

# The Role of Grit on Happiness among University Students: Systematic Literature Review

## ABSTRACT

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Grit characterized by perseverance and passion for long-term goals, plays a crucial role in enhancing university students' happiness by fostering resilience, academic achievement and overall well-being. However, despite growing interest in its significance, the mechanisms through which grit influences happiness and other student outcomes remain underexplored. This study systematically reviews the role of grit in promoting happiness among university students. Using the PRISMA guidelines, a comprehensive search was conducted across major databases, including SCOPUS and Google Scholar, to identify studies published in English between 2019 and August 2024. A total of 21 relevant articles were included in the review. The analysis revealed two primary themes: student enhancement and improved well-being, highlighting how grit mediates various factors such as resilience, self-esteem, growth mindset, and academic adaptation. The findings discovered that grit not only influences academic success but also contributes significantly to students' psychological well-being, fostering hope, life satisfaction and perseverance. Educators and student support systems are encouraged to focus on developing grit as a key resource to promote both academic achievement and holistic well-being. This review contributes to the broader understanding of grit's role in facilitating personal growth, resilience and sustained happiness among university students, extending its impact beyond academic contexts.

**Keywords:** Grit, Happiness, Subjective well-being, Life satisfaction, University students

# 1. Introduction

## *Background and Rationale*

Happiness is a subjective experience often referred to as subjective well-being (SWB), encompassing both emotional and cognitive evaluations of life, such as life satisfaction, peace and fulfilment (Diener et al., 1999; Diener et al., 2003; Ryan et al., 2008). Because happiness relies on personal assessment, most research uses self-report measures to capture its emotional, cognitive, social, and attitudinal dimensions (Ghahramani et al., 2018; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Thus, this shows happiness not only emotional state but rather complex construct that influence individual social interaction that contributes to success (Ghahramani et al., 2018).

In the context of education setting, happiness is desirable due to its relevancy in fostering academic achievement and well-being (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). To support academic success, recent studies have identified grit as a significant predictor of happiness, with individuals high in grit more likely to experience greater life satisfaction and emotional well-being (Disabato et al., 2018; Weisskirch, 2019). Grit is defined as the non-cognitive trait-level of perseverance and passion for long-term goals (Duckworth et al., 2007). Duckworth emphasized the importance of stamina in achieving long-term success, suggesting that individuals with higher levels of grit view achievement as a marathon rather than a sprint (Kannangara et al., 2018). Conversely, individuals with lower levels of grit are more likely to abandon goals when faced with adversity or boredom. A lack of well-structured and meaningful goals has been identified as a significant barrier to sustained effort (Duckworth, 2014). Thus, grit plays a crucial role in helping students persist through challenges and maintain motivation despite setbacks (Hodge et al., 2017).

The integration of findings indicates a positive relationship between grit and happiness among university students. Grit appears to play a significant role in enhancing students' ability to cope with academic stress and persist through challenges, thereby contributing to greater levels of happiness and well-being in the higher education context. Complementary relationship between grit and happiness is driven by one of the components of grit, namely perseverance dimension (Disabato et al., 2018). Weisskirch (2019) indicated that indirect effects of perseverance on happiness through commitment making, exploration in depth and rumination exploration. This is why people who have high grit tend to report of having higher levels of happiness, life satisfaction and better mental health (Salles et al., 2014; Vainio & Daukantaine, 2016). These findings suggest that grit plays a broader role beyond academic performance, contributing meaningfully to psychological well-being.

Therefore, a deeper and more systematic examination of how grit influences not only academic outcomes but also overall mental health and happiness is particularly important in the context of higher education. University students often face significant stress, pressure and life transitions, making grit a potentially critical factor in their overall well-being. Understanding this relationship more clearly can help lay the groundwork for future empirical studies and inform the design of targeted student support interventions aimed at enhancing academic success.

## *Underpinning Theory*

University and college students face numerous academic, social, and personal challenges that require ongoing adaptation and resilience. Successfully navigating these demands is critical not only for academic achievement but also for overall psychological well-being. Understanding

the personal attributes that enable students to persevere, remain engaged and thrive in higher education is therefore essential. One such attribute that has gained increasing attention in research is grit, which has been linked to sustained effort, goal attainment and enhanced well-being (Duckworth et al., 2007).

In the context of university students, grit enables sustained engagement with challenging tasks, promotes persistence in achieving academic goals, and contributes to the development of personal mastery. When integrated with Self-Determination Theory (SDT), grit can be understood as facilitating the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Specifically, sustained effort toward meaningful goals enhances students' sense of competence, aligns goal pursuit with intrinsic motivation to support autonomy, and can strengthen relatedness through collaborative or socially recognized achievements (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Duckworth et al., 2007).

Building on this theoretical foundation, grit also contributes to broader well-being outcomes beyond academic performance. It influences mediators such as self-esteem, growth mindset, academic engagement, and resilience, which in turn foster happiness (Alhadabi & Karpinski, 2020; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). From a Positive Psychology perspective, the PERMA model of well-being comprising positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment which provides a framework for understanding how grit translates into happiness (Seligman, 2011). Perseverance in goal pursuit enhances accomplishment and engagement, aligns actions with meaningful personal values, generates positive emotions, and can improve social connections. Integrating Grit Theory, SDT and PERMA thus provides a coherent framework illustrating how grit enables university students to satisfy psychological needs, leverage personal strengths and achieve higher levels of happiness as shown in Figure 1.

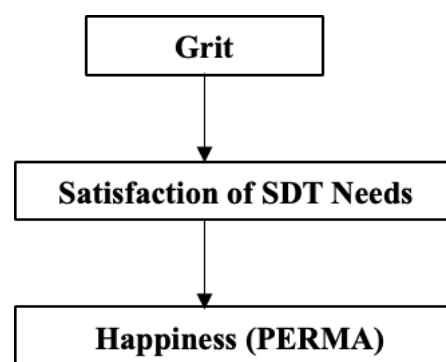


Figure 1: Study Conceptual Framework

### ***Purpose of Study***

Globally, university and college students facing challenges and adaptation is needed in order to overcome obstacle. Consequently, to achieve happiness in higher education, the development of grit is essential. Despite its importance, few studies have systematically examined the relationship between grit and happiness among university students. In recent years, several scholars have systematically investigated grit in relation to educational success; for instance, Yong et al. (2022) conducted one of the few studies closely related to happiness and its predictors among undergraduate students in Malaysia.

