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Assessing grit of emerging adult diocesan seminarians in Negros Island, Philippines

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Abstract. Grit plays a crucial role in the development of emerging adult seminarians as they undergo a rigorous process in preparation for a lifelong commitment to God and the Church. It entails a combination of persistence and passion, driving individuals to pursue their long-term goals despite facing challenges and obstacles. This study aimed to assess the extent of grit in emerging adult seminarians in four diocesan seminaries in Negros Island, particularly in terms of perseverance and consistency, and its relationship with their birth order, family structure, and income. Utilizing descriptive-correlational design, 142 emerging adult seminarians in four diocesan seminaries in negros island answered the 12-item Grit scale. The study findings indicate that the respondents, as emerging adult seminarians, possess average grit. Specifically, they demonstrate higher scores in the perseverance of effort compared to the consistency of interest. Further, the demographics such as birth order, family structure, and family income were found to have no significant correlations with grit. The results suggest that while the seminarians have the drive to endure setbacks, they may struggle with maintaining consistent choices over time. The findings also highlight that the development of grit is a personal journey, independent of factors like birth order, family structure, or family income.

Keywords. Grit, Passion, Perseverance, Emerging Adult, Psychology, Seminary Formation, Philippines

A. Introduction

Seminary formation necessitates patience and intensive supervision to bear mature fruit (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016). Unsurprisingly, it takes an extensive and tedious formation and discernment process between the seminarians and the seminary formators. Consequently, the Church emphasizes the candidates' human dispositions as a fundamental and integral part of seminary formation (Congregation of Catholic Education, 2008). Thereby, it is essential that seminarians can only make it with enduring perseverance and consistency of attraction to the consecrated way of life (Artagame, 2018).

Grit is defined as the person's determination and consistency of effort for long-term goals (Duckworth & Gross, 2014; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). As a noncognitive character, it is considered essential in assessing life quality and success. Grit is characterized by one's capability to undergo adversity and the relentless will to be constant with one's choices over an extensive period (Halliday et al., 2017; Duckworth et al., 2007).

The Philippine Church acknowledges that seminary formation is vital to the success of the renewal of the Church and that it offers a transformative journey to those who willed to accept its call (Diocese of San Carlos, 2007). It further considers the seminarians' formation as their ardent way of following Jesus holistically and personally, thus, considering human formation with great fervor and seriousness. (Episcopal Commission on Seminaries [ECS], 2006; 2020). It must be noted that they are asked to give attention to their spiritual, intellectual, pastoral, psychological, and even developmental needs (Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, 1991)

Many diocesan seminarians are in the stage of emerging adulthood. This developmental level is characterized by five features: age of identity exploration, possibilities, self-focus, instability, and a feeling of being in-between (Peñaflor et al., 2019). These characterizations of emerging adulthood strengthen the importance of grit in the lives of seminarians, who are vulnerable to drastic changes when confronted with dilemmas and are offered a plethora of choices and opportunities.

Studies have emerged concerning different populations and demographics in terms of grit. Nevertheless, none of them assessed the emerging adult diocesan seminarians. As a former seminarian, the researcher acknowledges that grit is commonly used but still unevaluated as a construct in seminary formation. This is the dearth that this study sought to address.

Thereby, this research measured the extent of the grit of emerging adult seminarians in Negros Island formation year 2022-2023 in terms of consistency of interest and perseverance of effort. Further, it also assessed the correlation between the demographics-birth order, family structure, family income-and the respondents' grit. The study's results were used in formulating a proposed grit-based psychosocial intervention program suitable for seminary formation.

B. Literature Review

Grit

As a construct of Positive Psychology, grit is defined as the individual's perseverance of effort and longevity in his interest over a more extended period (Duckworth et al., 2007). It is a higher-order concept reinforced by two interconnected yet separate first-order tenets: perseverance of effort and consistency of interest (Datu et al., 2016). The same study posits that is associated with social and personal well-being and can predict life satisfaction, interdependent happiness, and positive affect. Another study on Australian undergraduates shows that a higher grit correlates with greater optimism and hope (Sheridan et al., 2015). This reality is essential, especially for those treading a much lengthier path in life (Salles et al., 2014).

