

Relationship between grit and subjective career success in teacher

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Abstract

Choosing a career as a teacher is a long journey because individuals must be ready to serve for a lifetime to educate the nation's generation. In other words, the teacher needs to define their subjective career success and have an unyielding personality, such as grit, to remain consistent in achieving subjective career success. This study aims to determine the relationship between grit and subjective career success in teachers. This correlational quantitative study involved 300 teachers, consisting of 85 male and 215 female teachers aged 20 to 54 years. Data were collected using non-probability quota sampling with the Grit-O Scale and Subjective Career Success Scale. The results of data analysis showed that grit was significantly associated with eight dimensions of subjective career success in teachers, with a p-value of $<.001$. The implication of this research is that teachers are expected to be able to help teachers build persistence and consistency of interest in their careers so that they will be able to overcome all obstacles and failures in their careers.

Keywords

Grit, subjective career success, teacher

Introduction

Teachers are fundamental to the advancement of a nation. Choosing a career in teaching requires a profound commitment, as it involves a lifelong dedication to educating and nurturing future generations. Given the lengthy journey of a teaching career, educators must articulate their subjective career success to comprehend their profession fully, devise career plans, and set personal career goals. This understanding enables teachers to identify the efforts necessary to achieve their career success and translate these into tangible actions (Tambunan, 2017). However, the reality indicates that many teachers have a limited understanding of career planning, which is reflected in their lack of career strategies (Afdal, 2019). This gap in comprehension impacts their professional fulfillment and performance, leading to suboptimal teaching effectiveness. Consequently, teachers tend to be less proactive in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities and may lack the initiative to advance their careers, as they become complacent with their current positions (Ridwan et al., 2022).

The teaching profession is a critical component in the educational process, serving as the cornerstone of a school's success in achieving its educational objectives. Teachers play a vital role in fostering the growth and development of students' knowledge, skills, intelligence, and attitudes (Hazmi, 2019). Consequently, teachers are regarded as ideal figures and role models for their students (Mundiri & Bariroh, 2019), and they must possess professional competencies to facilitate high-quality teaching and learning experiences (Arifa & Prayitno, 2019). To effectively fulfill their responsibilities, teachers are required to possess not only teaching competencies but also pedagogical, personal, and social competencies (Tambunan, 2017). However, these competencies are not yet fully developed among many

teachers. This is evidenced by the results of the Teacher Competency Test (Uji Kompetensi Guru, UKG), which indicate that less than 30% of teachers achieve a minimum score of 80 (Nurlaila, 2022). These UKG results suggest that many teachers still lack adequate mastery of the required competencies, as the majority score below the minimum threshold.

Teachers are not only required to possess teaching competencies but are also often responsible for handling school administration. Based on an interview conducted via WhatsApp call on Friday, November 25, 2022, with an honorary teacher in Bojonegoro, it was revealed that the school where this teacher works currently lacks administrative staff. Consequently, all administrative duties, including financial management, fall on the teachers. This additional workload hinders the teacher's ability to focus entirely on their teaching responsibilities, as they are burdened with significant administrative tasks. Moreover, there is no additional compensation for teachers who take on these administrative roles. This scenario illustrates how objective career orientations can impede an individual's sense of career success (Ingarianti et al., 2020).

The inability of teachers to meet various required competencies significantly impacts Indonesia's educational standing. According to the 2018 PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) conducted by the

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Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Indonesia's education system ranks in the bottom 10 of 79 participating countries (Nur'aini et al., 2021). Similarly, UNESCO's 2016 Global Education Monitoring report highlights that the quality of teachers in Indonesia is among the lowest, ranking 14th out of 14 developing countries (Yunus, 2017). In the following year, the World Economic Forum's Global Human Capital Report placed Indonesia at 65th out of 130 countries, significantly lagging behind Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand, which were ranked 12th, 33rd, and 40th, respectively (Gaol & Siburian, 2018). These data indicate that the quality of education in Indonesia, including the caliber of its teaching workforce, remains very low.

According to survey data from the Ikatan Guru Honorar (IGH) in West Java, there is a noticeable performance gap between honorary teachers and civil servant teachers (PNS), with honorary teachers generally exhibiting lower performance levels (Salam & Heriyanto, 2018). One significant factor contributing to this disparity is the idealism surrounding career success, which is inherently linked to the recognition and salary teachers receive (Zuzandi & Connie, 2019). Economically, honorary teachers often face financial hardship, earning wages significantly below the regional minimum wage, forcing many to seek additional jobs to supplement their income (Gunawan & Hendriani, 2020). They find it difficult to achieve objective career success, as their salaries are not commensurate with their dedication (Oktafiana et al., 2020). This struggle affects how teachers perceive their work and their ability to attain subjective career success. Balancing multiple jobs can lead to diminished performance in their primary role as educators.

