

A study of grit and parental monitoring as predictors of academic success among the undergraduates in South-Eastern Nigeria.

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-----ABSTRACT-----

The study investigated grit and parental monitoring as predictors of academic success among the undergraduates in South-Eastern Nigeria. The study sample size was. A total of 203 Unizik undergraduate students participated in this study. Their age ranged from 18-29, with a mean age of 22. The number of males was 95 (47%), and the number of females was 108(53%). The standard deviation of their age was 2.0. Five faculties were picked from the entire faculties in Unizik, and from these five faculties, five departments were in turn picked. A probabilistic sampling method was employed, precisely simple random sampling technique. The use of the probabilistic sampling technique gave equal opportunity to all the faculties, departments, and levels. The instruments used in the study were the Grit Scale, Parental Monitoring Scale, and the Academic Success Inventory for College students (ASIC). The study is a survey research; correlational design was adopted for the study, while multiple regressions were used in analysing the data. The result of the findings reveals that there is a significant relationship between grit and academic success. It reveals also that there is no significant relationship between parental monitoring and academic success. The implication of this study is that there is need for teachers to deemphasize talent as a major predictor of academic success, and to think of other variables that can predict academic success, such variable as grit. School psychologists and teachers should teach students that gritty students can outperform the so called talented students. It is recommended that Government should start emphasizing academic success from a holistic point of view rather than just from the point of view of a higher GPA. Also, teachers and parents alike should inculcate into their children a holistic view of academic success.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Success as an outcome variable is desired by everybody, and it is not a monopoly of a particular group. It follows then, that anybody who is in school or who has already gone to school desires equally to be successful academically. As a result of the quest for academic success, people have come up with the notion that intelligence or put it in another way natural endowment is the major player when it comes to being successful academically. Granted, that natural endowment should not be neglected, some other variables should equally be considered as predictors of academic success, such variables as grit and parental monitoring. Because of the emphasis and the over dependence on natural endowment, some who considered themselves as less gifted in intelligence have been in a constant sorry state of not going to be successful academically. The so called gifted individuals have continued to rub it at the faces of the less gifted ones.

Meanwhile students drop out of colleges for a variety of reasons such as academic failure, lack of funds, personal problems or change in career plans, lack of intelligence (Prevatt, LI, Welles, Dreher, Yelland & Lee, 2011). Some other factors include: academic background, poor I.Q, academic experience, expectations and institutional commitment, academic social match, income and employment, family support and commitments, and university support services (Lucilia, Joana, Ana, Susana, Henrique, & Helena, 2016). Amongst all the factors mentioned above, intelligence or the related has consistently been linked to academic failure. Teachers and parents alike emphasize intelligence as the major of all, allowing other variables drift off. Quite accepted that intelligence plays a role in academic success but can there be other variables that can be looked upon as predictors of academic success rather than just intelligence and some other factors mentioned above? Without academic success, ones opportunity in life becomes very slim. Those who fail to attain a college degree have fewer career opportunities, earn less money and achieve lower financial stability than their peers who graduate from colleges. For the purpose of this study grit and parental monitoring have been given the priority attention as possible factors that might predict academic success. Let us quickly see the concept of success, which will help us appreciate the understanding of academic success from a broad view.

Success (the opposite of failure) is the status of having achieved and accomplished an aim or objective (Abu-Wusu, 2017). Being successful means the achievement of desired visions and planned goals. Furthermore, success can be a certain social status that describes a prosperous person that could also have gained fame for its favorable outcome. Success can also be described as - attaining wealth, prosperity and/or fame. The online Business Dictionary (2018) defines success as Achievement of an action within a specified period of time or within a specified parameter. Success can also mean completing an objective or reaching a goal. Success can be expanded to encompass an entire project or be restricted to a single component of a project or task. It can be achieved within the workplace, or in an individual's personal life. For example, if an individual's personal goal is to be accepted in a new career, success would occur after the individual has been officially accepted into his or her new place of employment. The word success can be understood from both the objective and subjective points of views. Objectively, a person can be successful, based from the yardstick from which the society measures who is successful or who is not successful. A person can also be dimmed successful subjectively if he or she is able to meet his/her personal set goals. Grosberg & Abrahams (2014) in categorising success into objective and subjective explained that objective success is not influenced by people's feelings, it is more of the unbiased, factual success. While subjective success is more of a feeling, a taste, an opinion about the objective success. From the above understanding of the word success, one can easily see that the word success can be viewed from various dimensions: academic success, wealth success, health success, social status success, political success etc. Among all these various dimensions through which success can be viewed, this write-up will concentrate on academic success.

