for this study. The first being to add to the knowledge base about grit and its relationship to demographic variables such as age, gender and academic achievement. The second objective of this study was to determine if there is a relationship between grit and research self-efficacy. This study involved 131 graduate students from Assumption University who were asked to respond to the Grit Scale and an adapted version of the SERM (Self-Efficacy in Research Measure). Statistical analysis was carried out to find correlations between grit and demographic variables such as gender and age and GPA. The findings from this study concluded that there was no significant difference in levels of grit for male and female graduate students. Grit was found to be positively correlated with age, while it was not found to be correlated with GPA. In relation to research self-efficacy, a linear multiple regression found a statistically significant relationship with grit and research efficacy: $r(131) = .339, p > .01$. The results of this study both confirm and refute some of the previous research done on grit in various populations. Nonetheless, there are implications for the use of grit in enhancing research self-efficacy, increasing graduate student research productivity and subsequently, the success of graduate programs.

Keywords: grit, research self-efficacy, academic achievement

Introduction

Identifying predictors of success and achievement has been an important area of research. Research has been conducted that has looked at both cognitive and non-cognitive factors and their relationship to outcomes in the labor market (Nikoloski & Ajwad, 2014) and in education (Farrugia, Han, Watson, Moss & Bottoms, 2016). Cognitive factors are those mental processes such as thinking and memory, that can both facilitate or hinder learning. Non-cognitive factors can include the expectations, motivations, persistence of the individual. Both non-cognitive factors such as academic mindset, perseverance, social skills, learning strategies and academic behaviors play a role the successful academic performance of students at various levels and from various populations (Farrugia et al., 2016). Of these non-