Career success is a lifelong journey encompassing work experiences and is crucial for determining individual success as it intertwines with psychological and financial aspects of life (Hidayat et al., 2019). Thus, career planning should be comprehensive and deliberate to achieve success. Career success can be understood as the attainment of results related to work and professional experiences (Arthur et al., 2005). Often, career success is evaluated objectively through measurable outcomes such as salary, promotions, or awards (Spurk et al., 2019). However, not all individuals have the opportunity to achieve objective success due to external factors beyond their control, such as organizational or workplace constraints (Ingarianti et al., 2020). The inability to achieve objective success can adversely affect one's career trajectory. Therefore, it is essential to consider and identify internal factors so individuals can experience subjective career success.

Subjective career success reflects an individual's satisfaction with their professional life (Gaile et al., 2022). To achieve this, individuals need to design their subjective success based on their own values, allowing them to find meaning, satisfaction, competence, and a strong sense of purpose in their current work (Kautsar et al., 2022). When individuals attain these qualities, they become more motivated to strive harder towards the subjective success they have envisioned (Ananda et al., 2022). Subjective career success encompasses not only the achievement of personal career goals but also the overall subjective evaluation of one's career. Setting career goals is crucial in this evaluation process as they serve as

benchmarks for success and expectations and as a reference for assessing one's career progress (Hupkens et al., 2021). Therefore, understanding and exploring subjective career success is especially important in the teaching profession.

Achieving subjective career success is closely linked to an individual's personality traits. Personality significantly influences workplace behavior, job success, and career progression (Penney et al., 2011; Wille et al., 2013). Overcoming challenges at work and achieving career goals require a resilient and steadfast personality trait, known as grit. The primary objective of grit is to persistently pursue long-term goals and maintain sustained effort over time (Duckworth et al., 2007). Individuals with grit demonstrate stronger determination and a higher desire to persevere through challenges compared to those lacking this trait (De Vera et al., 2015). For teachers, grit plays a crucial role in helping them remain diligent, persistent, and committed to improving their students' learning outcomes. Teachers often exhibit higher levels of perseverance compared to the consistency of their personal interests (Argon & Kaya, 2018). This trait impacts their feelings, behaviors, motivation, and performance. Additionally, grit aids teachers in resisting negative influences in their careers and helps them cope with their personal failures.

The use of grit in research related to career success in the workplace is relatively new and warrants further investigation. Theoretically, grit and career success are worthy of consideration, yet there is limited research exploring the relationship between these two concepts (Clark & Plano Clark, 2019; Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014). Previous quantitative and qualitative studies have yielded different results (Clark & Plano Clark, 2019). Quantitative research found no significant relationship between grit and career success. However, in qualitative studies, respondents indicated that while grit is important for career success, it is not the most crucial factor. They highlighted that luck, relationships, and opportunities played more significant roles in achieving career success than the personality trait of grit. It has also been suggested that grit is related to subjective career success when mediated by individualized deals (i-deals) and the glass ceiling effect, where individuals who have the opportunity to manage their work conditions, demonstrate perseverance, and maintain consistent interest are more likely to achieve subjective career success (Popoola & Karadas, 2022). As a fundamental component of education, teachers need to translate established curricula into engaging and enjoyable learning programs that are tailored to the needs and circumstances of their students (Izza et al., 2020). Therefore, teachers should be given the freedom to think creatively and innovate in setting goals, methods, and teaching materials to further develop their teaching competencies. In this process, teachers require perseverance and a consistent interest to effectively carry out their duties and achieve educational goals.

The contrasting results from previous research form the basis for this study, which aims to focus on the relationship between grit and subjective career success among teachers. Thus, the objective of this research is to understand the relationship between grit and subjective career success in teachers, as well as the relationship between grit and the dimensions of subjective career success in teachers. The theoretical benefit of this study is to expand the literature

explaining the relationship between grit and subjective career success, especially in the teaching profession. Practically, this research is expected to assist teachers, schools, and policymakers by providing insights into the importance of grit in achieving subjective career success. These insights could serve as a reference for developing programs or formulating new policies to support teachers in realizing their subjective career success.