There are different approaches to defining the concept of academic success. The ambiguity associated with the definition of academic success is partially attributed to its inherently perspectival nature (York, Gibson, & Rankin, 2015). Perhaps the most certain way a student can define this concept is being able to meet an institution's expectations. This may include being in a better standing and making all the satisfactory progress towards earning their credentials. Beyond that, academic success may also include the students themselves. As a student, you also need to identify your own success goals while in school and work towards achieving them. Once the goals are successfully achieved, an individual can claim to have achieved academic success.

Students look at academic success differently. There are those that define academic success as being able to earn a specific grade point average, others are of the opinion that it entails landing a successful career while others define this as being able to gain admission to a particular graduate program. Depending on how you look at it, any of these different thoughts can be used as an academic success definition without having to disregard any. According to Yolk et al (2015), academic success is defined as inclusive of academic achievement, attainment of learning objective, acquisition of desired skills and competencies, satisfaction, persistence, and post college performance. Vanthournout, Gijbels, Goertjens, Donche, and Petergem (2012), give a minimal definition of academic success, minimal because of the fact that their definition is not broad, according to them, academic success is defined as the ratio between the number of study credits a student obtained after his/her graduation and the total amount of credits the student was enrolled in during his years in school. Recognizing that the concept of academic success is in itself complex and multifactorial, Lucilia et el (2016), assert that academic success does not represent the same thing to most individuals (students, teachers, stakeholders, researchers). lucilia et al (2016) therefore accessing the definition of Higher education Academy, says that most studies choose to analyse academic success as student retention and/or as successful conclusion of studies within a specific period of time. Whichever way you consider it, academic success should be looked upon as a total transformative experience. An individual's education must not be limited to improving test results but should be encompassing. The challenge that remains is to create these transformations. It is the duty of our institutions to assume responsibility for the holistic development of a student. As parents, guardians,

siblings, church and family; we can also play a part in this transformation, but our schools are considered as the vanguard of all of these.

It is then within the ambience of this research to consider other variables that can determine academic success such as grit and parental monitoring which have not been given adequate attention. The character trait “grit” is a much discussed and debated topic, both among education researchers and in public forums (Ris, 2015). Why do some individuals accomplish more than others of equal intelligence? Ris (2015) is of the view that grit may likely contribute to it. The word grit is defined as perseverance and passion for long term goals (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly 2007). Grit entails working strenuously toward challenge, maintaining effort and interests over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress. The gritty individual approaches achievement as a marathon; his or her advantage is stamina (Duckworth, 2007). Whereas disappointment or boredom signals to others that it is time to change trajectory and cut losses, the gritty individual stays the course. Grit has also been defined as the tendency to pursue long term goals with sustained zeal and hard work (Katherine, Culin, Tsukayama & Duckworth, 2014). We all can identify people in our lives that we have big ideas and a lot of enthusiasm for many projects, only to drop them within a few weeks. Individuals with a lot of grit tend to set very long term objectives and do not lose sight of them, even when they are not getting any positive feedback (Bashant, 2014).

