

PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS THROUGH GRIT AND SELF-REGULATION: A GENDERIAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Competitive exams like the CAT require the students to be highly gritty, effective and regulated. The objective of this study is to understand the influence of gender on Grit, Self-Regulation and Personal Effectiveness. The study hypothesized that gender would play a role in development of the variables namely: Grit, Self-Regulation and Personal Effectiveness. Data was collected from 402 male and female students aged between 22 to 27 years, who are either in their undergraduate studies or in their first year of the MBA program and had taken the CAT entrance exam. Independent samples t-test results revealed a gender difference in passion dimension of Grit and stress management of personal effectiveness. The findings of the present study offer important implications to psychologists, teachers, parents, researchers, educational/coaching institutes, and majorly the students.

Key words: *Grit, Self-Regulation, Personal Effectiveness, CAT.*

Introduction

Character strengths represent durable positive individual characteristics and are expressed through thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). According to Crede, Tynan and Harms (2017). Grit, one such character strength has been understood to be a “higher order personality trait that is highly predictive of both success and performance and distinct from other traits such as conscientiousness”. In the student population aspiring for career success, Grit is identified to be an important contributor to success. This is because Grit is a quality that can make individuals remain focussed on the task at hand even in the face of setbacks and failures. It is this quality in individuals that makes a difference and ensures that they do not give up. Bowman, Hill, Denson, and Bronkema (2015) believe grit to be a combination of perseverance of effort and consistency of interest exhibited over a long period of time. It is considered to be a crucial element in ensuring success over several life domains, and is immensely important for students to possess this quality as they cannot afford to lose track of their goals or neglect their academic endeavours even for a short time. Morton and Paul (2019) in their study state that achievement of long-term goals is difficult and that failure rates are high. Consistency of interest and persistence of effort go

a long way in ensuring long-term academic success as students need to constantly self-motivate and push themselves to stay the course and reach the next level. This is a process they need to adhere to for quite a number of years and grit could be the one factor that helps individuals manage the same. Exploration of existing research to understand the gender differences in grit led to inconclusive results. Batres (2011) reported no gender differences on the Grit scale in alternative education students whereas other studies reveal a significant difference in the levels of grit between males and females. The existing literature lends insufficient empirical evidence to disentangle the relationship between gender and Grit.

Grit has been strongly associated with self-regulation and contributes to personal effectiveness in the individual. Self-regulation ensures that the person remains regulated and focussed on the task and committed to completing it by exerting control over the impulses, emotions and behaviour. Researchers have defined Self-Regulation in different ways: when defined in a narrow manner, it consists of the ability to control emotions whereas when defined in a broader manner, it consists of all the emotional, cognitive and metacognitive processes used while facing challenges at a personal or interpersonal level. It is derived from cognitive functions called executive functions meaning the ability for monitoring and managing one's own behavior, cognitions and emotional expression in order to achieve a particular goal or adapt to a particular situation. It involves a variety of cognitive and emotional processes, including attentional control, emotion regulation, impulse control, planning, and problem-solving. It allows individuals to set and achieve goals, resist temptations and distractions, adapt to changing circumstances, and maintain social relationships. It also plays a role in mental and physical health, as individuals capable of regulating their emotions and behaviors are expected to experience lower levels of stress, anxiety, and other negative outcomes. Self-Regulation, involves the ability to monitor and manage one's behavior, emotions, and cognitive processes to achieve goals or adapt to specific situations. A 2009 study found gender differences in Self-Regulation skills of kindergartners with girls scoring higher, although these differences were not seen in academic performance. Beyond this, there have been very few studies that illuminated the role of gender in differences in self-regulated learning in higher education and more competitive academic setups and this area warrants further investigation.

