

A. Hromyak, BS¹, A. Boolani, PhD², Nicole Roberts, BS¹, J. Martin, PhD¹

1. Sports Medicine Assessment Research & Testing (SMART) Lab, George Mason University, Manassas, VA, USA

2. Honors Department, Clarkson University, Potsdam, NY, USA

PRESENTER BIO

Ashley N Hromyak, CSCS
Email: ahromyak@gmu.edu
Program: MS Kinesiology, 2nd year

Ashley graduated from George Mason with her bachelor's in kinesiology and minor in coaching in December 2020. She is currently a student in the master's kinesiology program with an expected graduation date of December 2023. Ashley holds her CSCS, TSACF, RYT200 certifications. She is a US Army Airborne Veteran and an IFBB Pro. Ashley owns and operates her training business called Go to Grow Fitness LLC.

Introduction

Engaging in regular physical activity (PA) has proven benefits for both physical and mental health. Despite current guidelines recommending at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity PA per week, only half of Americans meet these recommendations. Many adults report facing environmental barriers to engaging in physical activity, and while the underlying cause for this lack of participation remains unclear, certain researchers have suggested that personality traits might play a role.

The personality trait called "grit" has the potential to positively influence participation in physical activity (PA) and enhance engagement in PA. Grit is characterized by passion and perseverance towards a long-term goal, even in the face of failures. Moreover, grit is linked to adaptive qualities during challenging situations, resulting in successful outcomes. The association between grit and increased motivation, perseverance, and resilience suggests its potential benefits for PA involvement and adherence to exercise programs. The expanding body of literature supporting the significance of grit in physical activity further emphasizes its importance.

Therefore, the purpose of this systematic review was to synthesize current literature that examined the relationship between grit with physical activity. We sought to examine the relationship (1) of grit with different modalities of physical activity; (2) between grit and physical activity adherence; and (3) between grit and physical activity across the life span. Conducting a systematic review at this time will contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the role of grit in physical activity, facilitate evidence-based conclusions, and guide future research endeavors.

PURPOSE

A systematic review was performed to synthesize current literature reporting the relationship between grit and aspects of physical activity such as engagement, adherence, intensity levels and modes.

KEY FINDINGS

- Higher levels of grit and resilience were associated with greater levels of physical activity engagement and adherence.
- Results support grit can promote positive outcomes in regard to participation in different sports and modes of physical activity.
- Grit appears to be a distinguishing trait between different intensity levels of physical activity with those participating in high intensity physical activity reporting greater grit.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Coaches and practitioners should consider incorporating a grit assessment as part of their initial screening process when working with clients to identify a potential risk factor for poor adherence to future programmed exercise prescriptions.

METHODS

- A systematic search of literature was conducted from October 2022 to January 2023 in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines.
- Five electronic databases (PubMed, Medline, CINAHL, Sport Discus, and Psychology and Behavioral Sciences) were searched using relevant terms to the topic independently by 2 researchers.
- To be included, each study must have been peer-reviewed, sample was 18+, and published in the last 20 years. Exclusion criteria applied included articles were case studies, abstracts only, and studies that involved subjects with chronic disease, and mental health conditions.
- The study quality was evaluated with the Appraisal Tool for Cross-Sectional Studies (AXIS), which has been shown to be a valid measure of the methodological quality of cross-sectional studies.
- Relevant data were extracted and synthesized qualitatively.

RESULTS

- 25 studies met the eligibility criteria and were included in the review.
- There was a total of 13,353 participants in the included studies with 4 distinct subject populations consisting of students ($n = 5,966$), general fitness population ($n = 5,439$), competitive athletes ($n = 1,597$), and older adults 60+ years ($n = 351$).
- The mean \pm SD age of participants across all the studies ranged 19.3 \pm 2.4 years to 68.8 \pm 8.7 years.
- Survey instruments were used which were either a grit ($n = 13$) or resilience ($n = 17$) instrument. Notably, several studies used multiple survey instruments. this ad
- The average quality score of the studies was 86%, indicating an overall acceptable level of quality of the included studies.

CONCLUSIONS

The existing literature strongly supports the positive association between grit and engagement in PA. Considering the challenges to be physically active and pursue higher levels of fitness these findings are not unsurprising, as gritty individuals are more likely to be directed towards long-term perseverance. Since most of the existing literature studies were cross-sectional the direction of the relationship could not be determined. Thus, future research should use methodology appropriate for establishing cause and effect.