Many other variables bear resemblance to grit but they are not exactly the same thing, such variable as resilience, conscientiousness of the Big Five, need for achievement etc. Thus, although we recognize the utility of the Big five taxonomy as a descriptive framework in which newly characterized personality traits should be situated, we do not believe that it provides an exhaustive list of traits worth studying (Duckworth et al, 2007). Conscientious individuals are characteristically thorough, careful, reliable, organized, industrious, and self-controlled. Whereas all of these qualities bear a plausible contribution to achievements, their relative importance likely varies depending upon the type of achievement considered. According to Duckworth (2007), grit overlaps with achievement aspects of conscientiousness but differs in its emphasis on long term stamina rather than short term intensity. The gritty individuals not only finishes task at hand but pursues a given aim over years. Grit is also distinct from dependability aspects of conscientiousness, including self-control, in its specification of consistent goals and interest. Grit also differs from need for achievement described by McClelland (1961), as a drive to complete manageable goals that allow for immediate feedback on performance. Whereas individuals high in need for achievement pursue goals that are neither too easy nor too hard, individuals high in grit deliberately set for themselves extremely long term objectives and do not swerve from them even in the absence of positive feedback. A second important distinction is that need for achievement is by definition a non conscious drive for implicitly rewarding activities and, therefore impossible to measure using self-report methods (Duckworth, 2007).

Resilience which is defined as the ability to appraise situations without distorting them, and thinking about changes that are possible in your life (Perkins-Gough, 2013), differs also from grit, although bears some resemblance. Resilience is related to grit because part of what it means to be gritty is to be resilient when challenges present themselves (Bashant, 2014). There are still other traits that one must possess in order to be gritty, which include conscientiousness, self-discipline and perseverance. Having grit means that you choose to invest time and energy in a particular endeavour and give up many other things in order to pursue this passion. Gritty people have deep commitments to which they remain loyal for many years. From the point of view of this study, grit may likely predict academic success.

Another variable of interest is parental monitoring. The scientific interest in this variable is vividly clear especially in the field of social sciences, more especially psychology and education in general. Parental monitoring has been variously defined and according to Dishion and McMahon (1998), it is a set of parenting behaviours aimed at paying attention to and tracking the child’s whereabouts, activities, and adaptations. The idea behind it is that parents who are sufficiently aware of what is going on in the lives of their children and what may be going wrong can undertake appropriate action. They can support and comfort their child when needed, and help the child make more responsible decisions in the future when transgressing societal norms or the law (Keijsers, 2015). The definition also equates monitoring with a set of parenting behaviours; good monitors are seen as effective at tracking and surveillance. Lowe and Dotterer (2013), in their own take, define parental monitoring as a parental practice that is defined as parents’ knowledge of their adolescents’ school and social activities and whereabouts. Common monitoring strategies include parents’ establishment of boundaries for adolescent’s’ autonomy, expectations for socially acceptable behaviours, and consequences for violating the established boundaries and expectations. Another dimension to the definition of parental monitoring which is essential to the understanding of parental monitoring is “open lines of communication”. Borawski, Ievers-Landi, Lovegreen, and Trapl (2003), suggested the open lines of communication and knowledge of a child. This definition has to do with a more matured definition which encompasses adolescents. A synthesis of the various definitions of parental monitoring could be to understand parental monitoring as a total surveillance of a child whereabouts, his/her activities, child school environment, church environment, peer

group environment, etc. From the point of view of this study, parental monitoring may likely predict academic success.

II. METHODS

Participants

A total number of 203 Unizik undergraduate students participated in this study. Their age ranged from 18-29, with a mean age of 22. The number of males was 95 (47%), and the number of females was 108(53%). The standard deviation of their age was 2.0. Five faculties were picked from the entire faculties in Unizik, and from these five faculties, five departments were in turn picked. A probabilistic sampling method was employed, precisely simple random sampling technique. The use of the probabilistic sampling technique gave equal opportunity to all the faculties, departments, and levels.

Instruments

The instruments used in the study were the Grit Scale, Parental Monitoring Scale, and the Academic Success Inventory for College students (ASIC).

Grit Scale

The scale contains 12- items and was developed by Duckworth et al (2007). The items are scored on a 5 – point Likert response pattern ranging from 1= not at all like me to 5= very much like me. Items contained in the scale include statements such as: I have overcome setbacks to conquer an important challenge; my interests change from year to year. The reverse items of the scale include items – 2, 3,5,7,8 and 11. The grit scale has two subscales-one level measures perseverance of effort and the other measures passion (consistency of interest). The items that measure consistency of interest (passion) are items 2, 3,5,7,8, and 11, whereas the rest of the items measure perseverance of effort. The developers reported a high internal consistency (α .85) for the overall scale and for each factor (consistency of interest α = .84; perseverance of effort α = .78). The present researcher obtained an internal consistency (Cronbach alpha) reliability of .705 using 47 students from the department of psychology Igbariam campus. Grit was correlated with the big five personality traits (conscientiousness), and a concurrent validity of $r = .402$, $p < .007$.

Parental Monitoring Scale (PMS)

The parental monitoring scale (PMS) is a 31 – item scale developed by Nwafor and Ugwu (2015), the response pattern was a 5- point Likert format ranging from Never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Often (4), Always (5). It assesses the degree to which the parents monitor their children (undergraduates) in respect to their social relationship, whereabouts etc., in the course of their undergraduate study. This scale include, my parents check my performances in school and my parents ask me about any new item I bring home. As indicated by the developers that never, rarely and sometimes indicated lower level of parental monitoring, whereas often and always signified higher degree of parental monitoring. The developers reported Cronbach alpha coefficient of .91 for the internal consistency reliability of the 31 items. Uzoegbu (2017), conducted a pilot study on this scale and got a reliability coefficient of .87, and a concurrent validity of $r = .30$ which was obtained by correlating parental monitoring scale with parental Authoritative scale. The present researcher did not conduct a pilot study due to the fact that it was an indigenous scale and a pilot study was recently conducted by Uzoegbu on the scale.

Academic Success Inventory for College Students (ASIC)

Academic Success Inventory is a 50-item questionnaire developed by Prevatt, Li, Welles, Dreher, Yelland and Lee (2011). The 50 item instrument has 10 sub scales that measure general academic skills, career decidedness, internal and external motivation, anxiety, concentration, socializing, personal adjustment and perceived efficacy of the instructor. The ASIC has 50 items that measure areas related to academic success. The rating is a Likert scoring pattern that ranged from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = strongly agree. The following subscales with the number of items in them are as follows: General academic skills(12 items), internal motivation / confidence (8 items), perceived instructor efficacy (5 items), concentration (4), external motivation /future (4 items), socializing (4), career decidedness (4), lack of anxiety (3), personal adjustment (3), and external motivation / current (3). The cronbach alphas for the ASIC were as follows: General academic skill = .93, internal motivation / confidence = .86, perception of instructor efficacy =.92, concentration = .87, external motivation / future = .88, socializing = .84, career decidedness = .87, lack of anxiety = .77, personal adjustment = .86 and external motivation/ current = .62. The cronbach alpha for the total ASIC was. 93. The developers also showed that a discriminant validity in the comparison between a group of students participating in the university Honours program and a group that was on academic probation was evident. The current researcher conducted a pilot study using 47 psychology students of Igbariam campus and got a cronbach alpha of .82. This

was in line with the validity of the developers and showed a great height of reliability. The present researcher also correlated academic success with self-efficacy and a concurrent validity of $r = .029$, $p < .870$ were obtained.

