

THE INFLUENCE OF PERSONAL GROWTH INITIATIVE ON STUDENT GRIT DURING THE PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic has had many impacts on all individuals. Mental health and student academic performance are the two things that have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. This study aims to determine the effect of personal growth initiative (PGI) on student grit during the pandemic. This study involved 231 respondents, consisting of 80 men and 151 women. The measuring tools used are PGIS-II and Grit-S (short scale). Data were collected using purposive sampling and the type of research used was non-experimental research with quantitative methods. The results of hypothesis analysis using a linear regression test between PGI and grit obtained $R^2 = 0.042$, $F = 11.047$, $p = 0.001$. This shows that there is a positive influence between PGI on student grit during the pandemic.

Keywords: Personal growth initiative, grit, students, and covid-19 pandemic

1. PREFACE

The Covid-19 pandemic has occurred for approximately two years since the beginning of 2020. For two years, the central government has made a number of efforts to suppress the spread of the Covid-19 virus, one of which is by implementing the Enforcement of Community Activity Restrictions. Until now, a number of activities such as work or college that previously had to be done at home, are now starting to be allowed to return to normal. At a number of universities, some have started to implement a *hybrid* and some have implemented a *full online system*. The online learning system has been implemented for two years, but there are still a number of students who are still unable to keep up with the changes.

The results of research conducted by Carsita et al. [1] showed that the stress level of students during online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic was still at a moderate level. In addition, there are several obstacles experienced by students in Indonesia when doing distance learning, such as slow internet networks, technology media that are difficult to use, difficulty focusing while studying, and piling tasks [2]. This is in line with previous research at one of the universities in Indonesia which shows that *online* has made 75.81% of students less understanding of the material being taught. In addition, the results of research by Giusti et al. [3] also show that distance learning has made students experience a decrease in concentration and learning ability because of the changing way of interaction that affects their achievement.

Therefore, the ability to adapt will be very useful for students in dealing with changes during the pandemic. In the context of education, the condition of backwardness and difficulty in adjustment is measured through a decrease in academic achievement. This is in line with the research of Arifin et al. [4] which proves that poor self-adjustment will have an effect on student academic achievement. Meanwhile, there are a number of students who, even though they have just experienced the condition of online education, are not disturbed and are able to maintain their academic achievements well [5]. According to Effendy and Widianingtanti [6], individuals who can adapt to changes during the pandemic and continue to grow are those who have a high *Personal Growth Initiative* (PGI).

According to Robitschek [7], PGI is a direct involvement of individuals who are intentional in an effort to develop themselves. Changes that occur due to PGI can certainly help individuals in adapting to the environment. Research conducted by Cankaya et al. [8], shows that PGI is one of the factors that can help students adapt to their new environment. The ability to adapt and change during the pandemic will certainly affect the academic improvement of students. According to Patanapu et al. [9], students with high PGI scores often show high academic scores.

In addition, PGI also has a fairly good correlation with the *grit* [10]. This study was conducted on 249 university students (190 women and 59 men) at foreign universities. The results of this study indicate that PGI has a correlation with the *grit* of ($r = 0.40, p < 0.001$). In addition, on the results of the multiple regression test, it was found that *grit* can affect PGI with results ($b = 0.26, p < 0.001$). According to Houston et al. [10], Individuals with a high level of *grit* describe themselves as individuals who are proactive with problems, enjoy competition, and actively work to improve themselves.

According to Duckworth et al. [11], *grit* is a persistence and passion that is carried out in achieving long-term goals. Therefore, students with *grit* will tend to be easier to adjust to the changes that occur during the pandemic. Luthans et al. [12] also said that high academic performance has a relationship with *grit* because it requires the ability to adjust to the process. In other words, students with *grit* will definitely have the ability to adjust and have good academic performance [13][14].

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that *grit* and PGI have similarities in influencing students' adaptability and academic scores during the pandemic. However, the two variables also have differences. Individuals with PGI act with initiative for self-development, while individuals with *grit* use passion and perseverance to achieve predetermined goals [11][15]. The two variables, of course, can have different positive impacts on individuals, but have similarities in influencing students' self-adjustment abilities. Therefore, researchers want to test whether PGI can affect *grit* during the covid-19 pandemic. Thus, the results of this study are expected to assist students in determining appropriate actions in dealing with the pandemic.