For emerging adults, having average grit demonstrates a strong desire to achieve and push through with their plans amidst pain and frustration on a general level (Banono, 2015). Furthermore, the same study also elucidated that having average grit would also show that an individual puts forth effort and perseverance in daily life obstacles but occasionally slack off because of the demands of life's obstacles.

Perseverance of Effort

Perseverance of effort is defined as the degree of endurance of an individual facing trials and adversities while sustaining the person's resolve and effort to achieve his/her long-term goals (Datu et al., 2016; Duckworth et al., 2007). Perseverance of effort is related to lower depressive symptoms via authentic pride and perceived power. Perseverance of effort represents sustained effort toward long-term goals despite setbacks and distress (Disabato et al., 2019).

According to Van Doren et al. (2019), perseverance is linked to greater well-being. Moreover, it was surmised by that same study that more remarkable perseverance is linked to lower depressive symptoms. This relationship is attributed to authentic pride and a sense of power. Further, individuals who exhibit high levels of perseverance of effort are more likely to achieve success in their careers which also translates toward success in one's perceived career achievements and career satisfaction (Salisu et al., 2020).

Consistency of Interest

Consistency of interests refers to the tendency of a person to embrace constancy in choosing an interest for a long time (Datu et al., 2016; Disabato et al., 2017). The person can focus on achieving enduring goals (Lan, 2019). In a study done by Gamban and Alinsunurin (2016) on shiftees and non-shiftees, it is said that before their being undecided before taking up the previous course, the most fundamental reason for shiftees to change their academic major was the change of interest.

Regarding its relationship with another construct, consistency of interest appears to have fewer correlations. First, it negatively predicted adverse effects (Datu et al., 2016). Further, Disabato et al. (2019) posited that life satisfaction is less correlated with the consistency of interest than the perseverance of effort, with only 0.16. The same is seen with job satisfaction. Sustaining consistency of interests over time fails to indicate whether or not the interests are compelling or otherwise. People may even argue that those with higher interest consistency are less likely to engage in purposeful activities since they are apprehensive about exploring new things. In value orientation, consistency of interests may not be essential to achieving selfless and societal-oriented goals. As an individual construct, consistency of interest is related to resiliency (Salisu et al., 2020).

Further, consistency of interest intensifies a person's deliberate practice to gain mastery (Credé et al., 2017). The greater the consistency of one's interest, the more willful it will be for that person to be adept at a skill and mastery. Aside from that, consistency of interest also predicts one's retainment in a specific interest that a person is into (Deybendal, 2022).

On a brighter note, consistency of interests cultivates meaning in life through customs, traditions, and routine (Disabato et al., 2019). Seminary formation offers a way of life filled with routines rich in symbolism and traditions. Schedules were posted to secure consistency and synchronicity in the schedule of the seminarians. That is why it must be important to revisit this in light of the seminary formation and its locale.

Birth Order and Grit

Birth order is a construct pioneered by Alfred Adler that propounded that differences in personalities are interrelated systematically to one's birth order (Black et al., 2018). According to the theory, firstborns are more responsible and better focused on satisfying the guardians and acting as models for their younger siblings. On the other hand, younger siblings appear to be more laid back and approachable.

According to Miller (2017), a person's birth order is a fixed factor influencing personality traits. The relationship between grit and birth order is observable because both can be traced back to the Big Five Theory facet, conscientiousness. Furthermore, grit and birth order research inferred no significant relationship between birth order and grit. Even though firstborn children have higher cognitive intelligence than infants born later, an inference could be drawn to a parallel between grit and academic brilliance. Nevertheless, numerous factors influence success, and birth order may have a distinct impact on those factors, but not with grit.