The result revealed that specific traits, behaviours, strategies and other domain in life predicts happiness. The differences between the former journal and this research are that the researcher use grit as another component in understanding the role it has on happiness. In addition, the purpose of this systematic literature review is to investigate the connection between grit and happiness in the recent years of 2019-2024.

Therefore, the present systematic review aims at exploring the role of grit and it's on happiness among university students. The main purpose of the review was to compile, analyse and learn from what had already been written about the experiences of students from higher education. The research results will further help researcher to understand the connection between grit and happiness in higher education, as well as to provide an effective way for university students to feel happy while pursuing sustain and retain their study. Due to the wish of researcher in understanding and analyzing the variables, systemative literature is used for this study and the following research question: Does grit predict happiness outcomes among university students?

The findings of this review will contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between grit and happiness within the context of higher education, particularly among university students as they navigate their academic journey. Although existing research often examines grit as a predictor of academic performance and success (Lam et al., 2019; Chisholm-Burns, 2021), limited attention has been given to exploring its relationship with happiness in university student populations. Most studies tend to focus on the general population, rather than addressing the unique experiences of students in higher education, who are especially vulnerable to stress, academic pressure and transitional life challenges. Therefore, this review specifically focuses on peer-reviewed studies published between 2019 and 2024, with the aim of mapping consistent themes, identifying research gaps, and proposing directions for future studies that support the holistic well-being of university students.

To illustrate more details the research questions with the review steps, including literature search, inclusion/exclusion criteria, data extraction and synthesis. The Table 1 outlines the expected outcomes from each step of the review.

Table 1: Mapping Research Aim to Methodological Steps and Expected Outcomes		
Research Aim	Methodological Steps	Expected Outcomes
Does grit predict happiness outcomes among university students?	- Systematically literature (2019- 2024)	- Identification of relevant studies
	- Use of inclusion/exclusion criteria	- Overview of study designs and populations
	- Quality appraisal using PRISMA	
	- Thematic synthesis of findings	- Key patterns and themes linking grit and happiness identified
	- Analysis of contextual factors (e.g., region, discipline)	- Insights into how grit contributes to student happiness across diverse settings
	- Identification of gaps and limitations in existing literature	- Recommendations for future research and educational practice

## 2. Method

The purpose of the literature review is to solve the research problem of the role of grit on happiness in higher education. The qualified documents were collected based on two databases of Scopus and Google Scholar. Scopus is well-known quality ranking publications for all subject fields. In addition, Scopus has a wide selection of subject areas. Meanwhile, Google Scholar is used due to its powerful open access database that archives journal articles. Google Scholar is both a database and a citation index (Rethlefsen, & Page, 2022). This study was conducted according to systematic literature review (SLR) in order to ensure that the researchers can reproduce the findings of SLR in the future. A systematic literature reviews study was conducted in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) statement (Moher, 2009) in Figure 2.

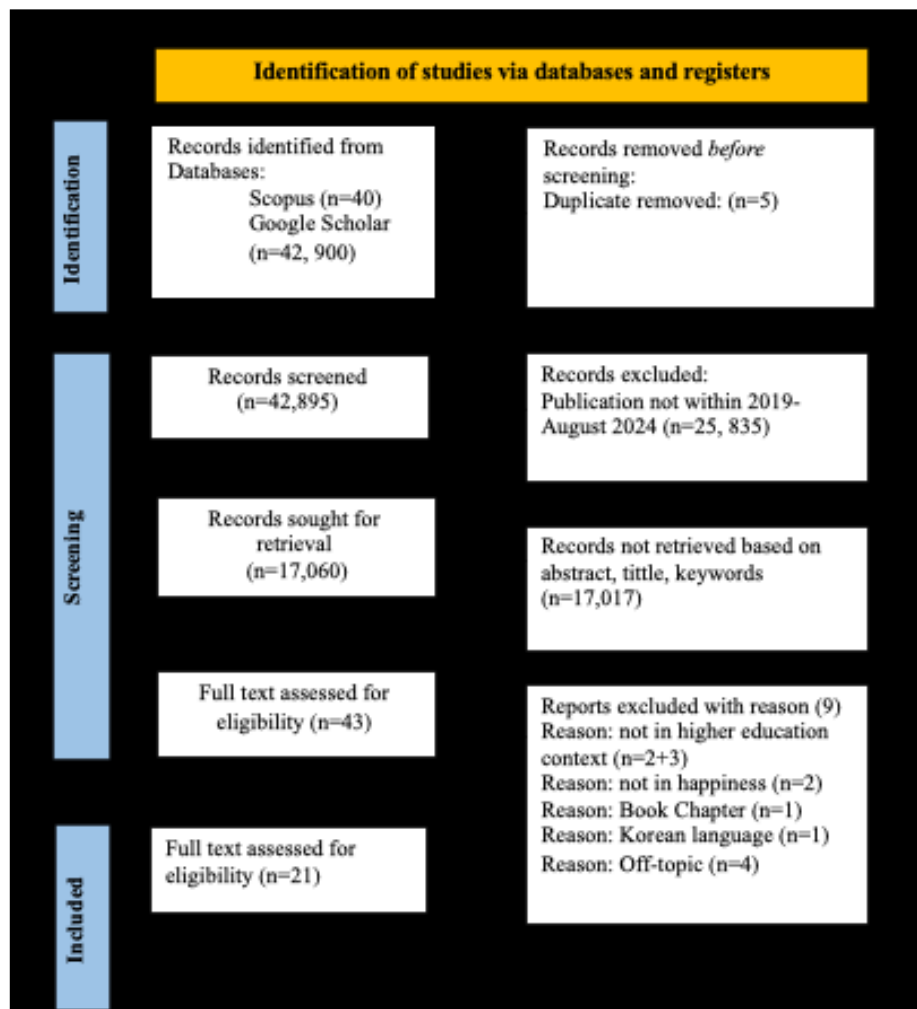


Figure 2. PRISMA flowchart for a systematic review on the impact of grit has on happiness among higher education students