Our Contribution

The results of this study are expected to be able to contribute knowledge to students regarding personal growth initiative and grit in positive psychology so that they can help

them face difficulties during the pandemic. In addition, it is hoped that researchers can add empirical study data related to personal growth initiative and grit in higher education academics in Indonesia. The results of this study are expected to provide knowledge for readers about the influence of personal growth initiatives on grit, so that students can take appropriate action or planning during a pandemic. In addition, this research is also expected to be used by lecturers or educators as material for psychoeducation for students in dealing with difficulties during the pandemic.

Paper Structure

The systematics of writing in this proposal seminar begins with Chapter I which contains the introduction. This introduction contains the background that discusses the phenomenon to the reason this research was made, the formulation of the problem of the research, the purpose of this research, and the benefits of the research. Chapter II contains a literature review regarding the description of the variables to be studied. Chapter III contains the research methods used, such as the characteristics of the participants, types of research, research settings and instruments, measurement of variables, and research procedures. Chapter IV contains research findings and data analysis. This chapter will describe the results of a number of analyzes of the data obtained such as main data analysis, hypothesis analysis, and other additional data analysis. Chapter V contains conclusions, discussions, and suggestions which are the results of the overall research that has been carried out.

2. BACKGROUND

Personal Growth Initiative

Definition of Personal Growth Initiative

Personal growth initiative (PGI) is an action that helps individuals to grow positively. According to Robitschek [7], PGI is an individual's ability to be aware of the changes that are taking place and to be actively or voluntarily involved in the process. In addition, PGI is also a conscious action in an effort to change cognitive, behavioral, and affective self at any level of life [16]. Robitschek and Keyes [17] also mention that PGI is a skill to increase knowledge and belief about change and have initiative in the change process. From the definition previously explained, it can be concluded that PGI is an act that is conscious or intentional by oneself in developing skills to be able to grow into a better individual.

Dimensions of Personal Growth Initiative

Personal Growth Initiative has four dimensions, namely readiness for change, planfulness, using resources, and intentional behavior. According to Robitschek et al [18], readiness for change is an individual's readiness to make specific changes to himself. In addition, readiness for change also refers to an individual's ability to identify what he wants to change about himself [19]. Next dimension is planfulness. According to Freitas et al. [15], planfulness is an individual's ability to organize strategies for change. In addition, this factor also discusses the capacity of individuals in developing plans that can be used to implement the change process [20].

Furthermore, according to Robitschek et al [18] using resources is how individuals use personal and external resources in their growth. In addition, according to Luyckx & Robitschek [21], using resources is a condition where individuals receive assistance from external factors in the growth process. Then the last factor is behavior, where this is a deliberate action by individuals for self-development [15]. According to [22], this factor consists in taking a step, big or small, to deliberately change a certain aspect of oneself.

Impacts of Personal Growth Initiative

There are several positive impacts provided by the personal growth initiative (PGI) on the individual. Research conducted by Effendy and Widianingtanti [6] shows that individuals with high PGI will have better meaning and life satisfaction. In addition, PGI has also been shown to be a predictor of psychological adjustment in early adulthood because it plays a key role in improving mental health [23]. Not only that, PGI is also believed to have a high correlation and impact on students' academic scores [24][25].

Grit

Definition of Grit

Grit is defined as perseverance and a sense of enthusiasm possessed by individuals in achieving long-term goals [11]. Mosanya [26] also said that grit is a dedication given by individuals in achieving their goals. In other words, grit represents passion and persistence for long-term goals so that it can help individuals to stay on their commitments [27].

Dimensions of Grit

Grit has two conceptually different dimensions, namely passion (consistency in interest) and perseverance (persistence in business). According to Duckworth [27], passion is an interest or goal that can contribute to the well-being of individuals in representing a passion. Even according to Datu et al. [28], passion in grit refers to an individual's tendency to stick to the same set of interests over a long period of time. Then, the second dimension of grit is perseverance of effort. This dimension is more about how diligent an individual is in doing an effort to achieve a goal. According to Wang et al. [29], Perseverance of effort reflects an individual's persistence to keep trying in the face of failure or adversity. This dimension is also related to the extent to which individuals will exert efforts to survive in the face of challenges [28].