Family Structure and Grit

Research has proven that home environment, parenting techniques, and experiences influence personality traits (Miller, 2017). According to Finnie (2019), students in the tertiary level who resided in a stable household and family structure measure high grit. He also predicted that students with greater grittiness are projected to succeed academically and socially in college. As a result, higher grit means a positive affinity between social triumph and academic success at the tertiary level.

Family influence does not only correlate with grit; it predicts grit (Lin & Chang, 2017). By definition, family influence is one's perceived impact on the family towards the individual. Family context notably impacts the interests and personalities of adolescents through different means: the parents' profession, familial recreation, and drive as a family (Dabney et al., 2013). Further, Fu and Markus (2014) perceived that in a collectivist environment (Filipino family setup is collectivist), what facilitates perseverance is the generous psychosocial support that one may get from his household and the pressure that collectivist households and society are imposing on the individuals. In the study by Lin and Chang (2017), although family influence predicts grit, parenting style does not. This only means that, however, the authority of the household is rearing a person, whomever the guardian is; the parenting style does not infiltrate one's capacity to persevere amidst adversities and develop consistency in effort.

Family Income and Grit

Luby et al. (2013) attested that exposure to a deleterious environment would negatively affect one's ability to use noncognitive factors such as grit. On top of that, poverty is also a leading factor in diminishing self-esteem and efficacy. However, when interventions are applied over time, persons living in a low socioeconomic state may develop noncognitive skills (Krishnan & Kutikova, 2013). On the other hand, persons benefiting from a better socioeconomic class secure success with the aid of their families (Teeter, 2020). Nevertheless, this reality does not indicate the correlation between noncognitive factors, including grit and higher societal footing.

C. Method

This study used a quantitative research approach, specifically a descriptive-correlational research design. This research design measured variables through statistics to answer research problems and hypotheses guided by a theory. Furthermore, the numerical description shows the respondents' trends, attitudes, and opinions as the representative of the population and their associations (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In this study, a descriptive approach will be utilized in assessing the extent of grit of the 142 emerging adult seminarians in four diocesan seminaries on Negros Island in the light of the two grit facets, perseverance of effort and consistency of interest. A correlational approach was utilized to underscore the relationship between the respondents' demographics—birth order, family structure, family income—and grit.

To assess the extent of grit, the researcher will employ the 12-item Grit Scale (Grit-O) by Duckworth et al. (2007). Several versions of scales were already published. However, the author strongly recommends using Grit-O for research purposes. Perseverance of Effort and Consistency of Interest are two 6-item dimensions in the full scale. Respondents will be able to rate items on a five-point Likert Scale from 1 (not at all like me) to 5 (very much like me).

The instrument has undergone pilot testing with 30 emerging adult male students in an academic institution of the locale to establish its local norm and psychometric properties.

Internal consistency drawn from the emerging adults in the region of the locale shows to be acceptable, with a coefficient alpha of 0.743 across all 12 items.

Before conducting the study, the researcher requested permission and approvals from the local superiors of each seminary, the Seminary Rectors. Additionally, he utilized the help of enumerators from each seminary. These enumerators facilitated the study's progress in every locale. In terms of documentation, they were assigned to disseminate and collate pertinent documents relative to the conduct of the study, such as the informed consent and letters to the superior. They were also asked to supervise the conduct of the study physically.

Since each seminary follows a different schedule, the researcher ensured constant connection with superiors and formators regarding the implication, procedure, and schedule most suitable for gathering data. During that said schedule, the researcher was present through virtual conferencing. Present during the said teleconferencing is the respondents. During this time, the researcher conducted an orientation and reiterated to the participants the purpose and nature of the study, their participation, the risks and benefits, and their right to withdraw from the study should they see the need to do so. Different orientations were conducted for each locale, as schedules vary for each seminary. During the online orientation, the researcher also instructed how to answer the form correctly. He also entertained questions pertinent to the data gathering and the research. Additionally, the researcher assured the respondents that he would assist should any factors might affect the respondents during the data collection. After this, he gave the respondents time to answer the questionnaires through an online form.