### Identification

This literature search was conducted in July 2024. The researcher searched Scopus and Google Scholar to identify the relevant research from 2019 to August 2024. Scopus and Google Scholar were selected as the primary databases for the journal article search due to accessibility considerations, as the Web of Science (WOS) database was unavailable through the university library subscription. The key search terms were (1) “grit”, (2) “Happiness” substitution terms

("Subjective well-being" AND "Life Satisfaction"), (3) University substitution terms ("College"). For Google Scholar, advanced search is used such as Grit AND Happiness, and with at least one of the words "Subjective Well-Being" OR "Life Satisfaction" OR "College" OR "University", including title searched and year dated between 2019-2024. The keywords were matched by Boolean operators AND/OR. The two databases use string, as in Table 2, 42, 900 were identified.

Table 2: Search strings

Search Builder	Search String
Grit	"grit"
Happiness	"Subjective well-being" OR "life satisfaction"
Context	"university" OR "college"

In order to ensure the inclusion of papers, the researcher excluded secondary sources such as unpublish research, thesis/dissertations, conference paper as well as magazine and book chapter.

### *Screening*

In answering the research questions, relevant inclusion and exclusion criteria were established. The journal article used are within certain criterions namely 1) the official publication between 2019 and 2024, 2) full-text article published in English, 3) the term of grit, happiness or subjective well-being appear in the title or abstract and 4) the article should have DOI (Digital Object Identifier), refer to Table 3. Scopus databased was also searched to retrieves any undetected articles and 17 documents were found.

At this stage of screening, all titles and key parts of journal should have been thoroughly reviewed to meet the inclusion requirements of this study. Firstly, a total of 42, 900 articles were obtained from the two e-databases. Secondly, duplicates were deleted, Thirdly, based on the range of time (2019-August 2024) and the conditions of English language, 25,835 articles were deleted. Fourthly, the researchers screened the articles by meeting the qualification criteria based on title, abstract and keywords, deleting 17, 057. Fifthly, after full evaluation, combine with the criterion of inclusion and exclusion, the remain article were discussed.

Table 3: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
University, college students sample group	Preschool, primary, secondary, high school, teacher, special education, adults learner
Empirical studies	Literature review, meta-analysis, poster, booklet, presentation slides, commentaries, essay of letters
Written in English	Written in other languages
Peer-reviewed	Non peer-reviewed

### *Article Extraction*

After a rigorous screening procedure, 21 articles published in the past six years (2019- 2024) were selected and met the inclusion criteria.

### 3. Result

This study aims to explore the role of grit in influencing happiness among university students as they pursue their educational degrees. The following are the findings obtained from the study.

#### *Information of research results*

All 21 selected articles are qualitative studies. The outcomes of university student happiness and grit are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Reported relationships between grit and happiness

No.	Author & Country	Title	Study Aim	Methodology (Sample Size, Data Analysis)	Results	Remarks
1	Noronha et al. (2024) - Brazil	The influence of grit on life satisfaction of Brazilian undergraduate students: academic adaptation as a mediator	What is the mediating effect of academic adaptation? This study proposed a mediation model to examine the mediating effect of academic adaptation in the relationship between grit and life satisfaction	413 undergraduate Brazilian students, Quantitative - Correlation analysis	That grit in academic context could benefit students' adaptation process, and the university's responsibility to improve its students' softskills, not only for the future stage after university, but also during the student's schooling.	
2	Harpaiz et al. (2024) - Israel	University students' academic grit and academic achievements predicted by subjective well-being, coping resources, and self-cultivation characteristics	To explore the contribution of 3 main categories of variables 1-subjective well-being (SWB) 2-Coping resources (self-efficacy & help-seeking orientation) (HSO) 3-self-cultivation characteristics (savouring and personal growth)  To academic grit and academic achievement, significance of academic grit as predictor and mediator for academic achievement.	351 University students (18-58 age) Anglophonic countries (US, Canada, UK) and Israel Quantitative SEM Analysis	Academic grit was found to be directly associated with academic achievement among university students while SWB, coping resources, and self-cultivation characteristics were only indirectly associated with academic achievement with the mediation of academic grit	These results have important educational implications since they reveal existing effects which should serve as a basis for the implementation of university programmes. The results indicate the importance of grit especially regarding personal growth to perform optimally at university studies.
3	Saunders et al. (2023) - USA	Grit, Subjective Happiness, Satisfaction with Life, and	To compare grit, subjective happiness, satisfaction with life, and academic	227 respondents of pharmacy students (19-25 year old)	Grit scores did not differ between pharmacy students and OT/PT students, while SHS scores were	

No.	Author & Country	Title	Study Aim	Methodology (Sample Size, Data Analysis)	Results	Remarks
		Academic Resilience Among Pharmacy and Physical Therapy Students at Two Universities	resilience among pharmacy and occupational therapy/physical therapy (OT/PT) students at 2 distinct universities using the short grit scale, subjective happiness scale (SHS), satisfaction with life scale (SWLS), and the academic resilience scale (ARS-30)	Quantitative Cross-sectional design Descriptive statistics, t tests, a 2-way analysis of variance, Pearson correlation, and regression analyses	significantly higher in OT/PT students.  Subjective happiness was higher in the private university, with young, female students at the private university reporting higher SHS scores. Although the grit score was not correlated with SWLS, SHS, or ARS-30 scores, the SWLS was correlated with SHS. The SHS was a strong predictor of academic resilience in both OT/PT and pharmacy students.	
4	Mason (2023) South Africa	Grit and its relation to well-being among first-year South African university students	This study investigated the relationship between hope (agency and pathways thinking), grit, and subjective well-being (life satisfaction and positive and negative emotions) among South African first-year university students	210 university students  Quantitative Regression analysis	Regression analyses indicated hope predicted higher grit, satisfaction with life, and positive emotions.  TA: Female students reported significantly higher agency and negativity scores, whereas males reported scores on the pathways dimension.	Hope is essential in student development and support programmes and may buffer students experiencing academic-related challenges.  Student development programs should seek to promote grit as a personal resource in student populations
5	Liao & Chen Chen (2022) - Taiwan	Happiness takes effort: Exploring the relationship among academic grit, executive functions and well-being	Examined the relationships among grit, executive functions, and well-being	214 university students  Quantitative Correlational sectional study - simple direct regression - Simple linear regression	The results indicated that grit had positive relationships with both executive functions and well-being.	
6	Şimşir & Dilma	The mediating roles of grit	To test the sequential mediation role	885 undergraduate students	Self-discipline is positively related to grit, life-	Overall, these results