Personal Effectiveness is a crucial element that contributes towards achieving success and satisfaction in one's personal and professional life. Personal Effectiveness originates from Positive Psychology and the self-help movement (Choudhary, 2016). Maheshwari & Kumar (2008) define personal effectiveness as the ability to make a positive and energetic impact on to others by conveying ideas and information clearly and persuasively. It is the ability to produce desired behaviours and outcomes whether at home, at school or at work and achieve personal objectives. Personal effectiveness can be viewed as the quality that results in meeting the goals or requirements of a particular task. Environments that promote achievement and work satisfaction

can promote Personal Effectiveness. On the other hand, any environment that promotes competitiveness, stress or confrontation can decrease Personal Effectiveness in an individual. Kwantes and Boglarsky (2007) state that one's outlook towards their future, attitude towards their work, goal orientation and a sense of direction can all result in higher levels of effectiveness. As Personal Effectiveness increases, confidence and competence increase paving way for higher levels of success both personally and professionally. It encompasses a range of factors, including self-awareness, emotional intelligence, communication skills, time management, goal-setting, and problem-solving skills (Schwartz, 2019). "Self-awareness is a foundational aspect of personal effectiveness as it involves having a clear understanding of one's strengths, weaknesses, values, and motivations" (Duval & Silvia, 2001). A study conducted by Wilson and Dunn (2004) demonstrated that self-awareness contributes to better decision-making and improved performance in various life domains. It allows individuals to recognize their strengths and weaknesses, establish realistic goals, and focus on self-improvement.

Personal Effectiveness also comprises of personal capabilities like stress management, leadership capability, self-confidence, ability to cope with change, social effectiveness, interpersonal skills etc. Self- Efficacy as proposed by Bandura and Wessels (1997) is synonymous with the development of Personal Effectiveness. Personal Efficacy can be seen as the individual's belief in their capabilities and control over different life situations. Personal Effectiveness and Personal Efficacy are two terms often used interchangeably in Positive Psychology. Personal Effectiveness is a greatly valued quality and is useful in diverse career fields, especially in management roles, as it encompasses essential skills and capabilities for success. These dimensions are equally relevant to students who often face heightened stress levels in their academic lives (Seibert & Kraimer, 2001). Key aspects or abilities contributing to Personal Effectiveness include time management, stress management, openness to change, self-confidence, self-efficacy, communication skills, social skills, and leadership abilities.

Grit, self-regulation and personal effectiveness have a key role in enhancing the student's academic performance and later career success, which makes it imperative to learn more about these variables and factors that contribute towards their development. It is also important to learn about the gender differences that influence the development and sustenance of these factors This study endeavours to study the influence of gender on these variables.

Research question:

Is there an influence of gender on grit, self-regulation and personal effectiveness?

Research Objective:

To find out if there is an influence of gender on grit, self-regulation and personal effectiveness

Research Hypothesis:

There is an influence of gender on grit, self-regulation and personal effectiveness.

Method

Research Design

This study is a quantitative study and between groups design was used to examine the gender differences that exist between males and females in the sample. Grit and Self-Regulations were treated as independent variables whereas Personal Effectiveness was treated as a dependent variable. The sample consisted of 402 (201 male and 201 female) students in the final year of their Under-graduate studies or those who are in their first year of MBA and have written the CAT entrance for admission into an MBA program. The age group of the students was between 22 to 27 years. The sample was assessed on their levels of Grit Self-Regulation and Personal Effectiveness.

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion criteria
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students in the final year of Undergraduate Study who have appeared for the CAT entrance and obtained their percentile score. 2. Students in the first year of the Masters of Business Administration program who have written the CAT entrance. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students attempting the entrance for a second time. 2. Students who could not read and answer the questionnaires on their own. 3. Students who are pursuing their second master’s program 4. Students who could not provide their consent. 5. Students suffering with any major psychiatric disorders

Instruments

1. The Grit Scale: The scale consisting of 2 sub-scales passion and perseverance was developed by Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews and Kelly in 2007.

2. The Self-Regulation Questionnaire was Developed by Brown, Miller and Lawendowski in 1999. It consists of 7 sub-scales receiving, Evaluating, Triggering, Searching, Formulating, Implementing and Assessing. Test-retest reliability was = .94, $p < .0001$. Internal consistency was $\alpha = .91$.

3. The ROPELOC developed by Richards, Ellis and Neill in 2002. Fourteen subscales- Active Involvement, Cooperative Teamwork, Leadership Ability, Open Thinking, Quality Seeking, Self Confidence, Self-Efficacy, Social Effectiveness, Stress Management, Time Efficiency, Coping with Change, Overall Effectiveness, Internal Locus of Control, External Locus of Control make up the questionnaire. Internal and external locus of control dimensions being optional were not included in this study. The internal reliability of the subscales ranges between .79 and .93 with an average of .85.