Method

Participants

The population for this study comprised individuals working as teachers in various capacities, including civil servants (ASN), non-civil servants (non-ASN), temporary teachers, foundation teachers, excluding school principals. All participants had a minimum of five years of work experience and held a bachelor's degree (S1) or an advanced diploma (D-IV). The sampling technique used was non-probability quota sampling, where subjects meeting specific criteria were recruited until the predefined quota was filled (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

The study involved 300 teachers from both public and private schools, presented in Table 1. The sample size was determined based on the researchers' available time, budget, and workforce. Technically, the researchers first identified several regions in East Java that would be convenient for data collection. Subsequently, research proposals were distributed to various targeted schools. Upon receiving approval to conduct the research, the data collection process began using instruments to measure grit and subjective career success, aiming to reach the target of 300 participants.

Data collection was conducted with ethical approval from the protocol. Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee, Faculty of Psychology, Airlangga University (No:2396-KEPK).

Research Instruments

Grit was measured using the Grit-O Scale (Duckworth et al., 2007), which had been adapted into Bahasa Indonesia (Rusli et al., 2020). The Grit-O Scale demonstrated a reliability score of Cronbach's Alpha = 0.688. This scale included two dimensions: Consistency of Interests (6 items) and Perseverance of Effort (6 items). The 12-item scale comprised 6 favorable and 6 unfavorable items. Responses were recorded using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) = Very unlike me to (5) = Very much like me. Examples of items in the Consistency of Interests dimension included statements such as "My interests change from year to year," while items in the Perseverance of Effort dimension included statements like "I finish whatever I begin." The total score was obtained by summing the responses provided by the participants.

Subjective career success was assessed using the Subjective Career Success Inventory (SCSI), which consists of 24 items and had been adapted into Indonesian (Shockley et al., 2016; Ingarianti et al., 2022). The SCSI showed a range of Cronbach's alpha coefficients from 0.601 to 0.969. Specifically, the coefficients were as follows: Authenticity ($\alpha = 0.702$), Growth & Development ($\alpha = 0.969$), Influence ($\alpha = 0.750$), Meaningful Work ($\alpha = 0.807$), Quality Work

($\alpha = 0.803$), Recognition ($\alpha = 0.645$), Personal Life ($\alpha = 0.601$), and Satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.693$). This scale used a 5-point Likert scale with responses ranging from (1) = Strongly Disagree to (5) = Strongly Agree. Sample items from the scale included statements such as "My supervisor says I am performing well," "I am proud of the quality of my work," "I find my work meaningful," "My decisions have an impact on my organization," and "I feel responsible for my own career."

Data Analysis Technique

Given the large sample size of more than 200 participants, it was assumed that the data followed a normal distribution (Field, 2009). Consequently, the analysis employed the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between two normally distributed variables (Prayitno, 2014). Data were further analyzed using Jamovi software version 2.3.

Result

This study involved 300 teachers distributed across several regions in East Java as participants. The demographic data of the study participants are presented in Table 1.

Based on the demographic in Table 1, the number of female respondents is higher than male respondents, totaling 215 or 71.7%. The highest level of education attained by participants is a Bachelor's degree (S1), with 265 participants or 88.3%. The majority of participants are Civil Servants (ASN), comprising 154 participants or 51.3%, with the largest work unit being Senior High Schools (SMA) with 130 participants or 43.3%. Most participants in the study have worked for more than 15 years, totaling 141 participants or 47.0%. A total of 188 participants in the study possess teaching certificates, representing the majority, and similarly, 237 participants or 79% have incomes below Rp 5,000,000.

Hypothesis test was performed to find out the relationship between dependent and independent variables. The result of the Pearson Correlation analysis using Jamovi is presented in Table 2.

Based on the correlation analysis data, the p-value $< .001$ indicates that grit is significantly correlated with all eight dimensions of subjective career success. Positive values in Pearson's r indicate a positive relationship between grit and each dimension of subjective career success.

Discussion

Based on the data analysis of 300 teachers across several regions in East Java, it is evident that grit is correlated with all dimensions of subjective career success: authenticity, growth & development, influence, meaningful work, quality work, recognition, personal life, and satisfaction. In this section, the relationship between grit and each dimension of subjective career success is discussed as follows.