No.	Author & Country	Title	Study Aim	Methodology (Sample Size, Data Analysis)	Results	Remarks
	Ç (2021) - Turkey	and life satisfaction in the relationship between self-discipline and peace: Development of the self-discipline scale (SDS)	of the grit and life satisfaction between self-discipline and peace among Turkish college students.	from public university  Quantitative Path Analysis	satisfaction, and peace.  Path analysis showed that the sequential mediating effect is significant for grit and life satisfaction on the relationship between self-discipline and peace	demonstrated that self-discipline makes a significant contribution to a peaceful life, also grit and life-satisfaction have a remarkable role in this contribution
7	Liu et al. (2022) - China	Grit and Life Satisfaction Among College Students During the Recurrent Outbreak of COVID-19 in China: The Mediating Role of Depression and the Moderating role of Stressful Life Events	To explore the relationship among grit, stressful life events, depression, and life satisfaction in college students during the recurrent outbreak of COVID-19	888 college students  Quantitative Cross-sectional survey - Correlation - Descriptive statistics	The results showed that  grit was correlated with life satisfaction ( $r = 0.426, p < 0.001$ ); depression mediated the relationship between grit and life satisfaction [indirect effect = 0.0292, SE = 0.009, 95% CIboot = (0.135, 0.500)]; The relationship between grit and depression was moderated by stressful life events ( $\beta = 0.107, SE = 0.028, p < 0.001, 95\% CI [0.053, 0.161]$ ).	
8	Hernandez et al. (2021) - Spain	Examining the dark side of motivation on life satisfaction in college students: Does grit matter?	Explored the simultaneous influence of personal traits and social factors to promote student well-being.	474 college students  Quantitative SEM Analysis multi-section survey	These findings provide evidence regarding adequate teacher behavior and the importance of measuring student grit in the classroom setting	These findings provide new insights into the understanding of teacher motivational behaviors and student learning processes that influence student behavioral regulations and affective outcomes
9	Verner-Filion et al. (2020) -	Passion and grit in the pursuit of long-term personal	Investigated whether passion in students was related to perseverance of	425 university students  Longitudinal	Harmonious passion was only positively associated with the facet of	

No.	Author & Country	Title	Study Aim	Methodology (Sample Size, Data Analysis)	Results	Remarks
	Canada	goals in college students	<p>effort and maintenance of interests toward the personal goals that students had set for themselves at the beginning of an academic semester.</p> <p>This study also investigated if the facets of grit were related to progress on personal goals, as well as to changes in subjective well-being and symptoms of depression over the semester in a sample of university students (N = 425).</p>	study	<p>perseverance of effort.</p> <p>In contrast, obsessive passion was negatively associated with both perseverance and consistency of interests facets of grit.</p>	
10	Ma et al. (2020) - China	The mediation model of grit among Chinese college students	To test the relationship among Happiness Orientations and four aspects of social competence: initiation, supportiveness, self-disclosure and assertive, and reveal whether grit is a mediating variable between happiness orientations and social competence.	380 college students Quantitative Correlational designs	<p>The dimensions of happiness orientation, the dimensions of social competence and the dimensions of grit are significantly related;</p> <p>Happiness orientation can positive predictive influence to social competence;</p> <p>Grit have a positive predictive influence to social competence;</p> <p>Grit play a fully intermediary role between the happiness orientation and the social competence.</p>	
11	Hwang et al. (2019) - South Korea	Employment stress and the happiness of Korean university students: Multiple mediating effect of growth mindset, grit and hope	To examine the multiple mediating effect of growth mindset, grit and hope on the effect of employment stress on happiness among 364 college students in Korea.	364 college students Quantitative Survey Method Frequency analysis, reliability analysis, correlation analysis and mediation analysis	The results of the study are as follows. First, it is noted that the Pearson correlation analysis showed that happiness had a negative correlation with employment stress, and there was a significant positive correlation among growth mindset,	<p>Improvements/Applications:</p> <p>This result will be utilized as a new model in which growth</p>

No.	Author & Country	Title	Study Aim	Methodology (Sample Size, Data Analysis)	Results	Remarks
					<p>grit and hope. Broadly speaking, employment stress showed a significant negative correlation with happiness, growth mindset, grit, and hope.</p> <p>Second, as a result of the process macro analysis, employment stress affects growth mindset, hope and happiness, and growth mindset has a positive effect on grit, hope and happiness. To this end, it is noted that grit has a positive effect on hope, happiness, and hope has a positive influence on happiness.</p> <p>Third, there was a multiple mediation effect of growth mindset, grit and hope in the identified relationship between employment stress and happiness.</p>	mindset, grit and hope mediate the job-seeking stress of university students in the process of affecting happiness in the Korean society where the employment crisis is at serious proportions.
12	Hwang et al. (2019) – South Korea	The effect of employment stress and growth mindset on the happiness of Korean college students: The moderated mediation model of grit	The purpose of this study was to verify the moderated mediation effect of grit on the mediating effect of growth mindset in the relationship between employment stress and happiness in 364 college students in Korea	364 college students Quantitative Correlational design	Findings: The results of the study showed a statistically significant correlation between happiness and growth mindset and grit. Employment stress was negatively correlated with happiness, growth mindset, and grit.	Improvements/Applications:  These results will be used as a new model for grit to control the emotional stress of college students through the growth mindset.
13	Carkit (2024) - Turkey	Relations between grit, career adaptability, and life satisfaction : a moderated	The present study investigates whether grit predicts life satisfaction via career adaptability and	338 Turkish university students Quantitative Regression coefficients	The results show that career adaptability mediated the relationships between grit and life satisfaction. Furthermore, the	