Results

Table 1

Mean Comparison of Male and Female Respondents on Grit & its Domains

Variables	Male		Female		<i>t</i> (400)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	M	SD	M	SD			
Passion	17.04	5.071	18.02	4.893	1.97	.05	.19
Perseverance	21.75	4.779	21.89	3.958	.31	.75	.03
Grit	38.79	8.334	39.91	7.192	1.44	.15	.14

Table 1 shows the results of the *t* test done on grit and its dimensions, Passion and Perseverance. Gender was taken as an independent variable and the objective was to see if there is a difference between males ($n = 201$) and females ($n = 201$) on the above-mentioned variable and its dimensions. Statistically significant mean differences were observed in one dimension of grit namely passion. For passion females reported a higher mean value ($M = 18.02$, $SD = 4.89$) than males ($M = 17.04$, $SD = 5.07$).

Table 2

Mean Comparison of Male and Female Respondents on Self-Regulation & its Domains

Variables	Male		Female		<i>t</i> (400)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	M	SD	M	SD			
Receiving	29.69	6.577	30.59	5.296	1.52	.13	.15
Evaluation	28.54	4.116	28.69	4.023	.35	.72	.03
Triggering	28.72	4.822	28.86	3.844	.32	.75	.03
Searching	31.80	6.311	32.42	4.926	1.11	.27	.11
Planning	28.20	6.514	28.79	5.312	.98	.33	.09
Implementing	29.69	6.597	29.90	5.657	.34	.73	.03
Assessing	30.53	5.154	30.92	4.277	.83	.40	.08
Self-Regulation	207.16	30.331	210.16	22.619	1.12	.26	.11

Table 2 shows the results of the *t* test done on self-regulation and its dimensions, and. Gender was taken as an independent variable and the objective was to see if there is a difference between males (*n* = 201) and females (*n* = 201) on the above-mentioned variable and its dimensions. No statistically significant mean differences were observed in any of the dimensions as well as on the variable self-regulation.

Table 3

Mean Comparison of Male and Female Respondents on Personal Effectiveness & its Domains

Variables	Male		Female		<i>t</i> (400)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	M	SD	M	SD			
Active Involvement	17.84	4.55	18.03	4.00	.45	.65	.04
Cooperative Teamwork	18.38	4.47	18.62	4.108	.56	.58	.06
Leadership Ability	17.54	5.88	17.47	4.42	.14	.89	.01
Open Thinking	18.32	4.49	18.48	4.01	.39	.69	.03
Quality Seeking	18.47	4.55	18.80	4.25	.75	.45	.07

Variables	Male		Female		<i>t</i> (400)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	M	SD	M	SD			
Active Involvement	17.84	4.55	18.03	4.00	.45	.65	.04
Cooperative Teamwork	18.38	4.47	18.62	4.108	.56	.58	.06
Self Confidence	18.13	4.48	17.99	4.05	.34	.73	.03
Self-Efficacy	17.67	4.534	17.55	7.23	.19	.84	.02
Social Effectiveness	16.67	7.84	16.78	4.50	.17	.86	.01
Stress Management	16.54	4.84	15.60	4.80	1.95	.05	.19
Time Efficiency	16.43	4.43	16.43	3.88	.00	1.00	.00
Coping with Change	16.85	4.68	16.94	4.21	.19	.85	.01
Overall Effectiveness	16.89	4.59	16.90	3.86	.03	.97	.00
Personal Effectiveness	222.57	48.34	222.67	41.11	.02	.98	.002

Table 3 shows the results of the *t* test done on personal effectiveness and its dimensions. Gender was taken as an independent variable and the objective was to see if there is a difference between males (*n* = 201) and females (*n* = 201) on the above-mentioned variable and its dimensions. Statistically significant mean differences were observed in one dimension of personal effectiveness namely stress management. For stress management, males reported a higher mean value (M = 16.54, SD = 4.84) than females (M = 15.60, SD = 4.80).

