



Short Communication

Sense of relatedness is linked to higher grit in a collectivist setting



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ABSTRACT

Grit (i.e., passion and perseverance for long-term goals) has been associated with positive educational, work, and well-being outcomes. However, limited research has been done to examine social and contextual antecedents of grit especially in non-Western settings. The aim of the current study was to assess the associations of relatedness to parents, teachers, and friends with grit dimensions (*perseverance of effort* and *consistency of interests*) and overall grit in 606 Filipino high school students. The results showed that sense of relatedness to teachers was linked to higher *perseverance*, *consistency*, and overall grit while relatedness to parents was associated with greater *consistency* and overall grit even after controlling for demographic variables. The theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

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1. Introduction

Achieving success in school, work, sports, and other domains of human performance usually requires several months or years of effort and persistence. To describe individual differences in passion and perseverance for long-term goals, Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, and Kelly (2007) have conceptualized the 'grit' construct. The authors have proposed that there are two dimensions that characterized grit: *perseverance of effort* (striving harder to accomplish goals despite the hardships faced) and *consistency of interests* (showing steady interest over time). Although grit may be related to the achievement dimensions of conscientiousness (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Duckworth et al., 2007), the former is essentially distinct because it focuses on stamina which enable individuals to accomplish long-term goals with interests and perseverance. Duckworth et al. (2007) also notes that grit is distinct from the need for achievement (McClelland, 1961) because whereas the latter pertains to non-conscious eagerness to accomplish goals that yield instant feedback about performance, the former refers to conscious inclinations to complete long-term goals even without getting desirable feedback. Given the influence of grit on academic achievement, engagement, motivation, and even well-being indices (see Datu, Yuen, & Chen, 2016 for a review), previous research have focused on identifying antecedents of grit in various contexts.

The extant literature shows that some psychological constructs may be linked to higher extent of grit. Particularly, recent research demonstrates that hope (Vela, Lu, Lenz, & Hinojosa, 2015), orientations to happiness like engagement (Von Culin, Tsukayama, & Duckworth, 2014),

positive affect (Hill, Burrow, & Bronk, 2016), and purpose commitment (Hill et al., 2016) are associated with greater determination and perseverance to pursue long-term goals. Whereas these studies may offer insights on the possible catalysts of grit, it seems that these investigations paid much attention to person-related correlates of grittiness and neglected social factors that may potentially cultivate grit especially in collectivist contexts.

In the current study, sense of relatedness was operationalized as a social factor that may be linked to grit. Sense of relatedness refers to the extent to which a person feels accepted by different social partners (i.e., parents, teachers, and friends) (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). It is quite plausible to contend that sense of relatedness can foster grit, especially that this construct "may function as a motivational resource when children are faced with challenge or difficulties" (Furrer & Skinner, 2003, p.148). Previous studies have documented the advantageous role of sense of relatedness in the educational context as relatedness was associated with academic achievement, motivation, and engagement (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Guay, Marsh, Senecal, & Dowson, 2008; Martin & Dowson, 2009). These findings indicate that relatedness may be linked to one's inclination to pursue and persevere towards completion of long-term goals.

There are at least three lines of evidence that can support the conjecture sense of relatedness may be associated with higher grit. First, the self-system model of motivational development (Skinner, Furrer, Marchand, & Kindermann, 2008) posits that relatedness is a key self-system process that can serve as a person's important resource in a specific context. The model proposes that self-system processes (i.e., relatedness) may operate as a potential catalyst of optimal educational outcomes like engagement and motivation. It seems possible that grit is a psychological resource that can potentially crystallize as a result of meaningful interpersonal relationships. Second, the self-determination

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theory argues that human beings have a fundamental need to establish and maintain harmonious relationship with others which they operationalized as relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The model posits that environmental conditions which enable satisfaction for the basic needs for relatedness and other psychological needs (i.e., autonomy and competence) may promote intrinsic motivation and adaptive functioning. Third, it is likely individuals who are situated in collectivist contexts (i.e., Philippines) may realize the benefits of relatedness because the self-construal theory (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) argues that unlike people in individualist societies who tend to endorse an independent self-construal, those in collectivist contexts tend to espouse an interdependent self-construal. Consequently, social and contextual factors strongly matter for a wide range of cognitive, emotional, and motivational outcomes in collectivist cultures.

Furthermore, relatedness to different people has been linked to distinct psychological outcomes. To support this conjecture, getting support from parents (Ahmed, Minnaert, van der Werf, & Kuyper, 2010; Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Guay et al., 2008), and teachers (Ahmed et al., 2010; Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Guay et al., 2008) have been associated with adaptive motivation and other key educational outcomes. However whereas Furrer and Skinner (2003) found the relatedness to peers appears to be the strongest predictor of student engagement, Guay et al. (2008) found that support from peers was not linked to any outcome. Interestingly, compared to support from parents and peers, teacher support serves as the best predictor of enjoyment in the academic context (Ahmed et al., 2010). These results indicate that relatedness to parents, teachers, and peers may have differential influence on passion and perseverance for long-term goals.