No.	Author & Country	Title	Study Aim	Methodology (Sample Size, Data Analysis)	Results	Remarks
		mediation model	how university students' age moderates this mediated relationship.		relationship between career adaptability and life satisfaction was stronger among relatively younger university students. University students' age further moderated the indirect effect of grit on life satisfaction via career adaptability. The indirect effect of grit on life satisfaction was stronger among relatively younger college students.	
14	Weiss kirch (2019) - USA	Grit Applied Within: Identity and Well-being	This study investigates how grit, perseverance in the face of challenges and focus on achieving goals, relates to identity development and how identity development mediates the relationship between grit and well-being	232 undergraduate Quantitative Correlational design	Grit-POE to commitment making, exploration in breadth, exploration in depth, and ruminative exploration, respectively.  no significant direct effect of Grit-POE to depression  There was a significant direct effect of Grit POE to happiness.  There were significant indirect effects of Grit-POE on happiness through commitment making, exploration in depth and ruminative exploration, respectively. The indirect effect was positive through commitment making, exploration in depth and ruminative exploration.	
15	Muhammad (2020) - Pakistan	Exploring predicting role of students' grit in boosting Hope, meaning in life and	Examines how the presence of students' psychological grit can boost up hope, meaning in life, and subjective happiness of	475 undergraduate students Quantitative Survey research method Correlation	Result findings suggest that 32%, 27% and 10% of change in participants' scores on hope, meaning in life and subjective happiness are	Resilience is significantly related to psychological grit, with

No.	Author & Country	Title	Study Aim	Methodology (Sample Size, Data Analysis)	Results	Remarks
		subjective happiness among undergraduates of university	475 undergraduate student	and Multiple Regression analysis	attributed to the student's psychological grit indicative of a medium effect size.	a moderate effect size.  Hope, subjective happiness, and meaning in life do not have significant relationships with psychological grit, with very small or negligible effects.
16	Lumontod (2019) - Phillipines	How grit, college adjustment, and happiness predict freshmen students' academic performance?	Exploring how grit, academic adjustment, and happiness predict first-year students' academic performance	313 freshmen students  Quantitative Correlation analysis	First, both grit and college adjustment was not significantly related to freshmen students' academic performance.  Happiness was the only significant predictor of academic performance.  Second, the findings show that grit, academic adjustment, and happiness were significantly inter-correlated	
17	Park et al., (2020) - South Korea	Influence of Human Rights Victimization on Happiness of College Students: Mediating Effect of Self-esteem and grit	The purpose in this study was to verify the mediating effect of self-esteem and grit in the link between human rights victimization and happiness among college students	233 undergraduates  Quantitative Correlational Frequency analysis, reliability analysis, and double mediating effect analysis were performed. Bootstrap method	First, human rights victimization had a significant negative effect on happiness, self-esteem and grit. Grit had a positive correlation between self-esteem and happiness.  Second, self-esteem and grit mediated in the link between human rights victimization and happiness	
18	Gupta (2023) - India	Correlational Study of Grit with Life Satisfaction	This study examined the relationship of Grit with Life Satisfaction,	149 young adults between the ages of 18 and 25	Grit was positively correlated with Life Satisfaction and Subjective Happiness, and it	

No.	Author & Country	Title	Study Aim	Methodology (Sample Size, Data Analysis)	Results	Remarks
		Subjective Happiness, and Burnout in Young Adults	Subjective Happiness, and Burnout in young adults	participate. Quantitative Correlational Descriptive analysis and regression analysis	was negatively correlated with burnout.	
19	Ajay & Kallahalla (2022) - India	Grit, Self Esteem, Subjective Happiness, and Internet Addiction in College Going Degree Students	To examine and differentiate grit, self-esteem, subjective happiness, and internet addiction in college-going degree students	College Student  Exploratory research Quantitative Design	There was a significantly higher level of Grit, Self-esteem, and Subjective happiness in students who were involved in NSS and extracurricular activities and these students also showed significantly lower levels of internet addiction indicating higher adaptability and wellbeing	
20	Wen Jiang et al. (2020) - China	Striving and happiness: Between- and within-person-level associations among grit, needs satisfaction and subjective well-being	Further examine the within person associations between grit, NS and well-being.  -Attempt to replicate and extend our findings to college students	78 college students  Daily diary design (adapted from Nezlek 2012)  Multilevel within-subject mediation analysis	Daily grit was significantly associated with LS. Meaning college students felt more satisfied with their life and experienced more positive and less negative affect on days when demonstrated greater perseverance and commitment towards their goals than on their average day.	
21	Seo & Lee (2022) - South Korea	The relationship between human rights victimization and happiness of university students: Mediating effect of grit and Moderated mediating effect of growth mindset	To provide an intervention model to prevent the decrease in happiness caused by human rights victimization by analyzing the moderated mediating effect of the growth mindset on the path of human rights victimization to happiness through grit for university students.	233 university students  Quantitative Survey Frequency, reliability, correlation, and moderated mediating effect analysis	First, human rights victimization was negatively and significantly correlated with grit, growth mindset, and happiness.  Second, the moderated mediating effect of a growth mindset on the path from human rights victimization to happiness via grit was verified. The human rights victimization of university students affects happiness through grit, and the growth mindset increases the effect	

No.	Author & Country	Title	Study Aim	Methodology (Sample Size, Data Analysis)	Results	Remarks
					of human → grit → happiness path	

### ***Research Status of Grit and Happiness***

The researcher observing the number of articles published in different years, which the researcher observed the changes occur in attention given on grit and happiness, including the geographical distribution of the articles. Based on the geographical distribution of the articles, the researcher was able to identify which regional area that pay attention to grit and happiness.

