

**Perceived Academic Quality, Grit, Self-Efficacy and Academic Performance Among Young Adults Engaged in Online Education**

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| ***Article history:*** |  | **Abstract** |
| Submitted: 30.12.2021  Revised: 13.01.2022  Accepted: 19.02.2022 |  | The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll on all individuals and their families around the world. There have been challenges that have surfaced in all walks of life and they might have a long-lasting impact on countless individuals who are currently at crucial junctures in their lives. One of the most prominently affected areas has been education and academics. Even though teachers and students have showcased a great amount of resilience in the face of the impending uncertainty to keep education going ahead, the change in modality of education has impacted many students across the globe. The present study sought to explore the factors that have impacted the online learning experience for students during the pandemic. Perceived Academic Quality, Grit, Self-Efficacy and Academic Performance of Undergraduate and Postgraduate students from major cities in Maharashtra, India, were studied. Other factors including exposure to the virus, disruption in family income and access to resources were also studied. Statistical analysis revealed that Self Efficacy showed a positive significant relationship between Grit (0.01\*) and Perceived Academic Quality (0.05). The study suggested that a higher sense of self efficacy was associated with long term perseverance and Perceived quality of Academics. Furthermore, students who showed a higher sense of self-efficacy could cope better with the changed modality of education. Other factors affecting the online education experience were also studied among the population and the subsequent findings were discussed. |
| ***Keywords:***  *Education;*  *Academic quality;*  *Grit;*  *General self - efficacy;*  *Covid – 19 pandemic* |
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**1 Introduction**

The quality of service delivered by the institutions of higher education is essential since the satisfaction of students relates with positive perceptions for the given service quality (Krampf & Heinlein, 2014). The quality of education received has been an area of curiosity among all stakeholders in academics, especially since the onset of the pandemic. The changed modality of imparting education has come across as a challenge for most students. The major factors that have affected the perception of the quality of the students include the changed experience of learning. Students across the world have reported that they believe that their competencies will remain limited with the online education system (Mahdy, 2020). Furthermore, students have developed apprehension about the changes in coursework delivery and unclear instructional parameters & compromised motivation towards learning (Roman, Sahin & Tasso, 2021).

Self-Efficacy of the student, the student's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1977) is also a major factor that can result in the nature of perception of academic quality. One of the factors affecting academic self-efficacy could also be previous academic performance of the student. This could further affect the way the student perceives the quality of the education being imparted online during the pandemic. One of the reasons why a student might have a fear of incompetency could be that their holistic development has been compromised due to the lack of physical expression in the classroom. Students undergoing courses and programs that are practical in nature have also suffered to a great extent. The lack of practical exposure and hands-on experience has further contributed in hindering the perceived quality of education for multiple students. Even the best methods used in the online modality of education have been limiting on a few fronts. Another minor but a very important part of the learning process for most students in professional and non-professional courses is the peer support and discussions that take place among them. The absence of peers has also been a setback for all students as peer discussions and exchange of ideas have not been facilitated in person.

Angela Duckworth defines grit as “perseverance and passion for long-term goals” and states that grit “entails working formidably toward challenges, maintaining same levels of effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and stagnancy in progress”. Grit may be an important factor in explaining achievement and persistence (Bowman, Hill, Denson and Bronkema, 2015; Strayhorn, 2013).

Duckworth and colleagues designed the Grit Scale and the Short Grit scale which contain questions geared toward eliciting perceptions about behaviors associated with setting and pursuing achievement goals.

Occupational psychology has for long tried to find the key factors to what determines success. As many studies have shown, intelligence or general mental ability is obviously one of the key factors. However, even though it is a worthy predictor, it is not the only factor that inspires success. Far less is known about individual differences other than IQ that predict success. Previous studies have established Conscientiousness, one of the Big Five personality traits, as another general predictor for high performance across various fields, but there are still dimensions or traits that have not been explored yet.

The newly defined personality trait called “grit” has been an area of great interest in recent years. Duckworth reintroduced grit as a personality trait of perseverance of effort and consistency of interest for long-term goals, and suggested grit as a valid and one of the most significant predictors of long-term success shared by the most remarkable leaders in every field. It is a fairly new concept and has created quite a buzz in the fraternity. It is often closely related or even confused with conscientiousness and even though it shares traits with consciousness, it is only half the picture. Grit is as much of perseverance as it is passion and focus seem to have been only laid on perseverance in terms of understanding the factor.

In their work on the short Grit scale Duckworth et al. (2007) identified a two-factor structure for the 12-item self - report measure of (Grit-O). This structure was consistent with the theory of grit as well as a compound trait comprising stamina in dimensions of interest and effort. Grit being a relatively new concept shares some features and aspects with conscientiousness and even resilience and has often been mistaken to be identical to it, however, grit is our passion and perseverance towards reaching a long-term goal while resilience is the optimism to keep bouncing back from failure. Both of these traits for success are rooted in a growth mindset.