Procedure

All the faculties in Unizik campus were listed, which include the following faculties- faculty of agriculture, faculty of arts, faculty of basic medical sciences, faculty of biosciences, faculty of Education, faculty of environmental sciences, faculty of health sciences and technology, faculty of Law, faculty of management sciences, faculty of medicine, faculty of Pharmaceutical sciences, faculty of physical sciences and faculty of social sciences. Having listed all the faculties on different sheets of paper and wrapped them. The researcher took all of them in his hands and shook them properly to avoid bias. The researcher then poured on the floor the wrapped papers. He then picked randomly five sheets of papers and the following faculties were picked- Arts, Social Sciences, Management Sciences, Physical Sciences and Engineering. Using the same method, the researcher wrote down all the departments in the above different faculties that were picked. The departments in the different faculties that were picked are: faculty of Arts (English language and literature department, History and International studies department, department of Igbo , African and Asian studies, department of linguistics, department of modern European languages, department of music, department of philosophy, department of Religion and Human relations, department of Theatre and film studies and chines department); faculty of social sciences (department of psychology, department of sociology, department of mass communication, department of Economics and department of political Science); faculty of Management Sciences (department of Banking and finance, department of Public Administration, department of Accountancy, marketing department, department of Entrepreneurial studies, department of public administration, and department of cooperative economics and management) :faculty of Physical Sciences (department of computer science, department of geology, department of mathematics, department of physics and industrial physics, department of pure and industrial chemistry and department of statistics.); faculty of Engineering (Electrical engineering department, Mechanical engineering department, chemical engineering department, civil engineering department, metallurgical and materials engineering, electronic and computer engineering, agricultural and bio resources engineering and polymer and textile engineering). Having listed all the departments in those five faculties, the following departments were fortunate to be picked- Philosophy (Arts faculty), Psychology (Faculty of Social Sciences), Marketing (Management Sciences), Electrical Engineering (Engineering faculty) and Geology (Physical Sciences). The researcher sustained the same method used in choosing faculties and departments in choosing levels from different departments and the following levels were chosen from the different deptmesnts-200 level (Philosophy), 300 level (psychology), 300 level (Marketing), 100 level (Electrical Engineering) and 400 level (Geology). After choosing the departments, accidental sampling technique was used in selecting the participants in each department. This shows that students that were willing to participate in the study were used. The researcher used the assistance of the course representatives in the selected departments to explain the nature and essence of the study to respondents, and assured them of confidentiality of whatever response they will provide. In some cases, the researcher met the lectures, informing them ab initio of his intention to use their classes. The researcher met the students while in class after lectures, and having explained to the students about the research project, distributed the questionnaire, with the help of two research assistants together with the help of the course representatives. The researcher was always around to answer questions from the respondents and to give some possible clarifications. The researcher explained to the students that the exercise was a free exercise, though he enjoined them to help out. A total of 240 questionnaires were distributed and, a total number of 225 were returned, and a total number of 203 were eventually used for this study, others were discarded for improper completion of the questionnaire. Below is a tabulation of the number of questionnaire collected from each of the departments- 40 questionnaires (Philosophy), 41 (Psychology department), 42 (geology department), 40 (Marketing department), and 40 (Electrical engineering department).

Design and Statistics

The study is a survey research; correlational design was adopted for the study, while multiple regressions were used in analysing the data.

III. RESULTS

Table 1: summary of table of zero order correlation coefficient matrix and coefficient determinants.

	1	2	3
Grit	1		
Pm	.086(0.74%)	1	
Aca	.001**(0.01%)	0.95(0.90%)	1

** P< .001

Pm= Parental monitoring

Aca= Academic success

The table 1 above reveals that there is a significant relationship between grit and academic success. It reveals also that there is no significant relationship between parental monitoring and academic success.

Table 11: Summary table of multiple linear regression of grit, parental monitoring and academic success.

Variables	R ²	F	Std	B	t	P
	.140	16.34	38.53			
Grit	.357	5.43	p<.001			
Pm	.087	1.32	p>.05			

Determinant = academic success

Pm = Parental monitoring

From the table two above, the first hypothesis was accepted, while the second hypothesis was rejected.

Interpretation

The table above indicates that, the first hypothesis which stated that Grit will significantly predict Academic Success was confirmed at $B (.357) = 5.43, P < 0.05$ level of significance. The implication of it is that grit is a good predictor of academic success. The second hypothesis which stated that Parental Monitoring will significantly predict Academic Success was rejected at $B (.87) = 1.32, P > 0.05$ level of significance. The implication is that parental monitoring is not a good predictor of academic success.