#### ***a. Number of Publications by year***

As shown in Table 5, the publication years of 21 documents are as follows: four in 2019, and five in 2020, and two in 2021, and four in 2022, and three in 2023, and three in 2024.

Table 5 : Journal Publication (2019 – 2024)

Year	Journal retrieved
2019	4
2020	5
2021	2
2022	4
2023	3
2024	3
Total	21

#### ***b. Geographical Distribution of Articles***

These 21 articles have been presented in 21 different journals. As shown in Figure 3, researchers from (13 countries) explored the influenced of grit had on happiness among University students, with the number of publications in descending order starting off from South Korea (four articles), China (three articles), India (2 articles), USA (2 articles), Turkey (2 articles), South Africa (1 articles), Pakistan (1 articles), Israel (1 articles), Spain (1 articles), Canada (1 articles), Philippines (1 articles), Brazil (1 articles) and Taiwan (1 articles). From the figure below, the impact of grit on happiness has received the intention of researchers in many countries, nevertheless the issue of happiness well-being needs to be further increased worldwide in order for university students to achieved greater success.

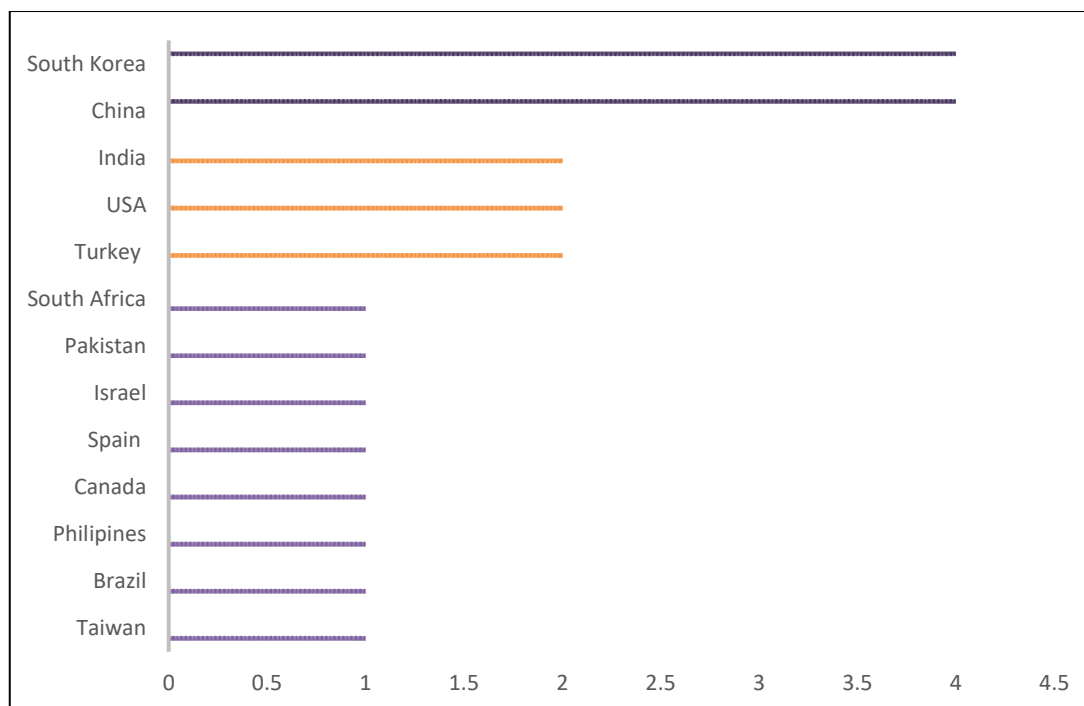


Figure 3: Geographical distribution of articles

### ***Does grit predict happiness outcomes among university students?***

To address the research question on whether grit predicts happiness outcomes among university students, the analysis revealed several interconnected themes that illustrate how grit contributes to students' enhancement and overall improved well-being within the university environment.

#### ***a. Student enhancement***

Ten studies reported of how grit influence happiness through student enhancement. Hwang (2019) investigated the effect of employment stress and growth mindset on the happiness of Korean college students, utilizing a moderated mediation model of grit. The result revealed growth mindset significantly correlates with grit and happiness while, employment stress was negatively correlated with growth mindset, grit and happiness. Similarly, in China a Multilevel within-subject mediation analysis research by Wen Jiang (2020) who explored the association between and within person associations between grit, need satisfactions and well-being. The results revealed that daily grit was significantly associated with life satisfaction. Students felt more satisfied with their life and experienced more positive rather than less negative affect towards their goals than on average day. Gupta (2023) identified a negative correlation between burnout, grit and life satisfaction among young adults, suggesting that higher levels of grit are associated with better life satisfaction despite the presence of burnout. Saunders (2023) found that resilience was the by-product of gaining happiness. Meanwhile a cross-sectional design study conducted in United States by Saunders (2023) investigate the relationship between grit, subjective happiness, life satisfaction with academic resilience among pharmacy and occupational therapy/physical therapy (OT/PT) students at 2 distinct universities. The finding yields several findings. First, both groups of pharmacy students and occupational therapy/physical therapy (OT/PT) students displayed several levels of grit. Second, OT/PT students scored higher on Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) than pharmacy students which indicating greater levels of happiness. Third, female students at private university reported of



higher SHS and reported of more feeling of happy. Fourth, SHS was found to be strong predictor relate to academic resilience for both students of pharmacy and OT/PT.

Harpaz (2024) investigated the contributions of three key categories of subjective well-being, coping resources (such as self-efficacy and help seeking orientation) and self-cultivation characteristics toward academic grit, academic achievement and significance of academic grit as predictor and mediator for academic achievement for success. The results indicated that grit was significantly associated with academic achievement among university students, suggesting that grit may foster student enhancement in academic pursuits. Additionally, subjective well-being, coping resources and self-cultivation indirectly associated with academic achievement with grit as a mediating factor. In a similar vein, Noronha (2024) explored the influence of grit on life satisfaction of Brazilian undergraduate students: academic adaptation as a mediator. The finding revealed that grit played a significant role in the academic adaptation process, emphasizing the responsibility of universities to facilitate the development of students' soft skills. The results also mentioning the importance of improving soft skills during schoolings which contribute not only to student success during their studies but also their professional lives after graduation.

Self-esteem has emerged as a significant factor across several studies. Park et al., (2020) investigated the impact of human rights victimization on happiness of college students, examining the mediating effect of self-esteem and grit. The result revealed two primary results, first, grit is significantly correlated with happiness and self-esteem and second, self-esteem and grit mediated between human rights victimization and happiness. Meanwhile, Ajay and Kallah (2022) examine and differentiate the roles of grit, self-esteem, subjective happiness and internet addiction in college-going degree students. The study revealed that students who participant in community service program such as National Service Scheme and other extracurricular activities demonstrated greater grit, self-esteem and subjective happiness. In addition, due to the involvement of these activities allowed the students to protect themselves from negative behaviours which theses students showed lower levels of internet addiction which indicating of higher adaptability and well-being.

Interestingly, a multi-section survey done in Spain by Hernandez et al. (2021) explored the negative aspects of motivation on life satisfaction among college students particularly on the role of grit. Interestingly was the finding that teacher motivational behaviours and student learning processes within classroom setting significantly influence student behavioural regulations and affective outcomes.

### ***b. Improve well-being***

A study conducted in Taiwan by Liao and Chen, (2022) investigates the relationships among grit, executive functions and well-being. The results revealed a significant positive association between grit, executive functions and well-being. Carokit (2024) investigate if grit predicts life satisfaction through career adaptability and how the factor of age moderates university students'. This study mentioned that in the context of Turkey, career adaptability mediated the relationships between grit and life satisfaction and younger university students were revealed to be stronger between career adaptability and life satisfaction. Another discovery of this study is that age moderate the indirect effect of grit on life satisfaction via career adaptability among university students. Meanwhile, another study in Turkey, revealed that grit and life satisfaction promote the relationship between self-discipline and peace among college students (Simsir &

Dilmic, 2021). In other words, self-discipline predicted the increasing level of grit that foresee high life satisfaction which increase the level of peace. Thus, it enhances students' well-being.

Two cross-sectional study of human right victimization in Korea, Park et al. (2020) and Seo and Lee (2022) examined the impact that is has on happiness among college students with the mediating effect of self-esteem and grit. The result revealed two findings (Park et al. 2020). First, human rights victimization negatively affect both happiness and self-esteem and second, self-esteem and grit mediated in the link between human rights victimization and happiness. Similarly, the research by Seo and Lee (2022) reported analogous findings, indicating revealed similar findings as Park et al. (2020) that individual who experienced human rights victimization exhibited lower levels of grit, growth mindset and happiness. Interestingly another finding revealed that suggested that the influence of human rights victimization on happiness through grit is influenced by individual growth mindset.

Another cross-sectional study of happiness orientations with social competence in China, Ma et al., (2020). Results showed the connectedness between git dimension, happiness orientation and the dimension of social competence (initiation, supportiveness, self-disclosure and assertive) among college students. The researcher proposed that grit have a positive predictive influence on social competence. Additionally, the researcher also mentioned that grit act as an intermediary between those two that grit have a positive predictive influence on social competence. In another study, grit was found to be related with happiness, boosting hope and meaning in life. Muhammad et al. (2020) examines how the presence of students' psychological grit can boost up hope, meaning in life, and subjective happiness among 475 undergraduate students in Pakistan. The finding suggests that students who show more grit may experience higher levels of hope, meaning in life and subjective happiness. In other words, fostering grit in students enhance their well-being and development.

Several studies describe the facets of passion only with depression. In the longitudinal study of passion for long term goals among college students in Canada. Verner-Filion (2020) investigated whether students' passion was related to perseverance of effort and maintenance of interests toward the personal goals that students had set early semester. In addition, the researcher explored if the facets of grit were related to progress on personal goals, and changes in subjective well-being and symptoms of depression. The finding revealed two main findings, first, harmonious passion positively associated with perseverance of effort which indicating individual with this keep on putting effort in reaching their goals. Second, in contrast, obsessive passion was negatively associated with both perseverance and consistency of interests facets of grit. In other words, individual with obsessive passion struggle to put effort or focus on a goal over time. Another research conducted in China by Liu et al. (2022) examined the relationship between grit, stressful life events, depression and life satisfaction in college students during Covid-19 outbreak. The findings revealed three findings. First, students who demonstrated more grit have higher life satisfaction. Second, depression mediated the relationship between grit and life satisfaction. Finally, the relationship between grit and depression was moderated by stressful life events.

In another cross-sectional study of first year student in Philippines, grit and academic performance on academic performance. Lumontod (2019) found that grit and college adjustment did not significantly predict academic performance in freshman students. In other words, no meaningful relationship was found between these variables with students' academic outcomes. Interestingly, happiness emerged as the only significantly predictor for academic performance. The researcher believed that grit, academic adjustment and happiness were

interconnected in some way. Overall, the study suggests that while grit and academic adjustment may not directly influence academic performance, happiness plays a key role in predicting students' success, with all three factors potentially being interrelated.

#### **4. Discussion**

This systematic review examined 21 studies (2019–2024) to explore the predictive role of grit on happiness among university students. The findings consistently support the view that grit defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals to contribute positively to students' happiness and overall well-being. Ten studies highlighted how grit correlates with key student enhancement factors such as resilience, academic achievement, self-esteem and motivation. For instance, Hwang et al. (2019) identified grit as a mediator between employment stress and happiness, alongside growth mindset and hope. These findings suggest that grit not only buffers academic stress but also promotes emotional resilience and adaptive learning behaviors.

The role of the university in fostering grit is emphasized in several studies. Noronha (2024) argued that institutions should promote soft skill development, such as perseverance, early in students' academic journeys. Participation in extracurricular activities was linked to increased self-esteem and decreased negative behaviors like internet addiction (Ajay & Kallahalla, 2020). Park et al. (2020) further linked grit with self-esteem and happiness, particularly in contexts involving adversity, such as human rights violations.