Discussion

Studies conducted so far on grit have mostly indicated minimal or no gender differences. However, the present study revealed statistically significant mean differences in passion dimension of grit with females scoring higher than males. Women have a natural and greater tendency to be compassionate towards various causes that involve other people which can lead to them pursuing those with higher levels of passion. In the Indian context, this quality when demonstrated towards members of their own family is considered to be an admirable quality in women. However, when exhibited by women towards their personal goals, it is discouraged. Acceding to the social and cultural norms discourages women from demonstrating qualities not acceptable to society. Whipple & Dimitrova-Grajzl (2021) state that there is a gender difference in perception of one's own grittiness. According to them, "Women might tend to underreport their own grit due to societal norms; alternatively, women might inadvertently underreport their grit because of differences in multitasking ability". While grit and perseverance towards their goals is appreciated in a male, the same quality when exhibited by a female is not accepted. This may prompt females to downplay their levels of passion and perseverance for their long-term goals. Passion aids the development of perseverance as it fosters determination and higher levels of passion in women could contribute to higher levels of overall grit. A study conducted by Kannangara et. al., on 300 undergraduate and post-graduate students found grit levels to be higher in females than in males.

In another study conducted by Sigmundson et. al., (2021) on 146 young adults in Iceland found grit levels to be significantly higher in the male sample. Sigmundsson, Guðnason, and Jóhannsdóttir (2021) found Grit levels to be higher in the female sample but passion levels to be higher in the male population. Choi (2018) in his study reported significant gender differences in Grit scores among engineering students at Northeastern University with female students scoring higher on the Grit scale than the male students. A similar result was also reported by Rojas, (2015) in a study examining the psychometric properties of the Grit scale, with females reporting higher levels of Grittiness than males.

There is diverse research done on the variable self-regulation. Many of these studies indicate clear gender differences between males and females. One such study points towards the inherent temperamental differences between boys and girls that result in girls being better regulated than boys. However, the results of this study did not reveal any significant gender differences in self-regulation and its dimensions.

The various dimensions of personal effectiveness when studied independently showed that gender differences exist on its dimensions. However, the results of this study indicate gender differences only on stress management with men having higher ability to manage stress effectively. Gentry et. al., (2007) conducted a research study, the findings of which revealed higher stress levels in women. Several other research studies support the fact that college going women experience higher levels of stress. Gender role expectations can contribute significantly towards the experience of daily stress in women. A study done by Matud (2004) states that women experience gender-specific stressors such as gender violence and sexist discrimination, which are associated with women's physical and psychiatric events. In the Indian context, working women generally manage work and home with little or no contribution towards house work by the men of their house. Women are expected to work outside the home and take care of the household chores though their earnings are equivalent to their partners' as taking care of the home is considered to be a social role assigned to women. In many households asking the women to leave the job if she complains can also be a reason for women to experience stress in their daily activities.

Women due to their higher levels of emotional involvement and compassion towards others, experience the stress of those around them. Hence women report higher levels of chronic stress caused by their daily routine and are overwhelmed by it. Turner et al., (1995). women also were more affected by the stress of those around them, as they tend to be more emotionally involved than men in social and family. However, in conditions causing severe stress, like war or terrorism women are known to manage their stress better than men. A study conducted by Ben-Zur and Zeidner (1996) to understand the gender differences in coping reactions in crisis found that women tended to be more active and problem-focused than men in their coping during the Gulf War crisis, whereas men, compared to women, reported more emotion-focused coping. They also found that this pattern was reversed for coping with daily stressors after the war.

Higher levels of stress may overwhelm women making management of stress to be ineffective. Furthermore, women generally have a tendency to use emotion-focussed coping whereas males use problem-focussed coping strategies. Emotion-focussed coping strategies used to manage stress like crying or venting bring immediate relief but may not completely resolve the problem or situation causing stress. These coping strategies are considered to be passive and most of the time ineffective. Men on the other hand depend less on emotion-focussed coping and are more problem-focussed in their approach to managing stress. This helps them manage stress effectively or maybe even eliminate the stressor itself by finding suitable resolution of the problem.

Implications

The findings of this study have implications for parents, educators and psychologists as an understanding as developing passion defined as consistency of interest for either learning or any other task can foster certain character strengths. Peterson & Seligman, (2004) state that interest is shown to be a powerful influence on sustained attention and comprehension, and promoting self-regulation of interest for learning may result in positive motivational and performance outcomes in the long term. Li (2002) found that cultivating a passion for lifelong learning fosters diligence, persistence and concentration.

Limitations and future directions

This study focuses on gender differences, however, understanding other demographic contributors can yield comprehensive information regarding these variables especially in the Indian context as characteristic socio-cultural influences specific to India will throw light on the influence of India specific effects on the interaction of these variables.

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