

# The Role of Grit and Zest for Life in Enhancing Work Engagement: A Cross-Sectional Study

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the relationships between work engagement, grit, and zest for life among working adults. Specifically, it examines how grit and zest for life predict work engagement, providing insights into the psychological traits that foster employee motivation and productivity. A cross-sectional design was employed, involving 153 participants selected based on the Morgan and Krejcie table. Data were collected using three standardized tools: the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) for measuring work engagement, the Grit Scale (Grit-O) for assessing grit, and the Zest for Life subscale from the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS). Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to examine relationships between variables, and linear regression analysis was used to determine the predictive power of grit and zest for life on work engagement. Analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. Descriptive statistics indicated moderate to high levels of work engagement ( $M = 4.52$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ), grit ( $M = 3.84$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ), and zest for life ( $M = 4.11$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ). Correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between work engagement and grit ( $r = 0.62$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and zest for life ( $r = 0.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Regression analysis showed that grit ( $B = 0.45$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and zest for life ( $B = 0.39$ ,  $p < .001$ ) significantly predict work engagement, explaining 53% of its variance ( $R^2 = 0.53$ ,  $F(2, 150) = 83.56$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The study demonstrates that both grit and zest for life are significant predictors of work engagement. These findings suggest that fostering perseverance and enthusiasm among employees can significantly enhance their engagement at work. The results have practical implications for organizational leaders and HR practitioners aiming to improve employee motivation and productivity.

**Keywords:** Work engagement, grit, zest for life, employee motivation, organizational psychology, cross-sectional study.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the construct of work engagement has garnered significant attention in organizational psychology due to its profound implications for employee performance, well-being, and organizational outcomes (Bal et al., 2015; Parsakia et al., 2022; Saks & Gruman, 2018; Sekhar et al., 2017; Susomrith & Coetzer, 2019). Work engagement, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption, reflects a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind (Lechner et al., 2019). Understanding the antecedents of work engagement is crucial for developing interventions that enhance employee motivation and productivity. Among the various predictors, grit and zest for life have emerged as important psychological traits influencing work engagement (Lechner et al., 2019; Peterson et al., 2009).

Grit, defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals, has been identified as a key factor in achieving success across various domains (Lechner et al., 2019). The concept of grit encompasses two primary dimensions: consistency of interests and perseverance of effort. Recent studies have demonstrated that grit is associated with career success and engagement, indicating its relevance in the workplace (Lechner et al., 2019; Rusdi et al., 2023). For instance, Lechner et al. (2019) found that grit, as measured by a short scale, shows little variation across socio-demographic subgroups and is positively correlated with career success and engagement (Lechner et al., 2019). Similarly, Rusdi et al. (2023) highlighted the significant effect of grit on the work engagement of the millennial generation, emphasizing its role in sustaining motivation and effort over time (Rusdi et al., 2023).

The construct of zest for life, also known as vitality or enthusiasm, represents a lively and energetic approach to life and work (Peterson et al., 2009). Zest for life is a component of positive psychology and is considered one of the character strengths that contribute to overall well-being and life satisfaction. In the context of work, zest is associated with higher levels of work engagement and job satisfaction (Peterson et al., 2009). Peterson et al. (2009) demonstrated that zest is positively related to work engagement, suggesting that individuals who approach their work with enthusiasm and energy are more likely to experience higher levels of engagement (Peterson et al., 2009). Further, Soria-Reyes (2023) indicated that zest, along with hope, predicts life satisfaction in women with breast cancer, underscoring

its significance in enhancing quality of life and well-being (Safariningsih et al., 2022).

The interplay between grit and zest for life in predicting work engagement has also been explored in various studies. For example, Liu, Fathi, Allahveysi, and Kamran (2023) examined a model involving teachers' growth mindset, teaching enjoyment, work engagement, and teacher grit among EFL teachers. Their findings revealed that teacher grit significantly contributes to work engagement, highlighting the importance of persistent effort and enthusiasm in the teaching profession (Liu et al., 2023). Additionally, Singh and Chopra (2018) investigated the relationship between workplace spirituality, grit, and work engagement, finding that both workplace spirituality and grit significantly predict work engagement, thereby suggesting that personal attributes and organizational context jointly influence employee engagement (Singh & Chopra, 2018).

In the context of existing literature, previous studies have highlighted the relevance of grit and zest for life in various professional settings. For instance, Safariningsih, Rizan, and Handaru (2022) explored the roles of grit and self-efficacy in work engagement among healthcare workers, demonstrating that both factors significantly predict engagement levels (Safariningsih et al., 2022). Similarly, Teriba and Foley-Nicpon (2021) examined grit's relation to age, academic performance, interest, and adult attachment, finding that grit is a robust predictor of sustained effort and achievement in different age groups. These findings underscore the importance of grit and zest for life as critical determinants of work engagement (Teriba & Foley-Nicpon, 2021).