By way of definition, Duckworth, et al., (2007) write that “Grit entails working strenuously toward challenges, maintaining effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress”. The basic theme is one of persistence despite challenge, a definition largely unchanged over more than a century. Reginald Brabazon, the 12th Earl of Meath, explained in 1909 that “The writer understands by the word ‘grit’ that virile spirit which makes light of pain and physical discomfort, and rejoices in the consciousness of victory over adverse circumstances, and which regards the performance of duty, however difficult and distasteful, as one of the supreme virtues of all true men and women” (Meath, 1909).   
The earliest use of “grit” as a character trait is attributed to Nathaniel Hawthorne (1863), who wrote of a British poet: “His main deficiency was a lack of grit”. Half a century later, Edward Lyttelton (1909), the headmaster of Eton College, wrote in the same volume as Brabazon that he was concerned that his nation’s young people suffered from a deficiency of grit, rendering them unqualified to replicate the military triumphs of their ancestors.

**2 Materials and Methods**

150 undergraduate and postgraduate students from major cities in Maharashtra, India, were studied. Purposive sampling was used to collect the data through google forms from colleges in Pune, Mumbai and Nagpur. Purposive sampling was used to collect the data from the students.

Tools used - General Self efficacy scale, Short Grit Scale, Perceived Academic Quality.

**3 Results and Discussions**

To understand the relationship between the variables studied in this research, a correlational analysis was conducted. Since all the variables are continuous in nature, and the sample size was 150, Pearson's correlation was used.

A significant positive relationship was found between Grit and General Self Efficacy, r (148) = +0.57; p<0.01. The results indicate that there is a strong association between perseverance to achieve long term goals (Grit) and the students’ belief in their capacity to execute behaviours towards a specific performance (Self efficacy).

Perceived Academic Quality and General Self Efficacy were found to have a significant positive relationship r (148) = + 0.20; p<0.05. It can be interpreted that students’ belief in their own capacity is strongly related to their perception of academic quality in the online mode of education.

Perceived Academic Quality and Grit were found to have a positive relationship, r (148) = +0.016; ns. The results indicate that student’s perception of academic quality in the online mode of education and Grit - the perseverance to achieve long term goals do not have a significant impact on each other.

General self-efficacy has a significant positive relationship with 2 other variables. Higher belief in their ability to execute behaviors necessary for performance, higher the academic quality perceived and perseverance for long term goals by the students. It is observed that General self-efficacy is crucial to the perception of online education for students in higher education. It can be said that students having higher self-efficacy scores, have had a better experience in terms of coping with the online education system (Perceived Academic Quality) as well as with keeping up their perseverance for long term goals (Grit).

Apart from the above psychological attributes, other factors like infrastructure, access to technology, financial consequences of the pandemic on family income and their connection to the online learning experience of the students have also been studied by the researchers. It was observed that 68% of students reported having a separate room for themselves in the house to attend the online lectures. This may have indirectly contributed for students to have higher self-efficacy scores and with reduced uncertainty with regards to external factors of space, noise and other distractions.

One of the most important challenges students around the world faced on the advent of the pandemic was access to good internet connection, the required hardware and software to continue with their higher education online. The researchers found out that 93% students from the above-mentioned major cities of Maharashtra had the necessary infrastructure like devices, internet connection for attending online classes. This led to ease of adjustment to the new scenario of online classes and reduced anxiety, stress among the students regarding the same.

Affordability and financial income of families had been greatly affected by the pandemic. This impacted the ability of the parents and the students to invest in the required infrastructure and tools for smooth functioning and attendance in the online class of the students pursuing higher education in the family. It was reported that 49.52% of the students had an annual family income of more than 6 lakh INR, 39.04% between 2.5 lakh INR - 6 lakh INR. 11.42% had an annual family income of less than 2.5 lakh INR. This data points out to the homogeneity of the sample, that most of the students belonged to a higher income group. It is also noted that financial stability is a very subjective factor since 49.52% students reported being financially affected due to the pandemic because of which they had been irregular, inattentive and under some stress while attending classes online.

The results of the survey show that the sample was homogenous in terms of their financial status, and belonged to the upper middle class or higher due to which majority of the students who participated in the survey were able to perform well in their academic and co-curricular activities.

Students who reported having a separate room and infrastructure for attending their online classes, showed higher scores on all variables i.e. Perceived academic quality, Grit, academic performance and general self-efficacy. Students who tested positive for COVID - 19 during the academic year showed lower scores on all the four variables measured. Lower academic performance was seen for all the negatively affected demographic variables, such as lack of infrastructure, infected by COVID -19, financially affected by the pandemic etc.

**4 Conclusion**

Significant correlations could not be established between academic quality, grit, self-efficacy and academic performance. Therefore, changes and variations in these variables are not related to one another in the context of online education.

Through the demographic details collected, it was observed that financial status of the students showed homogeneity. As the majority of the changes in the system of education during the pandemic were related to availability of technological and infrastructural support, being at the higher end of the economic structure might have helped the students. This might explain why there wasn't much of a change noted in the measured variables. Further research is needed to explore the differences in the measured variables in the context of socio-economic class.

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**Biography of Authors**

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