D. Results and Discussion

Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the emerging adult seminarians in four diocesan seminaries in Negros Island. The whole population of 142 emerging adult diocesan seminarians participated in the data collection.

Considering the demographics, Eldest and Youngest appear to be proportionate. At the same time, the Middle got the highest number of respondents, and those who were only children got the least regarding Birth Order. Further, empirical data points out that there is a notable difference in family structures among the respondents. Most participants indicated living with both parents, while the minority indicated being raised by a single parent or not living with both parents altogether. Concerning respondents' family income, apparently, most respondents came from households with lower income levels, while those from higher-income households make up the minority of the population.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variable	f	%
Birth Order		
Eldest	36	25.4
Middle	64	45.1
Youngest	38	26.8
Only Child	4	2.8
Family Structure		
Living with both Parents	116	81.7
With single parent	21	14.8
Not living with both parents	5	3.5
Family Income		

Lower (10820 and below)	102	71.8
Higher (10821 and above)	40	28.2
Whole	142	100.0

Extent of Grit of Emerging Adult Seminarians in Diocesan Seminaries in Negros Island

Table 2 elucidates the extent of grit of emerging adult seminarians in Diocesan Seminaries in Negros Island. Overall, the respondents ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.49$) are somewhat gritty. In terms of its facets, Perseverance of effort ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 0.64$) scored higher as a whole and across demographics and is interpreted as most likely gritty than Consistency of Interest ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 0.74$), is inferred as somewhat gritty. Further, findings suggest that the eldest respondents ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 0.41$) scored the highest when grouped according to birth order. Additionally, respondents Not living with both parents ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.59$) scored the highest among other family structures.

The general impression that respondents are somewhat gritty indicates that the emerging adult diocesan seminarians in Negros Island exhibit average stability in passion and Perseverance for long-term goals but can be discouraged by setbacks (Garcia et al., 2015). The results imply that, as individuals in the emerging adulthood stage, the respondents' scores fell within the expected norms for this developmental period. This finding affirms the study of Credé et al. (2017), which elucidates that the emerging adult population exhibits average scores in Perseverance of effort and consistency of interest. Although the respondents exhibited moderate grit, they could still be vulnerable to various factors associated with their decisions and long-term goals, potentially undermining their pursuit. As Eskreis-Winkler et al. (2014) stipulated, emerging adults may score high in Perseverance but generally score average in terms of their grit.

Further, empirical data suggest that respondents scored higher in perseverance of effort than in consistency of interest. This realization may imply that they may be more able to push through challenges and persist in pursuing their goals than necessarily feeling passionate about the tasks leading them toward their aims. Consequently, there may be both advantage and disadvantage in this pattern of scored. On the upside, this implies that seminarians has a strong will to persist amidst difficulties and setbacks, hence, may accomplish significant objectives as highlighted in previous research studies (Huang et al., 2014). On the other hand, Harnett et al. (2017) suggest that diminishing consistency in their interests may lead to difficulty in maintaining motivation and involvement over time, which could affect their overall level of participation in pursuing their goals. Such a pattern of scores suggests that emerging adult seminarians are driven more by a sense of duty or obligation to complete tasks or achieve goals than by a deep intrinsic passion for a particular pursuit (Nofle & Robins, 2008). According to Jachimowicz et al. (2018), individuals who exhibited high levels of Perseverance of effort but low levels of consistency of interest were less likely to be fulfilled and satisfied in their pursuits over the long term, even if they initially achieved success in those pursuits. The study suggests that while Perseverance of effort is essential for achieving goals, it must be accompanied by a sense of intrinsic interest and enjoyment in the pursuit to lead to long-term fulfillment and satisfaction.