Hence, the objective of the present research was to assess the associations of relatedness with grit dimensions (i.e., perseverance of effort and consistency of interests) and overall grit in an interdependent setting. This study would be valuable in understanding how social relationships may be linked to passion and perseverance for long-term aspirations. To date, no research has been conducted to examine social or contextual correlates of grit especially in collectivist societies. To address this gap, the unique predictive influence of sense of relatedness to parents, teachers, and friends after controlling for demographic variables. We hypothesized that sense of relatedness to parents, teachers, and friends would positively predict perseverance of effort, consistency of interests, and overall grit even after controlling for relevant demographic variables (i.e., age and gender).

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

There were 606 Filipino secondary school students from a private high school in Metro Manila who participated in the study. The average age of the participants was 13.87 ($S.D. = 1.26$). There were 300 female and 305 male students. Yet, one student did not specify gender. Prior to the survey administration, the participants' parents were given passive consent forms and the participants were given active consent forms.

2.2. Measures

Grit was assessed through administering the 8-item Short Grit Scale or Grit-S (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). The items were marked on a 5-point likert scale (1 = Not like me at all; 5 = Very much like me). Sample items in the scale are: "New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones" (consistency of interests); and "I am a hard worker" (perseverance of effort). The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients of the *perseverance of effort*, *consistency of interests*, and *overall grit* were 0.60, 0.63, and 0.60 in the current research.

To assess relatedness, the 12-item Sense of Relatedness Scale (Furrer & Skinner, 2003) was used in the study. The items were rated on a 4-point likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 4 = Strongly agree). Here

are sample items in the scale: "When I'm with my parents, I feel accepted", and "When I'm with my teacher, I feel like someone special". The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients of the relatedness to parents, teachers, and peers in the present study were 0.75, 0.65, and 0.74 respectively.

The English version of the questionnaires was used in the study because English serves as the official medium of instruction in the Philippine context.

2.3. Procedures

Prior to the survey administration, the author sought approval from the principal of the secondary school institution. After getting the approval to collect data, the author and class advisers distributed consent forms and administered the paper-and-pencil measures on grit and relatedness in the respective classes of the participants.

3. Results

3.1. Preliminary analysis

The results of Cronbach's alpha reliability analyses, descriptive statistics, and correlational analyses are shown in Table 1. Whereas the reliability coefficients of the grit dimensions (*perseverance of effort* and *consistency of interests*) were relatively low, previous investigations which used Grit-S in the Philippine setting and other contexts yielded low Cronbach's alpha coefficients (See Datu, Valdez, & King, 2016; Datu, Yuen, & Chen, 2016 for a review). For instance, Duckworth and Quinn (2009) showed that the reliability coefficients of the *perseverance of effort* dimension ranged from 0.65 to 0.78 for students who qualified in the final phase of the National Spelling Quiz Bee and undergraduate students of Ivy League universities. The patterns of correlation were consistent the theoretical expectations. Sense of relatedness to various social partners were significantly correlated with grit dimensions and overall grit score.

3.2. Hierarchical regression analyses

The unique predictive influence of sense of relatedness to parents, teachers, and friends on perseverance of effort, consistency of interests, and overall grit beyond the possible impact of demographic variables (i.e., age and gender) was explored through hierarchical regression analyses. In Step 1, demographic variables were entered as a predictor of the outcome variables. In Step 2, sense of relatedness to parents, teachers, and friends were entered as predictors of the said outcomes. Results showed that relatedness to teachers was positively associated with perseverance of effort (Model 1), consistency of interests (Model 2), and overall grit (Model 3) while relatedness to parents was positively linked to consistency of interests (Model 2) and overall grit (Model 3) even after controlling for the influence of demographic variables (See Table 2). Furthermore, it appears that relatedness to teachers had the strongest association with grit.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The study aimed to assess the associations of sense of relatedness with grit dimensions in a collectivist setting. Sense of relatedness to distinct social partners (except for peer relatedness) was positively associated with grit dimensions even after controlling for the influence of relevant demographic variables. The results indicate that having positive relationships with teachers and parents may be linked to higher perseverance and passion for long-term goals.

The first interesting aspect of the study points to the adaptive role of teacher relatedness which partly supported the hypothesis and corroborated the results from previous research regarding the strong influence of teacher relatedness on a wide range of educational outcomes (Ahmed

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