



Grit, Hope and Meaning in Life: A Correlational Study

Hayat Muhammad¹, Zabih Ullah², Yasir Afridi³, Shahzeb⁴, Ayan Saddique⁵, Basharat Hussain⁶, Shakir Ullah⁷

^{1,2}Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Peshawar

^{3,4,5,6} Department of Psychology, University of Peshawar

⁷PhD Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Haripur

Abstract

The study examines the relationships between Boost in Tolerance, Need to Belong, and Satisfaction in Life among undergraduate university students. A total of 576 students (M = 21 years) from various faculties and departments participated in the study, with an equal number of male and female respondents. Using a purposive sampling technique, participants completed validated scales: the Grit scale, the Hope scale, and Meaning in life. The results show positive association between grit and hope ($r = .32, p < 0.01$), grit and meaning in life ($r = 0.27, p < 0.01$), hope and meaning in life ($r = .44, p < 0.01$), indicating that individuals with higher consistent and hope full tend to experience a greater sense of life purpose. Gender differences were observed, with females scoring significantly higher on grit ($t = -1.5, p = 0.05$) and hope ($t = -3.2, p < 0.01$) as compared to males, while no significant gender differences were found in meaning in life ($t = 0.93, p = 0.17$). The study highlights the importance of fostering grit and hope to enhance students' goal-directed behavior and life satisfaction. Future research should explore longitudinal effects and cultural influences on these psychological constructs.

Keywords: Grit, Hope, Meaning in Life, Positive Psychology, Gender Differences, Student Well-being

Introduction

Those individual who are more focused towards their true selves are considered as full functioning individual and they will desire in accomplishing their life purpose or goals because they are capable enough to remain in contact with their reality and emotions. Those who focus on themselves to attain meaningful goals and convince and pursue helping behavior and values will bring harmony within their existence and beings (Vainio & Daukantaitė, 2016). Without implicit support the concept of positive growth is nothing. Intrinsically, to achieve best version of self is the ability of every person. For positive growth which needs an environment that helps to grow a potential; while reaching their appropriate goals some of environmental factors may develop hurdle to prevent him to achieve these goals (Rogers, 1961). In achieving self-actualization the Sub consciousness process are playing important. These process will bring human beings to know new experience in life (Ryan et al, 2000; Emmons, 2003; Sheldon et al, 2004; Deci et al, 2000).

The core principle of development and movement is intrinsic motivation, which bring them towards positive growth. Every individual are internally motivated to build and their positive growth have been shown under suitable situations or this might create hurdle by the outer environment, which closed the organismic process. (Rogers, 1961; 194). With the biological

and subconscious driven process it is possible to sustain growth strength which will ultimately help in accomplishing the actualization stage. New life experiences will help in evaluation of individuals (Ryan et al, 2000; Emmons, 2003; Sheldon et al, 2004; Deci et al, 2000). To achieve peace and prosperity in life it essential for individual to have a Goal-directed life. Achieving long-term goals involves confronting numerous distractions in daily life, which impede progress toward those objectives. In the contemporary age of social networking, the youth globally, and specifically in Pakistan, are dedicating extensive hours to these devices, neglecting their scholastic and other creative and constructive pursuits (e.g., Instagram, tiktok, etc.). In this case, it is crucial to analyze positive psychological variables that can significantly redirect kids (students) towards life goals, enhancing their desire and perseverance.

Despite the rapid changes in the modern world, some individuals remain consistent in pursuing their life goals, and these efforts will lead them to their success (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Greene, 2006). These individuals have intrinsic drive , which will lead them to undertake practical measures to confront and surmount the adversities and problems they encounter (Ryan, Deci, & Kessar, 2004; Deci, 1975) The PP positive psychology is crucial in comprehending kids' mental health, career development, and academic success (Seligman 2002), . Researchers should employ a positive psychology framework to evaluate the abundance of components influencing crucial outcomes and formulate action plans to enhance particular targeted elements that support academic success and mental well-being. Positive psychology formulates and aims at strategies to enhance and fortify physical health, emotions, and happiness (Seligman, 2002). Temperament traits that propel individuals toward achievement in attaining life achievement or goal have lately been defined as "grit" (Duckworth et al, 2007).

Duckworth et al. (2011) assert that individuals exhibiting grit intentionally dedicated more time to a spelling exam, hence enhancing their efficiency. Self-discipline is more intimately associated with daily advancement. Grit, meanwhile, is intimately associated with exceptional and remarkable achievements. This may necessitate decennary or perhaps a lifespan to achieve (Duckworth et al, 2014). The strong correlation between grit and well-being is assert by Salles, Cohen, and Mueller (2014). A previous study examined the relationship among grit and well-being, which is shaped by an individual's perspective of the world as controllable, comprehensible, and resourceful, alongside the perceived meaningfulness of life. An optimistic perspective evaluates things accurately and encompasses contemplation and strategizing for inevitable changes over one's entire lifespan. It is a concept of responding positively to challenges, failures, and adversities. Being resilient persons does not imply that one would be devoid of challenges or distress (Southwick & Charney, 2012).

Hope is the essential force of creation. Without hope the concept of life is not possible. Hope is associated with abstract goals, aspirations and many emotions, synder et al (1994) provided definitions of hope (1998). Hope is defined as constructive force for effective agency and pathways that are organized interactively, encompassing cognitive pathways that operate through various methods to achieve desired objectives.

A psychological virtue and a crucial element of PP (positive psychology) is the concept of Meaning in Life, as articulated by Steger et al, (2006) (Seligman et al, 2009). The personal happiness is link with the meaning in one's life (Steger et al, 2007). Individuals who find their meaning in life do not consistently experience the absence of grief, pain, or despair. The nature of life is not a novel subject for debate and discourse (Kernes et al, 2008). Steger and Shin (2010) believe that the quest for meaning and the existence of meaning are two aspects of existential significance. Research indicates that deriving a feeling of significance in life has

both beneficial and detrimental consequences on mental health (Moomal, 1999) (Steger et al, 2006) (Zika et al, 1992).

The numerous researchers identified a correlation between hope and meaning in life; nevertheless, it is also essential to explore the association between psychological grit and the meaning in life of students. The present research includes the following hypotheses: The higher level of grit and hope are positively correlated with the greater sense of meaning in life. Females will score high on the grit scale and hope and meaning in life scale as compared to males.

Hypothesis

H₁: The higher level of grit and hope are positively correlated with the greater sense of meaning in life.

H₂: Females will score high on the grit scale and hope and meaning in life scale as compared to males.

Materials and Methods

Participants

The sample selection was based on accessibility, with university students invited to participate. A total of 482 undergraduate students, with a mean age of 21, were recruited from various faculties and departments. An equal number of male and female participants were included in the study. Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to, ensuring anonymity, obtaining free and informed consent, and maintaining complete confidentiality. The purposive sampling technique was employed for participant selection.

Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)

The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) was created by Steger et al. (2006) and includes ten questions rated on a Likert scale. In present study, the reliability of the scale, measured by Cronbach's alpha, is 0.90.

Grit Scale

The Grit Short Scale, created by Duckworth et al. (2009), has five questions rated on a Likert scale. A higher score means a stronger sense of grit. In this study, the scale showed good reliability among university students, with a reliability score of 0.82.

Hope Scale

The hope scale develop by Snyder et al. (1991) to measure participant attitude towards goals and priority. The scale consist of 8 items in Likert scale form .The total score is determined by the summing all item responses. It consist of two subscale. In present study the reliability of scale with Cronbach's alpha value is .83.

Procedure

The initial phase involved obtaining authorization from Institutional Heads as a prerequisite to initiating data collection. Next, a purposive sampling technique was utilized to select and approach students. In the third stage, students received a detailed briefing, highlighting the voluntary nature of their participation and clarifying that no academic credit would be awarded as an incentive for completing the research survey. Questionnaires were distributed during class sessions, with participants taking approximately 12 to 15 minutes to complete them. Once

data collection was finalized, all responses were combined and entered into data management software, specifically SPSS for further analysis and computation.

Ethical Approval

Informed consent was taken from the participants and briefed the participants about the purpose of the current research. No such committee exists in our institute; therefore all the ethical considerations were kept under consideration during the complete process.

Result of the Study

Table 1 correlation between Grit, Hope, meaning in life

Variable	1	2	3
Grit	1	.32**	.27**
Hope	.32**	1	.44**
ML	.27**	.44**	1

Note. ** = $p < .01$, G=grit , H= Hope, ML=meaning in life

The results show a significant association between grit and hope ($r=.32$, $p<0.01$), suggest that individuals with higher level of hope tend to report slightly higher levels of grit. There is a significant positive association between grit and meaning in life ($r=.27$, $p<0.01$) which suggest individual who experience greater grit are more likely to perceive more meaning in their lives. There is a strong positive correlation between meaning in life and hope ($r = 0.44$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that individuals with higher levels of hope are more likely to experience a greater sense of meaning in life.

Table 2 t value showing difference between genders on Grit, Hope, meaning in life

Variable	M		F		t	P
	M	S.D	M	S.D		
Grit	57.6	9.20	59.0	9.16	-1.5	.05
Hope	69.3	9.94	72.5	11.2	-3.2	.00
ML	50.4	9.15	51.2	8.39	-.93	0.17

Note. G=grit, H= Hope, ML=meaning in life

Table 2 presents the t-test results comparing grit, hope, and meaning in life between males and females. A statistically significant difference was found in grit scores between males ($M = 57.6$) and females ($M = 59.0$), $t = -1.5$, $p = 0.05$, suggesting that females tend to have slightly higher grit levels. Additionally, a significant difference was observed in hope scores, with females ($M = 72.5$) scoring significantly higher than males ($M = 69.3$), $t = -3.2$, $p < 0.01$. However, no significant difference was found in meaning in life scores between males ($M = 50.4$) and females ($M = 51.2$), $t = 0.93$, $p = 0.17$, indicating similar levels of perceived meaning in life across genders.

Discussion

The present study explores the relationships between hope, grit, and meaning in life, as well as gender differences in these variables. The results shows the association between hope and grit ($r = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$) which is significant, it reveals that individuals with higher levels of hope are more likely to show greater grit which supports the pursuit of long-term goals. A meaningful association was identified between grit and meaning in life ($r = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that individuals with higher grit tend to perceive a stronger sense of meaning in life. Meaning in life and hope were positively correlated ($r = 0.44$, $p < 0.01$), implying that individuals with greater hope are more likely to find meaning in life more easily.

We also explore the gender difference between variable as the t-test results shows that there does exist a significant difference in hope scores, with females scoring higher than males ($t = -3.2, p < 0.01$) as evident from mean values. A significant difference between male and female was also found in grit scores ($t = -1.5, p = 0.05$), with females reporting slightly higher levels of grit compared to males also evident from their mean values. But there doesn't exist a significant gender difference in meaning in life scores ($t = 0.93, p = 0.17$), which suggests that males and females perceive similarly about the meaning of life.

Hypothesis 1 Higher levels of grit and hope are positively correlated with a greater sense of meaning in life. Our hypothesis one is accepted as there does exist a significant positive correlation between grit and meaning in life ($r = 0.27, p < 0.01$), hope and meaning in life ($r = 0.44, p < 0.01$), and grit and hope ($r = 0.32, p < 0.01$). These associations agree with previous researches, suggesting that individuals who perceive higher levels of grit and hope are more likely to find meaning in life (Steger et al., 2006; Duckworth et al., 2007). Our findings also support the idea that grit and hope are essential for meaning-full life.

Hypothesis 2 Females will score higher than males on the grit, hope, and meaning in life scales. Our hypothesis 2 is partially accepted. The results show that Females did score higher on both the grit and hope scales ($t = -1.5, p = 0.05$ for grit; $t = -3.2, p < 0.01$ for hope) and also evident from their mean values, which agree with previous studies, which suggest that females may experience higher levels of hope and grit (Blanch & Aluja, 2013). The hypothesis was rejected for the meaning in life scale, as there does not exist a significant difference between gender on meaning in life scale ($t = .93, p = .17$). Both males and females experience similar levels of (MLF) meaning in life, which means that perception about meaning in life may be less influenced by gender and more influenced by other factors, such as individual life experiences and personal values.

We found the positive correlation between grit and hope, which is consistent with earlier research. Grit is the ability to maintain long-term goals while hope involves the capacity to plan for and work toward desired outcomes, which suggests that the two constructs are naturally related with each other's Duckworth et al. (2007). We also found the significant correlation between grit and meaning in life is align with research by Steger et al. (2006) who found that individuals with a higher level of Grit will report a stronger sense of life purpose.

The gender differences observed in hope and grit are align with previous researches, which suggest that females will score higher on measures of grit (Bailey et al., 2019). These findings may show the broader cultural and social roles that encourage women to experience greater emotional awareness and resilience in the face of adversity. But there does not exist a significant gender difference in meaning in life was somewhat unexpected. This result doesn't align with some previous studies, which suggest gender may play a role in how individuals derive meaning, with some findings indicating that women may report a higher sense about meaning in life (Gallagher & Lopez, 2009).

Our finding about meaning in life is unexpected may be due to various factors. For example, gender-specific experiences of meaning might be less pronounced in certain populations, especially among younger individuals or those from similar socio-cultural backgrounds. Additionally, the measurement tools used in this study may not capture all the nuances that contribute to perceived meaning, and future studies could explore more specific dimensions of existential well-being (e.g., life satisfaction, spiritual fulfillment) to better understand how gender influences meaning.

The relatively small difference in grit scores between males and females suggests that while females may score higher on average, this difference is not as substantial as might be expected. This could reflect changing societal roles or educational and professional settings where both males and females are equally encouraged to pursue long-term goals with perseverance.

Limitation of this Study

1. Our study relies on self-reported measure, which may be subject to inaccurate self-assessment by participants.
2. In our study included students of university.
3. Most of the participant in the study were included as young adults.
4. Small sample size was another limitation of study which limit its generalization.
5. Our study does not account for culture difference in Grit, hope and meaning in life.

Recommendations

In future the same study may be expanded to other cultures and regions.

1. Students from other fields should need to include in future study.
2. The longitudinal study is suggested for future study.
3. The study needs to be conducted on large sample size to increase its generalization.
4. People with disabilities should need to include in future study.

References

- Beechler, S., & Woodward, I. C. (2009). The global talent crisis. *Journal of International Management*, 15(3), 273–285.
- Deci, E. L. (1975). *Intrinsic motivation*. Springer US.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227–268.
- Duckworth, A. L., & Gross, J. J. (2014). Self-control and grit: Related but separable determinants of success. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 23(5), 319–325.
- Duckworth, A. L., Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., & Kelly, D. R. (2007). Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(6), 1087–1101.
- Duckworth, A. L., Quinn, P. D., & Seligman, M. E. (2011). Positive predictors of performance in the military: Self-discipline, grit, and the achievement of excellence. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 6(1), 1–8.
- Emmons, R. A. (2003). Personal goals, life meaning, and virtue: Wellsprings of a positive life. *Flourishing: Positive Psychology and the Life Well-Lived*, 105–128.
- Eskreis-Winkler, L., Shulman, E. P., Beal, S. A., & Duckworth, A. L. (2014). The grit effect: Predicting retention in the military, the workplace, school, and marriage. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5, 36.
- Greene, R. (2006). *The 33 strategies of war*. Penguin.
- Kernes, J. L., & Kunnier, N. (2008). Meaning in life: Vocational and existential predictors. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 16(1), 93–104.
- Moomal, Z. (1999). Positive psychology: A new approach to mental health. *Journal of Mental Health*, 8(5), 391–404.
- Robertson-Kraft, C., & Duckworth, A. L. (2014). True grit: Trait-level perseverance and passion for long-term goals predict effectiveness and retention among novice teachers. *Teachers College Record*, 116(3), 1–27.
- Rogers, C. R. (1961). *On becoming a person: A therapist's view of psychotherapy*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68–78.
- Salles, A., Cohen, G. L., & Mueller, C. M. (2014). The relationship between grit and resident well-being. *American Journal of Surgery*, 207(2), 251–254.
- Seligman, M. E. (2002). *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment*. Simon and Schuster.
- Seligman, M. E., Ernst, R. M., Gillham, J., Reivich, K., & Linkins, M. (2009). Positive education: Positive psychology and classroom interventions. *Oxford Review of Education*, 35(3), 293–311.
- Sheldon, K. M., Ryan, R. M., Deci, E. L., & Kasser, T. (2004). The independent effects of goal contents and motives on well-being: It's both what you pursue and why you pursue it. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 30(4), 475–486.
- Snyder, C. R. (1994). The psychology of hope: You can get there from here. *Free Press*.
- Snyder, C. R., Harris, C., Anderson, J. R., Holleran, S. A., Irving, L. M., Sigmon, S. T., ... & Harney, P. (1991). The will and the ways: Development and validation of an individual-differences measure of hope. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60(4), 570–585.
- Southwick, S. M., & Charney, D. S. (2012). *Resilience: The science of mastering life's greatest challenges*. Cambridge University Press.
- Steger, M. F., & Kashdan, T. B. (2007). Stability and specificity of meaning in life and life satisfaction over one year. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 8(2), 161–179.
- Steger, M. F., Frazier, P., Oishi, S., & Kaler, M. (2006). The meaning in life questionnaire: Assessing the presence of and search for meaning in life. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 53(1), 80–93.
- Vainio, M. M., & Daukantaitė, D. (2016). Grit and different aspects of well-being: Direct and indirect relationships via sense of coherence and authenticity. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 17(5), 2119–2147.
- Zika, S., & Chamberlain, K. (1992). On the relation between meaning in life and psychological well-being. *British Journal of Psychology*, 83(1), 133–145.