

“The Power of Grit” by Angela Duckworth

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Introduction to Grit

Grit is a psychological trait that is termed positive and non-cognitive based on the [person's perseverance and resolution](#) to achieve the goals in life. It is an amalgamation of passion and effort, which states the determination for long-term life goals and achievements. Duckworth precisely defined Grit in 2007 as “perseverance and passion for achieving long-term goals.” He carried out an extensive study on Grit and proposed that grit can serve as a better predictor of success as compared to Intelligence or Emotional Quotient. Grit is mostly comprised of one's ability to stick to a task and be able to pursue ambitions and act to achieve lifetime goals but put in a lot of effort and passion. This evokes a positive psychological trait in a person. Another essential domain is the consistency of interest of an individual over an extended period. These two things dominantly make up grit, and in the following discussion, we will extensively discuss what positive or negative impacts can grittiness have on one's personality. (Wu et al., 2022)

Traits and Interests of Gritty Individuals

Starting off with the interests and personality traits of gritty people. We are the kind of people for whom it is a popular thing that a person who achieves something extraordinary or overcomes insurmountable odds is one hell of a genius. Common examples quoted are Einstein, Newton, Nash, etc. So people have stereotyped such people with the word genius. On the other hand, it is the saying of Einstein himself that, “Genius is 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration.” According to Duckworth, 90% is of much higher importance. So generally, people are of the opinion that an extraordinary person is born with the innate skills and talents that make them shine and be capable of being called a genius. But this is not the case. The 90% perspiration, as mentioned in Einstein's saying, is called Grit – tough-mindedness, perseverance, and hard work. Duckworth carried out extensive research in this domain and finally drew out that grit is the outcome of passion and one's determination for long-term goals and achievements. Grit is the kind of commitment and resolution in terms of effort and patience shown by students and employees to achieve their goals even if they have to try for it for weeks, months, or years. According to Duckworth, grit has the ability to better predict a person's success and achievements in the future as compared to their intelligence quotient. (Young and Archer, 2023)

Perseverance Toward Long-Term Goals

In order to achieve long-term goals, grittier people maintain their efforts and interests over the years. There might be failures, hardships, and plateaus in progress that could demotivate them, but they are determined. On the contrary, even if the less gritty people are disappointed or bored, they change their course, and hence, they do not achieve what they wish for. In one of her famous TED talks, Duckworth refers to grit as “living life like it’s a marathon and not a sprint.” She has significantly taken the debate of the secret to exceptional achievement to a higher level by stating how simple and little factors can play a great role in determining success and significant achievements in one’s life.

Research Evidence on Grit and Achievement

Some of the research that is based on the same shows exactly how grit and personality traits for long-term goals have helped to outperform the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) of the same. In 2004, Duckworth carried out a study on the cadets of the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point. She targeted the ones who made it to the first summer. There were 1,139 new cadets who entered in July 2004. It has a seventeen per cent dropout rate. There were many different factors involved, such as the SAT scores, the class rank of the student, the extracurricular activities, the physical aptitude exam scores, etc. The result was that the grit scale proved to be the best indicator of how many of the cadets made it through the first year. A similar result was observed in a study on the National Spelling Bee. Duckworth was extremely impressed by the spelling bee and carried out the study in terms of the effect of grit on the success of young children. She researched 175 finalists of the spelling bee and later mailed a copy of the questionnaire to all of them. The results showed that the highest achievers were the ones who had the grittiest personality traits, such as persistence and determination.

Grit and Deliberate Practice

Duckworth found out that the spelling bee participants who were grittier had a direct correlation with their success. The gritty children had a large number of repetitive and continuous practices. Even though these practices were boring, they enabled them to perform excellently. This practice alone was proven to be the most influential predictor of the final achievement in the National Spelling Bee. So the studies by Duckworth on the West Point cadets and the spelling bee participants strengthened the idea that grit is a good predictor of success. It is even better than the IQ and emotional quotient in some cases. In addition, in both cases, the participants who had a high grit score were not necessarily the ones with the highest intelligence or talent, but their determination and perseverance helped them to succeed.

Limitations and Negative Effects of Grit

It is highly critical to take into account the negative side of grit as well. Grit may help an individual achieve goals and become successful, but it may also make a person too stubborn and inflexible. In some cases, a person may continue to pursue an unrealistic goal even when it is no longer beneficial or possible. Such persistence may cause stress, exhaustion, and a waste of resources. It may prevent the person from changing direction and exploring other opportunities. Therefore, grit must be balanced with good judgment, flexibility, and the ability to reassess goals. A person should know when to continue and when to change course. This balance helps to prevent grit from becoming harmful stubbornness. (Tynan et al., 2024)

Structural Barriers and Individual Responsibility

Another possible disadvantage is that the emphasis on grit may place too much responsibility on the individual while ignoring social and structural barriers. Students and workers may face poverty, discrimination, poor educational resources, health problems, or unequal opportunities that cannot be overcome by persistence alone. If success is explained only through grit, people who do not succeed may be unfairly blamed for lacking effort or determination. This view may overlook the responsibility of institutions and society to provide fair opportunities, support, and resources. Thus, grit should be understood as one factor among many that influence achievement.

Criticism of the Grit Construct

The grit theory has also been criticized because the two major components, perseverance of effort and consistency of interest, may not always work in the same way. Research has indicated that perseverance of effort is often more strongly related to academic performance than consistency of interest. A student may change interests or goals while still working hard and achieving success. Changing an interest does not necessarily indicate a lack of grit; it may reflect learning, maturity, or adaptation. Therefore, the measurement and interpretation of grit should be done carefully. (Calo et al., 2024)

Conclusion

To conclude, grit is a significant psychological trait that combines perseverance and passion for long-term goals. It can help individuals continue working despite challenges, failure, and slow progress. Duckworth's studies of military cadets and spelling bee participants showed that grit may predict persistence and achievement beyond talent or intelligence alone. However, grit is not the only explanation for success, and excessive persistence can become harmful when a goal is unrealistic or [circumstances require a change](#). Social conditions, opportunities, support, and individual well-being

also influence achievement. The most useful approach is to develop perseverance while maintaining flexibility, self-awareness, and realistic judgment.

References

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