Firstly, based on the data analysis results, grit is associated with the dimension of authenticity in subjective career success. As outlined in theoretical studies, the initial test results indicate a relationship between grit and authenticity in subjective career success. Authenticity involves shaping one's career path based on personal preferences and needs, thereby enabling individuals to withstand external obstacles

Table 1. Respondents Description

Category	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	85	28.3
Female	215	71.7
Age		
20-25 years	2	0.7
26-30 years	42	14
31-35 years	50	16.7
36-40 years	47	15.7
41-45 years	40	13.3
46-50 years	38	12.7
51-55 years	48	16
56-60 years	31	10.3
61-65 years	2	0.7
Education		
D-IV	2	0.7
S1	265	88.3
S2	33	11
Employment Status		
Civil Servant	154	51.3
Organizational Permanent Teacher	103	34.3
Temporary Teacher	43	14.3
Work unit		
Kindergarten	14	4.7
Elementary School	79	26.3
SMP	77	25.7
SMA	130	43.3
Length of service		
5-10 years	107	35.7
11-15 years	52	17.3
> 15 years	141	47.0
Educator Certificate		
Have	188	62.7
Do not have	112	37.3
Income		
< Rp5.000,000	237	79
> Rp5.000,000	63	21

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Analysis Result

Hypothesis	p-value	Pearson's r	Description
G - A	p < .001	0.210	Significant
G - GD	p < .001	0.192	Significant
G - I	p < .001	0.250	Significant
G - MW	p < .001	0.199	Significant
G - QW	p < .001	0.293	Significant
G - R	p < .001	0.204	Significant
G - PL	p < .001	0.176	Significant
G - S	p < .001	0.239	Significant

Description = G: Grit, R: Recognition, GD: Growth and Development, QW: Quality Work, MW: Meaningful Work, I: Influence, A: Authenticity, PL: Personal Life, S: Satisfaction

without wavering. Consistent with previous research findings, individuals with authenticity are connected to their inner selves and can function fully aligned with their personal values, motivating them to pursue their goals (Vainio & Daukantaitė, 2016). Therefore, high levels of grit enable teachers to persevere and remain consistent in their career choices, demonstrating responsibility towards themselves. Regardless of challenges encountered along their career paths,

these are viewed as opportunities for personal growth towards achieving subjective career success aligned with their intrinsic values.

Secondly, grit also demonstrates a relationship with the dimension of growth & development. This dimension relates to an individual's ability to advance their career through acquiring new knowledge and skills. The acquisition of new knowledge and skills supports career development and helps achieve subjective career success in the future. Gritty individuals tend to be persistent, hardworking, responsible for their tasks, and contribute their best efforts amidst failures or obstacles (Rosyadi & Laksmiwati, 2018). Therefore, individuals persist in pursuing their career interests and continually strive to learn new things to enhance their knowledge and skills while navigating their current career paths. Aligned with previous research indicating that grit motivates individuals to continuously learn new things and work hard to achieve optimal and high-quality performance (Widodo & Heru, 2020), grit plays a crucial role in helping teachers maintain a positive attitude towards their career development. They remain consistent in their chosen careers and continuously strive to learn new things to find meaning in their roles as educators.

Thirdly, grit is associated with the dimension of personal life in subjective career success, which relates to the positive impact on an individual's personal activities or life while pursuing their career. One aspect of adult developmental tasks is economic behavioral independence and career preparation (Sari, 2021). Fulfillment of developmental tasks positively influences individuals psychologically. Those who fulfill their developmental tasks feel happy and content with their personal lives. Considering the lifelong commitment required of teachers in their profession, grit is highly beneficial. It enables teachers to remain persistent and committed to their career interests, striving to achieve long-term career goals and positively view their career journey, guiding them towards achieving subjective career success.

Fourthly, the relationship between grit and the dimension of meaningful work appears to be the weakest among the eight dimensions examined. This dimension describes how individuals find personal and social significance in their careers because they feel united with the work they do. Individuals deeply engaged in their work often perceive their current career as a calling from within (Shockley et al., 2016). In the context of grit, this internal calling can be interpreted as the personal interest an individual has in their career. The stronger an individual's interest in their career, the greater their sense of attachment and positive meaning towards it (Puspita, 2013). Individuals who view their career as a personal calling are more likely to derive genuine meaning from their work and have a strong connection to it. Therefore, grit is crucial for teachers to maintain their interest in the careers they pursue, fostering a sense of commitment to their work and enabling them to derive positive meaning from it to achieve subjective career success.