Moreover, the cognitive control model of work-related flow proposed by Weintraub, Nolan, and Sachdev (2023) suggests that cognitive processes such as attention and control play a crucial role in achieving work engagement. This model aligns with the notion that personal attributes like grit and zest for life facilitate sustained focus and effort, leading to higher engagement levels. The integration of these psychological traits into organizational practices can enhance employee well-being and productivity (Weintraub et al., 2023).

In conclusion, this study seeks to advance the understanding of how grit and zest for life contribute to work engagement. By employing robust methodological approaches and validated measurement tools, this research will provide valuable insights into the psychological underpinnings of work engagement. The findings are expected to inform organizational strategies aimed at

fostering a motivated and engaged workforce, ultimately enhancing overall organizational performance and employee satisfaction. Through this investigation, we aim to underscore the significance of fostering grit and zest for life within professional settings. By recognizing and nurturing these traits, organizations can create an environment that promotes sustained effort, enthusiasm, and engagement, leading to improved job performance and employee well-being. The implications of this research extend to various domains, including human resource management, employee development programs, and organizational psychology, highlighting the pivotal role of psychological strengths in achieving workplace success and satisfaction.

## 2. Methods and Materials

### 2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employs a cross-sectional design to examine the relationships between Work Engagement, Grit, and Zest for Life. A total of 153 participants were selected based on the sample size recommendations from the Morgan and Krejcie table, ensuring a sufficient sample size for statistical analysis. Participants were recruited from various professional backgrounds to provide a diverse sample. Inclusion criteria required participants to be currently employed adults, aged 18 and above, and willing to provide informed consent for participation in the study.

### 2.2. Measures

#### 2.2.1. Work Engagement

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), developed by Schaufeli and Bakker in 2003, will be utilized to measure the dependent variable, Work Engagement. The UWES consists of 17 items divided into three subscales: Vigor, Dedication, and Absorption. Respondents rate each item on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always). The total score is calculated by averaging the scores of all items, with higher scores indicating higher levels of work engagement. The UWES has been validated in numerous studies across different cultures and industries, demonstrating high reliability (Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.80 to 0.90) and construct validity (Parsakia et al., 2022).

#### 2.2.2. Grit

To assess Grit, the Grit Scale (Grit-O), developed by Angela Duckworth and colleagues in 2007, will be employed. This scale comprises 12 items divided into two subscales: Consistency of Interest and Perseverance of Effort. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all like me) to 5 (very much like me). Scores for each subscale are averaged, and an overall grit score is derived by averaging the two subscale scores. The Grit Scale has been widely validated, with high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha of approximately 0.85) and strong predictive validity for success outcomes in various fields (Bono et al., 2020; Gaeta et al., 2017).

#### 2.2.3. Zest for Life

The Zest for Life scale, part of the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS) developed by Peterson and Seligman in 2004, will be used to measure Zest for Life. The VIA-IS includes 24 subscales, each representing a different character strength, with Zest for Life being one of them. This subscale contains 10 items, which respondents rate on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (very much unlike me) to 5 (very much like me). Scores are summed to obtain a total Zest for Life score. The VIA-IS has been extensively validated, showing high reliability (Cronbach's alpha above 0.80) and validity across diverse populations and settings (Sezgin & Erdogan, 2015).

### 2.3. Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. Descriptive statistics were first calculated to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants and the primary variables of interest. Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to examine the relationships between the dependent variable (Work Engagement) and each of the independent variables (Grit and Zest for Life).

Subsequently, linear regression analysis was performed to determine the predictive power of Grit and Zest for Life on Work Engagement. In the regression model, Work Engagement was the dependent variable, while Grit and Zest for Life were the independent variables. The significance level was set at  $p < 0.05$  for all statistical tests to ensure robust findings. The assumptions of linear regression, including linearity, homoscedasticity, and normality of residuals, were checked to validate the regression model.