Considering birth order, respondents who are the eldest outscored those who are middle born, youngest, and only child. The findings adhere to the results of Damian and Robert (2015), stating that firstborn children are likely to score highest among other ordinal positions. Further, Ackerman et al. (2019) construed that eldest children were more likely to persevere amidst

academic challenges than later-born children. The reason may emerge because firstborn children may have received more attention and expectations from their family members. As a result, they would develop a stronger sense of obligation and drive to succeed. Further, this would create a greater capacity for him to develop and hone himself in his chosen areas. For instance, Rohrer et al. (2018) stipulated that the eldest children have the propensity to achieve higher educational attainment and income than the later-born.

In addition, respondents living with both parents and single parents are somewhat gritty, while those not living with both parents are most likely gritty. Two reasons could be contributory to this. First, a sense of responsibility and independence would develop due to the absence of a parental figure. In a study conducted by Bifulco et al. (2012), he stipulated that the development of such senses is caused by the necessity that the individual should fill in. Such may be contributory to grit development. Second, it could also be due to the presence of multiple caregivers, which could be a source of social support and positive relationship. Such a family setup would augment a coping system necessary so that grit may flourish (Umberson et al., 2014).

Table 2. Extent of Grit in Terms of Consistency of Interest and Perseverance of Effort of Emerging Adult Seminarians in Negros Island

Variable	Perseverance of Effort			Consistency of Interest			Grit		
	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int
Birth Order									
Eldest	3.70	0.55	ML	3.19	0.61	SG	3.44	0.41	SG
Middle	3.64	0.66	ML	3.09	0.74	SG	3.36	0.49	SG
Youngest	3.74	0.71	ML	3.02	0.87	SG	3.38	0.58	SG
Only Child	3.83	0.36	ML	2.59	0.35	SG	3.21	0.34	SG
Family Structure									
Living with both Parents	3.70	0.61	ML	3.06	0.72	SG	3.38	0.47	SG
With single parent	3.56	0.73	ML	3.14	0.79	SG	3.35	0.61	SG
Not living with both parents	4.07	0.69	ML	3.20	1.16	SG	3.64	0.59	ML
Family Income									
Lower	3.66	0.62	ML	3.10	0.69	SG	3.38	0.46	SG
Higher	3.75	0.68	ML	3.04	0.86	SG	3.39	0.57	SG
Whole	3.69	0.64	ML	3.08	0.74	SG	3.38	0.49	SG

Note: 1.00-1.49=Not at all gritty (NA), 1.50-2.49=Not much gritty (NM), 2.50-3.49=Somewhat gritty (SG), 3.50-4.49= Most likely gritty (ML), 4.50-5.00=Extremely Gritty (EG)

Relationship between Birth Order and Grit

Table 3 illustrates the relationship between grit and birth order using Chi-Square. The finding shows no significant relationship between grit and birth order [$\chi^2(9) = 6.862, p = 0.651$].

Although it may not have shared any relationship with grit, other findings point out that the association of birth order with personality trait development arises not from the filial ordinal position of an individual but from what is known as sibling rivalry in a family, which may peak

at adolescent stage (Damian & Roberts, 2015). However, the effects of such have a high probability of dissipating when roles that are persistent in the family in the earlier years of the person start to lose their relevance (Harris, 2010). In the context of the respondents, such rivalry may deplete upon entering the seminary formation, where they would be separated from their household for a more extended period.

The absence of correlation between grit and birth order observed in this study may also be attributed to the limitations in controlling the birth order of the respondents. This finding is observable considering that the Middle-born represents 45% of the population and only 3% represent the Only Child. The skewness of the data has significantly reduced the ability of the researcher to detect a potential correlation between two constructs.

Table 3. Relationship between Grit and Birth Order

Variable	χ^2	df	p
Birth Order	6.862	9	0.651

Note: correlation is significant when $p \leq 0.05$

Relationship between Family Structure and Grit

Table 4 presents the relationship between grit and family structure using Chi-Square. The finding shows no significant relationship between grit and family structure [$\chi^2(6) = 4.781$, $p = 0.572$].

The result implies that the kind of family structure an individual is in cannot guarantee any association with the development of grit. The explanation for the lack of significant association between family structure and the development of grit and other personality traits is rooted in the notion that family structure alone may not directly impact an individual's personality.