Factors Affecting Grit

Research conducted by Duckworth et al. [11] stated that there are several factors that can affect grit in the individual. These factors are age, education, and personality. The results of the research conducted by them show that individuals with good educational values or having a more mature age tend to have good grit. The results of research conducted by Barbouta et al. [30] showed that grit and age had a strong correlation between each other. This shows that grit can continue to increase over an individual's life span. In addition, personality is also believed to affect the grit of individuals. One of the personality theories that can affect grit is Conscientiousness. According to Schmidt et al. [31] conscientiousness has a high degree of resemblance to grit, especially on the perseverance of effort dimension.

Impact of Grit

Research conducted by Kannangara et al. [32] showed that students with high grit had better mental health, self-control, mindset, and resilience. In addition, research by Alhadabi and

Karpinski [33] shows that grit is highly associated with student academic performance. In addition, there are also several studies that have shown that grit can affect the ability to adjust to individuals. Research conducted by Sharkey et al. [34] showed that grit not only can reduce the negative impact on individual mental health, but can also have a more positive impact on self-adjustment.

Covid-19 Pandemic

Definition of Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic occurs due to the rapid spread of coronavirus from one individual to another. Due to its very fast spread, the rate of Covid-19 cases in the world has increased significantly in a short time. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Covid-19 a global pandemic [35].

Impacts of Covid-19 Pandemic

According to Anggraini [2], the obstacles that students feel when doing distance learning are such as a slow internet network, difficult technology media to use, difficulty focusing, and piles of tasks. In addition, changes in interactions that occur between students and teachers who go online also have a negative impact. According to Novianti [36], the pandemic has reduced the interaction between students and teachers, causing boredom and disinterest in the learning process.

Not only that, according to Ridlo [37], poor mental health in students also experienced a significant increase during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the research of Wang et al. [38] conducted on 2031 university students, it was found that 48% of students had depression, 38% had anxiety disorders, and 18% had suicidal thoughts. Mental disorders experienced by these students will of course affect their academic performance. This is in line with the results of research from Mahdy [39] which showed that 96% of participants out of 1392 students experienced a negative impact on their academic performance due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

College Students

Students are individuals who are enrolled in a college. In Indonesia itself, ordinary students have an age range of 18-22 years. Some of these students fall into the category of late teens and early adults. According to Papalia & Martorell [40], late teens fall into the age of 11-20 years, while early adults enter the age of 20-29 years. In this age range, individuals are expected to have good thinking skills and socio-emotional development [40][41].

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The data collection technique in this study used a non-probability sampling method, namely purposive sampling. Initially, there were 239 participants who took part in this study. However, after being eliminated and categorized, there were 231 participants who fit the criteria. Based on gender, female participants in this study amounted to 151 students (65.4%), while male participants in this study amounted to 80 students (34.6%). Based on the age category, the study participants consisted of 18-25 years old. Most of the participants were 20 years old with a total of 72 (31.2%).

The tools needed in this research are the Personal Growth Initiative Scale–II (PGIS-II) developed by Robitschek et al. [18] and Short Grit Scale developed by Duckworth & Quinn [42]. Both of two measurement instruments are also translated by researcher before been use. Additionally, researcher has also asked for help from expert judgement on translating to make sure that the measurement instrument can be use well.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov one sample analysis technique that researcher use has shown that $p > 0.05$, which means the data distribution in this study is normally distributed. Then, researcher continue to analyzes the hypothesis using a simple regression analysis technique to see if there is an impact for personal growth initiative on grit. Based on the test results, it was found that personal growth initiative had gave an impact on grit with R square = 4.2%; $p = 0.001$.