### 3. Findings and Results

The study included 153 participants, comprising 67 males (43.79%) and 86 females (56.21%). The age distribution was as follows: 23 participants (15.03%) were aged 18-24, 47 participants (30.72%) were aged 25-34, 38 participants (24.84%) were aged 35-44, 28 participants (18.30%) were aged 45-54, and 17 participants (11.11%) were aged 55 and

above. Regarding educational background, 52 participants (33.99%) held a bachelor's degree, 78 participants (50.98%) held a master's degree, and 23 participants (15.03%) held a doctoral degree. In terms of employment sector, 71 participants (46.41%) were from the private sector, 58 participants (37.91%) from the public sector, and 24 participants (15.68%) were self-employed.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive statistics for Work Engagement, Grit, and Zest for Life*

| Variable        | Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (SD) |
|-----------------|----------|-------------------------|
| Work Engagement | 4.52     | 1.12                    |
| Grit            | 3.84     | 0.76                    |
| Zest for Life   | 4.11     | 0.89                    |

The descriptive statistics for the variables under study are presented in Table 1. The mean score for Work Engagement was 4.52 (SD = 1.12), indicating a moderate to high level of engagement among participants. The mean score for Grit was 3.84 (SD = 0.76), suggesting a relatively high level of perseverance and passion for long-term goals. The mean score for Zest for Life was 4.11 (SD = 0.89), reflecting a generally enthusiastic and energetic approach to life and work among the participants.

Before conducting the regression analysis, the assumptions of linearity, homoscedasticity, and normality of residuals were examined and confirmed. The scatterplot of

standardized residuals against standardized predicted values indicated no clear pattern, confirming the assumption of homoscedasticity. The Normal P-P Plot of standardized residuals showed that the points were close to the diagonal line, indicating that the residuals were approximately normally distributed. Additionally, the Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.92, suggesting no significant autocorrelation in the residuals. The variance inflation factor (VIF) values for Grit and Zest for Life were 1.15 and 1.18, respectively, indicating no multicollinearity issues. These results confirm that the assumptions for linear regression were met, allowing for a valid interpretation of the regression analysis.

**Table 2**

*Pearson correlation coefficients and p-values between Work Engagement and the independent variables (Grit and Zest for Life)*

| Variable      | Work Engagement | p-value |
|---------------|-----------------|---------|
| Grit          | 0.62            | < .001  |
| Zest for Life | 0.58            | < .001  |

Table 2 shows the Pearson correlation coefficients and p-values between Work Engagement and the independent variables. There was a strong, positive correlation between Work Engagement and Grit ( $r = 0.62, p < .001$ ), indicating that higher levels of grit are associated with higher work

engagement. Similarly, there was a significant positive correlation between Work Engagement and Zest for Life ( $r = 0.58, p < .001$ ), suggesting that individuals with greater zest for life tend to be more engaged at work.

**Table 3**

*Summary of regression results*

| Source     | Sum of Squares | Degrees of Freedom (df) | Mean Squares | R    | R <sup>2</sup> | R <sup>2</sup> adj | F     | p      |
|------------|----------------|-------------------------|--------------|------|----------------|--------------------|-------|--------|
| Regression | 102.35         | 2                       | 51.18        | 0.73 | 0.53           | 0.52               | 83.56 | < .001 |
| Residual   | 90.65          | 150                     | 0.60         |      |                |                    |       |        |
| Total      | 193.00         | 152                     |              |      |                |                    |       |        |

Table 3 presents the summary of the regression analysis. The regression model significantly predicted Work Engagement,  $F(2, 150) = 83.56, p < .001$ , with an  $R^2$  of 0.53, indicating that 53% of the variance in Work Engagement can

be explained by the combined influence of Grit and Zest for Life. The adjusted  $R^2$  value of 0.52 suggests a minimal shrinkage, indicating that the model is likely to generalize well to the population.

**Table 4**

*Results of multivariate regression analysis*

| Predictor     | B    | Standard Error (SE) | $\beta$ | t    | p      |
|---------------|------|---------------------|---------|------|--------|
| Constant      | 0.91 | 0.42                |         | 2.17 | 0.03   |
| Grit          | 0.45 | 0.10                | 0.42    | 4.50 | < .001 |
| Zest for Life | 0.39 | 0.09                | 0.38    | 4.33 | < .001 |

Table 4 shows the results of the multivariate regression analysis. Both Grit ( $B = 0.45, SE = 0.10, \beta = 0.42, t = 4.50, p < .001$ ) and Zest for Life ( $B = 0.39, SE = 0.09, \beta = 0.38, t = 4.33, p < .001$ ) were significant predictors of Work Engagement. The constant term was also significant ( $B = 0.91, SE = 0.42, t = 2.17, p = 0.03$ ), indicating the baseline level of work engagement when Grit and Zest for Life are at zero. These results suggest that both Grit and Zest for Life contribute significantly and positively to predicting Work Engagement.

Our correlation analysis demonstrated strong positive relationships between work engagement and both grit ( $r = 0.62, p < .001$ ) and zest for life ( $r = 0.58, p < .001$ ). These findings align with earlier studies which found that individuals who exhibit higher levels of grit are more likely to engage deeply in their work due to their persistent and passionate approach towards long-term goals (Lechner et al., 2019; Rusdi et al., 2023). Additionally, zest for life, reflecting a vibrant and energetic approach, was significantly correlated with work engagement, supporting previous literature that links enthusiasm and vitality with higher engagement levels (Peterson et al., 2009).