The same results were garnered by the study by Miller (2017). She postulated that the lack of discernible connection between grit and birth order is partially due to the absence of a relationship but due to the limitations in her study encountered while treating the variables. Further, family structure as a construct's relationship with character traits would be extensively understood when other factors are also zeroed in, e.g., parenting style (Howard et al., 2019), perceived family influence (Christopoulou et al., 2018), parental investment (Gillion, 2017), etc.

The role of the family in developing perseverance in a person is of primordial importance (Fu & Markus, 2014). Considering the study conducted by Lin and Chang (2017), influence brought about by the family, or one's perception that his family has authority over him, may predict grit. Further, more research indicates that the home environment, especially parental image, significantly affects an individual's personality development (Finnie, 2019). That goes to show the crucial factors that the presence of parents plays in the development of a personality trait such as grit. Specifically, it was even found that higher grit scores were significantly related to a person's high quality of maternal and paternal care (Oliveira et al., 2020).

In the same way, the family may play a significant part in a seminarian's discernment. According to Naparan et al. (2022), gaining approval of their chosen vocation from their very own family would also spell out the propensity of the candidates for the priesthood to endure and proceed to more advanced stages of formation and, eventually, to persevere toward priestly ordination. The same study elucidated that seminarians may experience struggles as they are asked to be separated and live far from their families.

Table 4. Relationship between Family Structure and Grit

Variable	χ^2	df	p
Family Structure	4.781	6	0.572

Note: correlation is significant when $p \leq 0.05$

Relationship between Family Income Grit

Table 5 presents the relationship between grit and family income using the Spearman rank correlation. The finding shows no significant relationship between grit and family income [$r(140) = [-0.010]$, $p = 0.904$].

The findings imply that a higher family income does not necessarily lead to a stronger association with the development of grit. Perhaps, the rationale behind this noncorrelation could be explained by the fact that family income alone may require mediating variables such as parenting style (Yang, 2021) and psychological level (Salles et al., 2014) to create a significant association with grit.

The study conducted by Black (2014) stated that, although grit and grade point average share a significant relationship, parental income lacks association with grade point average and that grit has no arbitrary faculty between such relationships. This supposition proposes that even academic success may not be able to relate to grit. This inference seems vital in the context of the respondents as they are also expected to finish a bachelor's degree in Philosophy and their Bachelor's degree in Theology. The tedious process that the student seminarian has to undergo affects not only their academic performance but also his persistence and passion for priestly formation.

In a study conducted by Calibo and Oracion (2014), one of the secular reasons why young Filipinos enter into Diocesan seminary is social mobility. Social mobility may be defined as the seminarian's means to elevate oneself in social status. Although this may be associated with socioeconomic income, social mobility may also be defined when earning a higher education.

Moreover, research also shows that one of the temptations that a seminarian would typically face would root in the financial problems faced by his family (Naparan et al., 2022). According to the same study, such an undertaking would affect the seminarian's perseverance to continue in the seminary as it would divert him in choosing his family's financial needs over his formation. However, it should be reminded that there is no empirical evidence suggesting that extent grit may predict a seminarian's admittance toward the holy orders.

Table 5. Relationship between Grit and the Given Variables

Variable	r_s	df	p
Family Income	-0.010	140	0.904

Note: correlation is significant when $p \leq 0.05$

E. Conclusion

In conclusion, the research findings suggest that emerging adult seminarians have scores within the average range of grit, indicating their alignment with the norm for their developmental stage. They display acceptable levels of perseverance but may be susceptible to setbacks and distractions. However, these results indicate that their ability to persevere may encounter challenges when faced with problems and opportunities. Furthermore, the data implies that seminarians demonstrate higher levels of perseverance in effort compared to consistency of interest, suggesting they possess greater endurance and tolerance when

confronted with challenges. Nonetheless, their steadfastness in making choices may vary. Many seminarians come from financially disadvantaged family backgrounds, which could explain their elevated levels of perseverance. