

FROM GRIT TO LIFE SATISFACTION OF COLLEGE STUDENTS: PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL AS A MEDIATOR

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ABSTRACT – This present conceptual paper intends to explore and investigate college students' life satisfaction in Ji'nan, China. College students' life satisfaction has emerged as one of the most prominent indices relating to health, and it remains a severe challenge to be measured for educational organizations due to its subjective characteristics. However, it may be tested by its predictors. The prior literature about the relationship between grit, psychological capital, and college students' life satisfaction has been reviewed, through which the inconsistency between grit and life satisfaction has been revealed. Therefore, this paper tries to explain the relationship between college students' life satisfaction and grit by the mediating effect of psychological capital, which may be a new conceptual model seldom conducted in previous studies, especially in Ji'nan.

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INTRODUCTION

Times are changing, and the pursuit of happiness remains unchangeable for people worldwide. However, the reality in society, which can be reflected by the two popular and correlated social phenomena, "Involution" and "Tang Ping" among youngsters, arouses public attention and even deep confusion. The two hot words started to popularise on social media platforms as the counterparts of globalisation and social changes in China, exemplifying the low satisfaction of youngsters (Xiang, 2021). Compared to the general population, college students are more widely acknowledged as a population at risk of low life satisfaction (Browning et al., 2021). Besides, some researchers have found that mental health disorders are highly prevalent among college students (Tuckwiller & Dardick, 2018), especially after the outbreak of Covid-19 (Liu et al., 2022). In addition, the Blue Book of National Depression, showing that close attention should be paid to students' mental health, was released in 2022 (China Daily, 2022, June 29) with data that 50% of patients with depression are students at school. Over 35 per cent of the patients range from 18 to 24 years old.

And some recent researchers have looked into the connection between mental health and life satisfaction. Self-reported mental health was substantially correlated with life satisfaction (Lombardo et al., 2018). According to Guzman et al. (2020), overall life satisfaction greatly mediated the association between perceived mental health risks and academic and social functioning. Both men's and women's transitions from late adolescence (age 19) to emerging adulthood (age 21) have shown that life satisfaction and mental health are correlated. Consequently, is it beneficial to improve mental health by improving life satisfaction?

Because of the importance of college student's life satisfaction, many researchers have examined it is influencing factors from both cognitive and emotional perspectives. The present paper tries to focus on the former. In situations relevant to education, scientists have empirically looked at the relationships between grit, psychological capital, and life satisfaction (Li et al., 2018). However, the contribution of psychological capital to the relationship between grit and life satisfaction among college students is mostly unknown. Interestingly, no studies on students have examined the ambiguity between grit and college students' satisfaction with their lives by mediating the impacts of psychological capital. Hence, a thorough understanding of this subject is missing. Self-determination theory has been used to explain the connection between grit and life satisfaction. The current study seeks to give college students a comprehensive view of grit-to-life satisfaction by studying the mediating role of psychological capital.

With the foundation of the prior literature, grit was found to be the most important predictor of life satisfaction in earlier studies (Li et al., 2018; Kannangal et al., 2018; Clark & Malecki, 2019). Yet,

no study has put forth a comprehensive paradigm incorporating psychological capital as a mediator between grit and college students' life satisfaction. In light of the problem and difficulties raised, the following RQ (Research Questions) are addressed:

RQ1: What is the relationship between grit and college students' life satisfaction?

RQ2: Does psychological capital mediate the relationship between grit and college students' life satisfaction?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Life satisfaction

College students as the younger generation keep on increasing these years. Throughout the past several decades, due to China's tremendous advancement of its higher education system, more people of the same age are now attending college (Zhang et al., 2018b). With higher rates of anxiety, depression, substance misuse, and disordered eating than the general population, college students are universally acknowledged as vulnerable (Browning et al., 2021). Also, they are in a crucial stage of development for their healthy growth (Yang et al., 2020). Nonetheless, a country's economic success and growth will be significantly influenced by its college-age population (Zuo B. et al., 2020).

College students' life satisfaction is the continual completion of various social and cultural demanding situations, including dwelling within brand-new surroundings or being beaten with academic or economic needs (Hamdan-Mansour et al., 2009). Besides, Protor, Linley and Maltby (2009) stated that life satisfaction can affect a person's approaching psychological condition and has essential implications for an individual's physical and intellectual development. Although a few students can overcome those challenges well, others might experience a high strain and life satisfaction as poor responses to these challenges (Alorani & Alradaydeh, 2018). Therefore, it is crucial to conduct behaviour studies with the point of interest in improving college students' life satisfaction. All elements affecting life satisfaction become increasingly tough to test due to the subjective nature of the concept of dependent variables (Ain et al., 2021). Nevertheless, it is executable to analyse the institutions of different determinants.

Grit

Grit, a critical predictor of success, is described as passion and perseverance for long-term goals. (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). According to Datu, King, Valdez, and Eala (2018), grit has two major components: consistency of interests (staying committed to interests that may lead to goal achievement) and perseverance of effort (having the resolve to achieve an objective despite numerous obstacles). Thus, grit is supposed to be a hierarchical variable comprising two subcategories. Disabato et al. (2019) found that using the overall grit score was more appropriate. Hou et al. (2021) found correlations between overall grit and subjective well-being stronger in affective than cognitive well-being.

According to research by Li et al. (2018), grit is associated with greater levels of life satisfaction among mainland Chinese workers, English undergraduate and graduate students (Kannangara et al., 2018), and high school students from the Philippines (Valdez & Datu, 2020). Additionally, among American middle school students, domain-specific grit (i.e., academic grit) is connected to life happiness and school satisfaction. (Clark & Malecki, 2019). A recent literature review shows the growth of research about grit on life satisfaction within the last five years. A few research exposed the predicted feature of grit on life satisfaction (Li, Fang et al., 2018; Datu et al., 2018; Clark & Malecki, 2019; Jiang et al., 2020; Lozano et al., 2021). Despite that, some issues remain unexplored. For example, although prior theoretical research has indicated that individuals' grit predicts life satisfaction, little research has empirically examined the underlying mechanism between them (Li et al., 2018). Moreover, different studies indicated that there might be a fantastic relationship between grit and psychological capital (W. et al., 2019; Mashod & Kura, 2020; Kim et al., 2021). Therefore, this present study tries to propose that:

H1(Hypotheses): Grit has a practical effect on college student's life satisfaction.

H2: Grit has a practical effect on the psychological capital of college students.

Psychological capital

Psychological capital, as a high-order assemble comprising hope, resilience, self-efficacy, and optimism, is introduced through Luthans and Youssef to capture one's undoubtedly oriented human useful resource strengths and intellectual capacities (Luthans & Youssef, 2004), based totally on the ideas of the satisfactory psychological motion (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The above four mental sources journey collectively and interact with painting synergistically to provide differentiated manifestation time beyond regulation and throughout context (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). And the whole is more than the sum of its elements. The effects acquired from the study (Nolzen, 2018; Burhanuddin et al., 2019) have furnished further aid for the anticipated higher-order structure of psychological capital.

Existing literature in recent years has provided some evidence about the positive association of psychological capital with grit and life satisfaction for different respondents in various contexts. Some studies demonstrated the predicting function of psychological capital on either the positive mental health of college students, which is often characterised as their life satisfaction (Selvaraj & Bhat, 2018), or the life satisfaction of the respondents, including students and other people (Choi et al., 2018; Datu & Valdez, 2019; Bockorny & Youssef-Morgan, 2019; Poots & Cassidy, 2020). And here comes the other hypothesis:

H3: Psychological capital positively affects college students' life satisfaction.