Fifthly, the study findings indicate a relationship between grit and the dimension of satisfaction, which relates to the positive feelings individuals have towards the careers they pursue. Job satisfaction reflects an individual's subjective view of their work. Satisfaction with one's career impacts how an individual behaves at work; when individuals are

satisfied with their jobs, their behaviors and attitudes tend to be more positive (Lee et al., 2013). Individuals who experience job satisfaction are motivated and contribute to achieving good performance. When connected to grit and the teaching profession, individuals who subjectively view their careers positively are consistent in putting forth their best efforts in their current careers, thereby experiencing job satisfaction aligned with their subjective perspectives.

Sixthly, grit is found to significantly correlate with the dimension of recognition within the variable of subjective career success. This dimension pertains to the formal or informal acknowledgment individuals receive for their competence, skills, and achievements. Individuals who receive recognition from others regarding their competence, skills, and achievements tend to exhibit high levels of perseverance in pursuing their predetermined personal goals (Fadhilah & Wardani, 2021a). When connected to grit, individuals who consistently strive to achieve targets and positively contribute to their organizations are likely to receive recognition or awards for their competence, skills, and achievements. Thus, from the perspective of social exchange theory, when employees receive tangible and/or intangible benefits from their work, they are more inclined to engage in reciprocal behaviors for their organizations (Suryani, 2018).

Seventhly, grit also demonstrates a significant relationship with the dimension of influence, which concerns the impact individuals have on others and the organization. An individual needs to make meaningful contributions to have an impact on the organization or other individuals within it. Making an impact on the organization or others within the organization can be achieved by making meaningful contributions at work. Gritty individuals tend to contribute more to their work than individuals who are less gritty (Suzuki et al., 2015). It can be inferred that grit helps teachers to consistently be able to make maximum efforts in working so that the contributions they give can have a positive impact on other individuals and their organizations. Thus, as long as teachers are able to consistently contribute to their work, they can make every experience a contribution to evaluating their career journey and making improvements to their future careers that lead to subjective career success.

Eighthly, based on the research findings, grit is correlated with the dimension of quality of work, which pertains to producing high-quality products or services. This dimension shows the highest significant value compared to other dimensions. To achieve high-quality products or services, an individual needs to have a strong desire to work harder and commit to giving their best to their career. Hard work and efforts in pursuing their career lead individuals to produce quality and optimal performance (Lestari et al., 2022). To consistently maintain quality and optimal performance, individuals require grit in their careers because individuals with high levels of grit have been proven to exhibit positive performance (Widodo & Heru, 2020). Quality and optimal performance also help individuals avoid stress because individuals with grit have lower levels of work-related stress compared to those without grit (Kim & Lee, 2022). The duties of teachers are not only related to teaching but also involve extensive school administrative tasks, which potentially increase their workload. Therefore, grit is necessary for teachers to avoid work-related stress and maintain their hard

work so that the resulting performance remains optimal and of high quality. The presence of grit in teachers also helps them avoid work-related stress, enabling them to interpret their career success because the resulting work is maximal.

While this research provides insights into the field of science, it still has several limitations. Grit is a long process in an individual's career journey, yet this study only conducted it at one point in time. Therefore, there is a possibility that the research findings do not fully depict grit as a whole. The second limitation relates to the participant population, as the authors did not control the proportion of employees by gender and their highest education level. This resulted in an uneven distribution of participants across each category.

Conclusion and Implications

Based on the research findings and discussion, it is concluded that there is a relationship between grit and subjective career success among teachers. Specifically, grit is associated with the dimensions of authenticity, growth & development, influence, meaningful work, quality work, recognition, personal life, and satisfaction. Grit and subjective career success have a positive relationship, meaning that teachers with higher levels of grit also experience higher levels of subjective career success. Conversely, teachers with lower levels of grit tend to have lower subjective career success.

The implications of this study suggest that teachers should be supported in building perseverance and consistent interest in their careers, enabling them to overcome obstacles and failures in their career paths. Additionally, teachers are encouraged to achieve their long-term goals and experience subjective career success. To cultivate grit in their careers, teachers should focus on their long-term objectives and remain steadfast in the face of challenges that test their resolve. By doing so, teachers can evaluate their career journeys, make improvements for their future career paths, and find meaning in their career journeys while experiencing subjective career success. Future research could enrich these findings by exploring subjects or participants other than individuals in the teaching profession and conducting longitudinal studies to provide a deeper understanding of grit. It is also important for future studies to consider population distribution, especially in terms of gender and highest education level.

Declaration

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Author contributions

SSSP conceptualized the study and wrote the introduction, data collection, data processing, and discussion sections. TMI provided guidance in writing the manuscript and preparing and validating the research instruments.

Conflict of interest

Authors declare no conflict of interest

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