In addition, the researchers also conducted different tests on pgi and grit on several factors. Several factors tested were age, gender, GPA, experience of stress, and personality. Then it was found that age had a significant difference with the PGI value and personality had a significant difference with the grit value. For more detailed results, see table 1

Table 1

PGI and grit correlation with another factor

	PGI ($p > 0.05$)	Grit ($p > 0.05$)
Age	0.019	0.468
Gender	0.106	0.225
GPA	0.964	0.201
Experience of stress	0.770	0.200
Personality	0.994	0.000

Discussion

The results of the research that have been carried out show that the personal growth initiative has an influence on grit during the pandemic. This can be seen in the results of the linear regression test which shows the p value = 0.001. This might happen because the two variables both help students to experience positive growth. As stated by Robitschek [43] that PGI of course can facilitate positive growth in individuals. In addition, PGI can also affect grit because it helps individuals in achieving the specified goals. As stated by Freitas et al. [44], PGI is associated with positive perceptions, conscious change, and the achievement of goals set by students.

In the results of the different test between PGI and age, there was a significant difference in PGI between ages. However, keep in mind that the stage of development experienced by each individual can be different, so this may affect the PGI value. According to Robitschek [18], PGI does not specifically grow at a certain life stage, but can grow in an important life stage for each individual. In contrast to the results of the difference test between PGI and gender,

the two things proved to have no difference. Therefore, PGI cannot be seen through the role of gender, but is expressed in the growth of each individual [45].

The results of the different PGI and GPA tests also showed that there was no significant difference in PGI between groups of participants with high or low GPA. This may be due to the division of groups by the researcher based on the mean of the overall GPA of the participants, where each participant and the others actually have almost the same GPA. Furthermore, the results of the different PGI test with personality also showed no significant difference. This might happen because according to Robitschek et al. [18], however, PGI remains relevant for everyone because it takes into account the universal need for individuals to grow throughout their lives.

In addition, the results of the different PGI and stress tests also showed no significant difference. However, the research questionnaire did not measure participants' stress levels, so it is possible that participants were only experiencing mild stress. Thus, the two groups did not have a significant difference because they might actually have good well-being and were not experiencing severe stress. As stated by Alharbi and Smith [46] that well-being includes having a lot of positive feelings and still having less stress.

Not only PGI, the researchers also conducted different tests on the grit with the above factors. test grit with age showed that there was no significant difference in grit between ages. However, the mean grit participants increased with age. According to Duckworth and Quinn [42], this can indeed happen because grit grows according to individual life experiences. The results of the difference test between grit and gender also showed insignificant differences. According to Duckworth and Quinn [42], the difference in the number of participants between the sexes can affect the results of different tests conducted.

In addition, the results of the grit with GPA also showed no significant difference. However, this may happen because the mean value used by the researcher as a group division is quite high, as happened in the research of Palisoc et al. [47]. In contrast to the results of the different grit with personality which shows a significant difference. This can be explained because type A personality has similarities with conscientiousness, where the results of research by Duckworth et al. [11] showed that grit has a high correlation with conscientiousness.

In the last different test results, grit with stress experience showed no significant difference. This can be explained because like the results of the PGI test with stress, the researcher's questionnaire did not know the level of stress experienced by the participants, so the stress level experienced by the participants may be low. This is in line with Lee's [48] statement that grit does not relieve stress on individuals, but makes them less susceptible to stress.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of research on the effect of personal growth initiative on student grit during the pandemic, it was found that there was a significant effect so that the hypothesis was accepted. The results showed that the personal growth initiative variable had an effect of 4.2% on the grit variable with p value = 0.001. Thus, the personal growth initiative variable can affect the grit value of students during the pandemic.

In the next study, the researcher suggests to equalize the number of female and male respondents so that the results of the difference test between variables with gender are more accurate and in-depth. Then, with the finding of significant differences in PGI with age and grit with personality, the researcher suggests conducting a deeper study of the relationship between these variables. In addition, the results of the research conducted indicate that PGI has an influence of 4.2% on grit, so that further research is expected to find other factors that influence the relationship between the two variables. Researchers also suggest conducting research on the effect of PGI on other variables that can help students improve self-adjustment and academic performance such as resilience, interpersonal relationships, and autonomy supportive behaviours.

With the results of the research that has been done, the practical advice from the researcher is for students who are experiencing difficulties due to the pandemic to focus on increasing their PGI scores. Thus, the grit in students will also grow along with the growth of PGI, so that they can use their time more effectively by focusing on only one variable.

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