However, there have been contradictory findings concerning the positive effect of grit on life satisfaction. Other research conducted by Ain et al. (2021) shows that high grit may evoke sceptical perceptions and cause backlash effects. These inconsistent findings suggest that grit's influence on life satisfaction might be "intervened" by other psychological mechanisms, which brings about the next variable in the following part. Therefore, this study assumes that:

H4: Psychological capital mediates the relationship between grit and college student's life satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

Psychological capital

Although some studies uncovered the predicted function of grit on life satisfaction (Li et al., 2018; Datu et al., 2018; Clark & Malecki, 2019; Jiang et al., 2020; LozanoJiménez et al., 2021). There have been contradictory findings concerning the positive effect of grit on life satisfaction. Other research conducted by Ain, Munir and Suneel (2021) shows that high grit may evoke sceptical perceptions and cause backlash effects. These inconsistent findings suggest that grit's influence on life satisfaction might be "intervened" by other psychological mechanisms. Based on the above work, this present paper will fill in the blank on the relationship between grit and the life satisfaction of college students by the mediating effect of psychological capital, trying to examine the underlying mechanism among them in comparison to the previous study (Li et al., 2018).

Research measures

The present study is to utilise a quantitative approach. A survey questionnaire measured each variable. This study uses a quantitative approach with a Likert scale model to certify the hypotheses (Hair et al., 2019), with a 5-Likert scale to measure the independent variables and a 7-Likert scale to the dependent variables and mediator as modus to remedy the common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). All measurement items were taken from previous research, saving each scale's validity and reliability.

To measure the life satisfaction of college students, the SWLS (Satisfaction With Life Scale) with a coefficient alpha of 0.87 (according to Diener & Emmons, 1985) is to be utilised and grit by the Grit.

Scale with tested high inner consistency of 0.85 (Luthans et al., 2007). Psychological capital contains four mature scales developed from previous studies. They are the hope scale (Snyder et al., 1996), the self-efficacy scale (Parker, 1998), the optimism scale (Scheier & Carver, 1985) and the resilience scale (Wagnild & Young, 1993), which will be considered as a high-order construct with the coefficient alpha of 0.88, 0.89, 0.89, 0.89 respectively.

The unique characteristic of the observed sample was used to create a bilingual survey in Chinese and English. (Chinese college students whose native language was Chinese). The initial survey form was translated into Chinese by the principal investigator, who is fluent in both languages. PLS-SEM might be employed to assess H1 to H4. Moreover, this study is cross-sectional due to the confined time and framework.

Sampling technique

Several factors must be considered to determine the sample size needed for research, including statistical power, effect sizes, alpha level, and predictors (Kock & Hadaya, 2018). Prior determination of the sample size is crucial, and GPower software (Faul et al., 2007; Faul et al., 2009) can assist in this process. For this study, a priori power analysis embedded in GPower software was used to estimate the optimal sample size of 85 respondents based on a medium effect size (f^2), α of 0.05, and 80% power for the mediation model. Kline (2004) suggested that a sample size of over 200 is typically large and appropriate for most study models, and as such, this study will use data from over 200 respondents.

DISCUSSION

According to the literature review, it is clear that various populations and contexts have been studied to determine the relationship between grit and life satisfaction, including employees in China (Li et al., 2018), college and graduate students in England (Kannangara et al., 2018), middle school students in the United States (Clark & Malecki, 2019), high school students in the Philippines (Valdez & Datu, 2020), and others. But there are still some issues that need to be resolved. Although previous theoretical research has shown that a person's grit predicts their level of life happiness, little empirical research has looked at the underlying mechanism between them. (Li, Fang, Wang, Sun, & Cheng, 2018). And different studies indicated that there might be a fantastic relationship between grit and psychological capital (W. et al., 2019; Mashod & Kura, 2020; Kim et al., 2021).

Compared to the previous studies, this study investigates college students' life satisfaction from the grit and psychological capital perspective in Ji'nan, China. The online survey consisted of 41 questions, and the sample students came from several colleges in Ji'nan since there have been nineteen colleges or universities until the present study was done. Both grit and psychological capital are considered high-order constructs in fostering and mediating college students' life satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study will contribute to the existing literature on the following three constructs: grit and college students' life satisfaction by using the mediating function of psychological capital. This study establishes that grit has an effective relationship with college students' life satisfaction, which the psychological capital may mediate. This study is specific and significant due to its mediation version, which has not been examined before with the same variables. However, it advised the most effective in the various past research. The recommended model remains improvable despite the fact that it's far more useful. There's nonetheless a want for changes and sensible studies closer to the focal point of this examination so that it can be well carried out in the context of Ji'nan of China.

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