Reflection on The End of The Covid-19 Pandemic: The Role of Social-Emotional and Character Development on Students' Academic Grit

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Keywords: Academic Grit, Social-Emotional, Character Development

Abstract: This study aims to explain socio-emotional development and identify factors influencing students' academic grit towards the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. Using multiple linear regression analysis, the research involved 232 high school students who had resumed face-to-face learning. Data was collected online in the school's computer lab using the Social-Emotional and Character Development Scale (SECDS, $\alpha = 0.880$) and the Academic Grit Scale (AGS, $\alpha = 0.861$). Results showed that socio-emotional and character development collectively impact academic grit. Hypothesis testing indicated that prosocial behavior, self-control, and respect at home did not significantly affect academic grit. However, factors such as honesty, self-development, and respect at school were significant contributors. These findings highlight the importance of socio-emotional traits in fostering academic perseverance as students transition back to normal schooling. Applying the SECD concept in academic settings may help reduce risky behavior in middle school students. Early identification of academic grit levels is crucial for promoting resilience and academic success. This research provides new insights into how socio-emotional development and character traits can support students' academic grit during challenging periods.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic is a global challenge that impacts all aspects of life (Mosanya, 2021), creates major problems for the education system in human history, affects 1.6 billion students in more than 200 countries and has an impact on closing all schools (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). The learning process in schools, which should improve skills and social awareness, is ultimately hampered because the Covid-19 pandemic forces students to carry out the learning process online (Mosanya, 2021). In contrast to previous years, currently the education process has been carried out offline or face-to-face, but it cannot be denied that the previous online learning system had an impact on students' academic grit (Kareem, Thomas, Kumar, & Neelakantan, 2022). This impact is caused by a lack of student interaction with teachers and peers, as well as damage to the student support system (Chen et al., 2022).

Grit is a non-cognitive skill that shows persistence and long-term motivation (Chen et al., 2022) and requires working hard to complete challenges and maintain interest despite failure (Hofmeys, 2021). A high grit level shows
that students have a great interest in learning and have good interaction patterns with the academic world (Kareem, Thomas, Kumar, & Neelakantan, 2022). Academic grit itself is a desire or persistence for long-term academic goals (Postigo, Cuesta, Alonso, Cueto, & Muniz, 2021).

Researchers or academic practitioners hope that academic grit can help students complete their academic assignments. However, some students have extrinsic motivation in completing their assignments and this extrinsic motivation is motivated by social-emotional (Oriol, Miranda, Oyanedel, & Torres, 2017) and individual character development (Red & Jeremiah, 2017). Social relations have an important role in the learning process. Much of individual

growth is spent in the school environment. Social-emotional development is defined as a process of building positive relationships with others, acquiring knowledge, and realizing and managing feelings (Folsom, 2005).

The purpose of this study can be described by the hypothesis built by the researcher:

H1: partially prosocial behavior has a significant effect on academic grit

H2: Honesty partially has a significant effect on academic grit

H3: Self-development partially has a significant effect on academic grit

H4: Self-control partially has a significant effect on academic grit

H5: Respect at school partially has a significant effect on academic grit

H6: Respect at home partially has a significant effect on academic grit

H7: Social-emotional and character development simultaneously have a significant effect on academic grit

2 THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

2.1 Academic Grit

Grit represents perseverance and passion for long term goals. Grit really requires hard work to face challenges, maintain effort and interest despite failure, difficulty, and high tension (Dukckworth & Peterson, 2007). Research developments have linked grit to academic achievement among children, youth, and universities. Grit has a unique relationship with academic aspects (Clark & Malecki, 2019). Academic grit is persistence and passion for long-term academic goals in an educational context (Postigo, Cuesta, Alonso, Cueto, & Muniz, 2021).

According to Dukckworth & Peterson (2007) academic grit has two dimensions, namely, persistence in effort and consistency in interest. Perversion in effort is defined as an individual's determination to dare to face challenges, dare to face failure, and always try to achieve success. Consistency in interest is commitment and resilience which become individual assets to remain in a consistent position in the long term.