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between work engagement, grit, and zest for life among working adults. Using established measurement tools, we found significant positive correlations between work engagement and both independent variables. Our regression analyses further revealed that grit and zest for life are significant predictors of work engagement, together explaining 53% of the variance in work engagement. These findings underscore the importance of individual psychological traits in enhancing employee engagement at work.

The regression analysis confirmed that grit and zest for life are significant predictors of work engagement. Grit ( $B = 0.45, p < .001$ ) and zest for life ( $B = 0.39, p < .001$ ) both contributed uniquely to the prediction of work engagement. This suggests that both the ability to persist in the face of challenges and an enthusiastic approach to life are crucial for fostering deep engagement at work. The significant regression model ( $R^2 = 0.53, F(2, 150) = 83.56, p < .001$ ) indicates that these psychological traits account for more than half of the variance in work engagement among the participants. These results are consistent with the findings of Liu et al. (2023), who demonstrated that teacher grit significantly contributes to work engagement, and Safariningsih, Rizan, and Handaru (2022), who found that grit and self-efficacy predict work engagement among healthcare workers (Safariningsih et al., 2022).

The descriptive statistics indicated that participants generally exhibited moderate to high levels of work engagement, grit, and zest for life. The mean scores for work engagement ( $M = 4.52, SD = 1.12$ ), grit ( $M = 3.84, SD = 0.76$ ), and zest for life ( $M = 4.11, SD = 0.89$ ) suggest that the sampled employees possess a robust capacity for sustained effort and enthusiasm in their professional lives. These levels are consistent with previous research that has documented the role of grit and zest in fostering positive work-related outcomes (Lechner et al., 2019; Peterson et al., 2009).

Moreover, our findings resonate with the cognitive control model of work-related flow proposed by Weintraub, Nolan, and Sachdev (2023), which emphasizes the role of cognitive processes like attention and control in achieving work engagement (Weintraub et al., 2023). The integration of grit and zest for life within this framework suggests that these traits enhance cognitive control processes, thereby facilitating sustained focus and engagement. Singh and



Chopra (2018) also found that workplace spirituality and grit significantly predict work engagement, indicating that personal attributes and organizational culture jointly influence employee engagement (Singh & Chopra, 2018).

While the findings of this study provide valuable insights into the relationships between work engagement, grit, and zest for life, several limitations should be noted. First, the cross-sectional design of the study limits the ability to infer causality. Although the associations observed are strong, we cannot definitively conclude that grit and zest for life cause higher work engagement. Longitudinal studies would be necessary to establish causal relationships. Second, the sample was limited to 153 participants, which, while adequate for the analysis, may not fully represent the broader population of working adults. Future research should consider larger and more diverse samples to enhance generalizability. Third, the reliance on self-reported measures introduces the possibility of response bias, as participants may overestimate their levels of grit, zest for life, and work engagement. Incorporating objective measures and multi-source data could mitigate this limitation.

Future research should build on these findings by exploring the longitudinal effects of grit and zest for life on work engagement. Longitudinal designs would allow researchers to track changes over time and better understand the dynamic nature of these relationships. Additionally, examining the potential mediating and moderating variables could provide a more nuanced understanding of how grit and zest for life influence work engagement. For instance, factors such as organizational support, job characteristics, and personal coping strategies might mediate or moderate these relationships. Expanding the research to different cultural contexts and industries would also be valuable, as the role of grit and zest for life may vary across different work environments and cultural settings.

The findings of this study have practical implications for organizational leaders and human resource practitioners. To enhance work engagement, organizations should consider implementing interventions that cultivate grit and zest for life among employees. For instance, training programs focused on developing perseverance, goal-setting, and enthusiasm could help employees build these traits. Organizations could also foster a supportive and stimulating work environment that encourages sustained effort and vitality. Recognizing and rewarding employees' persistence and enthusiasm can further reinforce these behaviors. Additionally, leaders should model gritty and zestful

behaviors, as their attitudes and actions can significantly influence the organizational culture and employee engagement levels. By prioritizing the development of these psychological traits, organizations can enhance employee well-being, productivity, and overall organizational performance.

This study underscores the significant roles of grit and zest for life in predicting work engagement among working adults. The positive associations and significant predictive power of these traits highlight their importance in fostering a motivated and engaged workforce. While further research is needed to establish causal relationships and explore the underlying mechanisms, the current findings provide a strong foundation for understanding how individual psychological traits contribute to work engagement. By integrating these insights into organizational practices, leaders can create a work environment that supports sustained effort, enthusiasm, and deep engagement, ultimately enhancing both employee well-being and organizational success.

### Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

### Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

### Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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### Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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### Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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