IV. DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The core objective of this research was to determine the predicting strength of grit and parental monitoring on academic success among undergraduate students of Unizik. The result of this research showed that the first hypothesis was confirmed, whereas the second hypothesis was rejected. The first hypothesis stated that grit will significantly predict academic success among undergraduates was confirmed. This result was in confirmation of the findings of Duckworth et al (2007), who conducted a research to test whether grit was associate with cumulative GPA among undergraduates at an Elite university. The result of the study showed that gritty students outperformed their less gritty peers.

The finding of the first hypothesis was also in congruence with another study conducted by Duckworth et al (2007). The study was to test whether grit has an impact among those cadets who remained in the United States Military Academy, West Point. The result showed that grit was predicted for completion of the rigorous summer training program better than any other predictor. The result of the first hypothesis was also in direct confirmation of another research carried out by Duckworth et al (2007). The research was a prospective, longitudinal investigation involving finalists in the 2005 Scripps National Spelling Bee. This annual competition involves thousands of children in the United States, Europe, Canada, New Zealand, Guam, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Bahamas, and American Samoa. The researchers were interested in this competition for two reasons. First, there were curious about the importance of grit to exceptional extracurricular accomplishment-to vocational rather than vocational pursuits. Second, the researcher's wanted to test a hypothesis about the mechanism of grit. The result of the competition showed that gritty finalists outperformed their less gritty peers at least in part because they studied longer.

Furthermore, the result of this research also showed that the second hypothesis which stated that parental monitoring will significantly predict academic success among undergraduates was rejected. The implication of the above is that parental monitoring will not aid in the academic success of their undergraduate students. This result was inconsistent with the research carried out by Ying et al (2015). They conducted a study on Parental monitoring, parent adolescent communication and adolescents' trust in their parents in China. The result of the study was the adolescents' trust in their parents was positively related to parental monitoring and parent –adolescent communication. Furthermore, parent –adolescent communication mediated the association between parental monitoring and adolescents' trust in their parents. The implication of this study is that parental monitoring and parent –adolescent communication play an important role in fostering adolescents' trust in their parents, hence , the success of their adolescents.

The findings of the second hypothesis was in opposite with the research carried out by Lowe el al (2013), who investigated associations between parental monitoring and youths' school engagement and academic motivation among racial /ethnic minority adolescents, and tested whether mother and father adolescent warmth enhanced these associations. The result of the study showed that parental monitoring was a positive main effect of motivation, and both monitoring and father's warmth were positive main effects of school self-esteem. The inconsistency in the result of the second hypothesis and that of the research by Ying et

al (2015) and Lowe et al (2013) could be as a result of cultural differences. Their researches were conducted in Asia and America respectively.

Limitations of the study

Utmost care should be taken in generalizing the result of this study, this is because of the fact that the samples were drawn only from Unizik campus. Another important limitation is the non-cooperating attitude of some of the participants (students). Some of the students completed the questionnaires carelessly. Lack of fund and time were also factors that made the researcher restricted his study to UNIZIK.

The implication of this study is that there is need for teachers to deemphasize talent as a major predictor of academic success, and to think of other variables that can predict academic success, such variable as grit. School psychologists and teachers should teach students that gritty students can outperform the so called talented students. Another implication of this study is that a parenting style which is most suitable to our culture should be imbibed. Copying parenting style that is foreign might not work for us Africans.

It is recommended that Government should start emphasizing academic success from a holistic point of view rather than just from the point of view of a higher GPA. Also, teachers and parents alike should inculcate into their children a holistic view of academic success. Again, students should be taught to imbibe a mastery orientation to learning rather than a performance orientation. This will actually help them achieve academic success from a holistic point of view.

Conflict of interests:

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately affected their report of the findings of this research.

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