2.2 Social-Emotional and Character Development

Social-Emotional and Character Developmental (SECD) is defined in different terms, but with the same intent. Based on the purpose of this study, SECD is defined as a life skill that aims to develop students' character. SECD has five essential skills that help explain this concept (Synder, 2014).

The first skill is self-awareness, recognizing emotions and being able to realistically assess limitations and strengths. The second skill is self-management, being able to set and achieve goals and handle emotions so that you are able to set the priority of tasks that must be done. The third skill is social awareness, understanding, and giving empathy to other people's feelings. The fourth skill is relationship, building and maintaining healthy relationships with other people and being able to handle conflict constructively. The fifth skill is responsible decision making and problem solving, making ethical and constructive choices about personal and social behavior (Elias & Moceri, 2012).

The behaviors or skills highlighted in this study focus on prosocial behavior, honesty, self-development, self-control, respect for rules, and behavior expected at home and school. The concept was developed from the positive action theory of change (Ji, DuBois, & Flay, 2021).

3 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Research Method

This research is an explanatory research to determine causal relationships (Saiani, 2014). For example, in this study, the researcher tries to identify factors that can play a role in students' academic grit. The independent variables in this study use social-emotional and character development (prosocial, honesty, self-development, self-control, respect at school, and respect at home) and the dependent variable uses academic grit. Statistical data analysis using SPSS 2.0 application.

3.2 Population and Data Collection

The subjects in this study focused on middle school students who had conducted face-to-face learning with several self-identifications, namely level, gender and status of having been exposed to Covid-19 or not. The number of samples in this study were 232 students. Data collection used an online filling technique in the computer lab available at school.

3.3 Instrumentations and Reliability of The Questionnaire

3.3.1 Academic Grit Scale

Clark and Malecki (2019) developed and proved that the Academic Grit Scale (AGS) is psychometrically specific for academic performance or academic achievement and is appropriate for the youth population. This study used 10 AGS items with responses; (1) "Not at all like me", (2) "Not much like me", (3) "Somewhat like me", (4) "Mostly like me", (5) "Very much like me". The average score on the 10 AGS items shows the level of student academic grit. The higher the average score reflects high academic grit. After conducting a reliability test using Cronbach's alpha, AGS in this study has the recommended reliability (Bujang, Omar, & Baharum, 2018), namely ($\alpha = 0.880$).

3.3.2 Social-Emotional And Character Development Scale

This research uses the SECDS developed by Ji, DuBois, and Flay (2021) which consists of 27 items. The items are mapped based on social-emotional skill and character aspects into: (1) prosocial behavior 5 items, (2) honesty 5 items, (3) Self-development 4 items, (4) Self-control 4 items, (5) respect at school 5 items, (6) respect at home 4 items. Each item was rated with four responses (never, sometimes, often, very often). Cronbach's alpha SECDS in this study is ($\alpha = 0.861$)

4 RESULT

4.1 Descriptive Statistic

The results of data collection, identification of sample distribution in detail can be seen in table 1. Personal identification is distinguished by gender, grade, and the status of students who have been exposed to Covid-19. The dominant subjects in this study consisted of 61% male (N=143), 93% 9th grade (N=93), and 74% had never been exposed to Covid-19 (N=172).

As shown in table 1, female students have a higher average academic grit score (M = 39.04, SD = 6.762). Judging from the student's school level, grade 8 (M = 38.90, SD = 6.447) and grade 9 (M = 38.43, SD = 6.035) have a mean with a small difference. The profile of Covid-19 exposure status in students also has a small mean difference, been exposed (M = 38.62, SD = 6.335) and never exposed (M = 38.22, SD = 6.470).

4.2 Inferential Statistic

It is known that the coefficient of determination in table 2 or the R square value is 0.461 and the Adjusted R square is 0.447. This score explains the variation (change) of academic grit 44.7% can be explained by social-emotional and character development, the other 55.3% is explained by other variables outside of this study.

Partial hypothesis testing is briefly described in table 3. Prosocial has no significant effect on students' academic grit ($\beta = 0.071$, sig = 0.222 ($p > 0.05$)). These results differ from previous research which states that prosocial behavior has a significant effect on academic grit (Park & Lee, 2020). This can be caused by students' academic grit being influenced by the target of understanding a meaning independently rather than pleasure in the pursuit of happiness (Culin, Tsukayama, & Duckworth, 2014).