Importantly, some studies positioned grit as a mediating variable in more complex models of student well-being. Harpaz et al. (2024) found that grit mediated the relationship between subjective well-being, coping resources, and academic achievement. Similar mediating roles were reported in studies on academic adaptation (Noronha, 2024), hope (Mason, 2023) and resilience (Muhammad et al., 2020). However, not all evidence aligned. Saunders et al. (2023) found no direct correlation between grit and happiness but observed that happiness predicted resilience. Similarly, Muhammad et al. (2022) reported that hope and meaning in life were not significant predictors of grit, suggesting that the motivational pathways connecting grit and well-being may differ across contexts. These inconsistencies likely arise from both cultural and methodological variations. In collectivist societies, for instance, happiness is often grounded in social harmony, interdependence and relational well-being rather than in individual perseverance, which may weaken the salience of grit as a direct predictor of happiness. Moreover, differences in research design, measurement tools and the operationalisation of grit, such as whether it is measured as domain-specific or as a general trait, may contribute to these divergent findings. Collectively, these highlight that grit is not a universal determinant of well-being but a contextually embedded construct whose impact on happiness is shaped by cultural values, social expectations and the nature of goal pursuit.

Two studies focused on the facets of grit and Perseverance of Effort (POE) and Consistency of Interest (COI) and their indirect effects on happiness through identity processes. Weisskirch (2019) found that POE, not COI, predicted happiness indirectly via commitment making and ruminative exploration. Similarly, a Canadian longitudinal study linked harmonious passion to POE and subjective well-being, emphasizing the motivational quality of grit over time. Additionally, demographic factors, especially gender and age, were inconsistently examined across studies. While some studies used gender solely as a descriptive variable (e.g., Gupta, 2023), others identified meaningful differences. For example, Mason (2023) found that female students reported higher emotional agency but also more negative emotions, while males scored

higher on strategic planning. Muhammad et al. (2020) found greater resilience among female students. These findings suggest that gender may influence how grit and happiness manifest, though this area remains underexplored.

Only two studies directly linked grit to academic performance (Lumontod, 2019; Harpaz et al., 2024). Harpaz et al. used structural equation modeling to show that grit mediated the effect of well-being and self-cultivation on academic achievement. This reinforces grit's dual role as both a predictor of emotional well-being and academic success. Finally, several researchers advocated for institutional interventions. Mason (2023) recommended integrating grit and hope into student support programs, while Hwang et al. (2019) proposed a model where growth mindset, grit, and hope together mitigate academic stress and promote happiness. These findings highlight grit not only as a personal trait but as a developmental resource that universities can actively nurture.

## **5. Implications of the Study**

This study examined the influence of grit on happiness among university students over the past six years and systematically highlighting how grit contributes to students' well-being and academic success. The findings provide valuable directions for higher education institutions to cultivate grit intentionally through curriculum design, student support services and campus-wide initiatives.

Firstly, to integrate grit training into the curriculum, universities can embed perseverance-oriented learning activities such as long-term projects, reflective journals and mastery-based assessments that reward sustained effort and goal progression rather than short-term performance. Courses can also include structured reflection on challenges and setbacks to help students reframe failure as part of the learning process.

Secondly, within student support services, universities can offer grit and resilience workshops, peer mentoring programmes and counselling sessions that emphasise coping strategies, growth mindset and self-regulated learning. These initiatives help students build persistence, adaptability and emotional regulation when facing academic or personal difficulties.

Finally, at the institutional level, universities can promote a culture of perseverance and purpose by recognising student effort and improvement through awards, service-learning opportunities and community engagement projects. Embedding grit-related principles in orientation programmes and leadership training can further reinforce the value of sustained commitment and intrinsic motivation.

Thus, these strategies position grit as a trainable skill that contributes to both academic achievement and psychological well-being. By institutionalising grit development through educational practice and student engagement policies, universities can create supportive environments that nurture perseverance, optimism and happiness among their students.

## **6. Conclusion**

This systematic review analysed 21 studies (2019–2024) to examine how grit predicts happiness among university students. Overall, the findings affirm grit as a key psychological resource linked to happiness through related factors such as self-esteem, growth mindset, hope,

and resilience. Building on these findings, the review highlights two interrelated themes: student enhancement and well-being improvement.

From a conceptual standpoint, the review positions grit as predictor of well-being within the frameworks of Self-Determination Theory and the PERMA model. Perseverance and passion for long-term goals are shown to enhance psychological need satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, and engagement, which collectively promote happiness. At the contextual level, cultural and methodological differences help explain variations in findings. Grit tends to be more strongly associated with happiness in contexts involving stress or individual goal pursuit, whereas in collectivist cultures, its effects are moderated by social and environmental factors. Most studies employed cross-sectional designs, highlighting the need for longitudinal and cross-cultural research to clarify causal relationships.

At the institutional level, universities can promote student well-being by embedding grit development within academic and support initiatives. Programmes such as mentoring, reflective learning, and growth mindset interventions can cultivate perseverance, adaptability, and purpose among students. In conclusion, this review extends understanding of how grit connects well-being for happiness. As a results, providing both conceptual depth and practical strategies for higher education institutions seeking to enhance student happiness and resilience.

## **7. Limitations and Recommendations for Future Studies**

Several limitations of this review need to be addressed through. Firstly, in terms of selection of databases are limited. The databases only used Scopus and Google Scholar, and if more databases are used than the analysis results will be more comprehensive. Secondly, this research focused on the study of university students grit and happiness in the recent of six years (2019- August 2024). Grit and its influence on happiness should be investigated with other separate group of students, since level of grit may appear differently in other educational setting, either high school students or doctorate students. Thirdly, this study only focuses on English language journals, which may limit other discoveries to some extent. Future studies should consider on searching other language such as in Malay language in order to explore within the context of Malaysia as a collectivistic culture. Therefore, future researchers can increase the database in order to get more comprehensive results.

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