Honesty has a significant effect on academic grit ($\beta = 0.133$, sig = 0.045($p < 0.05$)). Obedience and discipline are positive learning capital. This is in accordance with the definition of academic grit as long-term academic persistence (Postigo, Cuesta, Alonso, Cueto, & Muniz, 2021) which requires honesty or humility in the emotional aspects of students (Latuapo, 2021).

Table 1: Statistic Descriptive of Participant

Identification	Indicator	Frequency	Percentage	Academic Grit Mean	SD	Min	Max
Gender	Male	143	61%	38.05	6.045	23	50
	Female	89	39%	39.04	6.762	20	50
Grade	7th Grade	50	22%	37.60	6.655	20	50
	8th Grade	89	38%	38.90	6.477	23	50
	9th Grade	93	40%	38.43	6.035	26	50
Profile of covid-19	Been exposed	60	26%	38.62	6.335	20	50
	Never exposed	172	74%	38.22	6.470	23	50

Self-development has a significant effect on academic grit ($\beta = 0.415$, sig = 0.000 ($p < 0.05$)). Students who have a high level of grit will tend to have good academic planning. This influences students to carry out self-development in achieving their goals (Willingham, 2016).

Self-control has no significant effect on academic grit ($\beta = 0.088$, sig = 0.119 ($p > 0.05$)). Self-control and fortitude are important factors for academic success. However, in several cases in the academic sphere, the goal of getting grades or achievements is motivated by extrinsic motivation rather than intrinsic motivation (Oriol, Miranda, Oyanedel, & Torres, 2017).

Respect at school has a significant effect on academic grit ($\beta = 0.130$, sig = 0.040 ($p < 0.05$)). Students who have direct involvement with the school environment also have persistence and can improve academic achievement and affect student grit scores (Tang, Wang, Guo, & Salmela-Aro, 2019).

Respect at home has no significant effect on academic grit ($\beta = 0.107$, sig = 0.088 ($p > 0.05$)). Research by Ma, Ma, and Lan (2020) explains that parental control carried out at home has a negative correlation with students' grit levels.

Excessive parental control can reduce the level of student achievement in secondary schools.

Table 4 describes the simultaneous effect of the variables in this study. Social-emotional development and character have a significant effect on academic grit. Research related to socio-emotional and character development shows the importance of social skills, social behavior, and student character in helping students understand their academic responsibilities (Ji, DuBois, & Flay, 2021).

5 CONCLUSIONS

This study has different results from previous studies. Although empirically academic grit has many results and is not consistent in explaining its predictors, this study attempts to analyze the role of SECD on student academic grit. SECD has a role to play in student success and well-being. SECD domains such as self-control explain that students can be disciplined to stay focused in learning behavior (Ji, DuBois, & Flay, 2021).

Table 2: The Coefficient of determination

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.679[a]	.461	.447	4.711

Table 3: Summary of Research Result

Multiple regression dependent variable: Academic Grit	Beta	Sig (sig<0.05)	t-value	Confirmation of hypothesis
Prosocial	0.071	0.222	1.225	Rejected
Honesty	0.133	0.045	2.011	Confirmed
Self-development	0.415	0.000	7.636	Confirmed
Self-control	0.088	0.119	1.563	Rejected
Respect at school	0.130	0.040	2.062	Confirmed
Respect at home	0.107	0.088	1.715	Rejected

Table 4: F Test (simultan)

Model		Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4274.388	712.398	32.106	.000[b]

The SECD concept if applied in an academic environment can contribute to reducing negative behavior (risky behavior) in middle school students. Regarding students' academic grit, the earlier it is known, the better. This is because academic grit can be an evaluation or description of students to plan academic achievement pathways in order to achieve student welfare. This study shows that grade 8 academic grit is dominant. According to Tang, Wang, Guo, and Salmela-Aro (2019) academic grit for grade 8 students explains aspects of school achievement and student involvement in the school environment. Although academic grit is not the only predictor of success, academic grit cannot be ignored either (Red & Jeremiah, 2017).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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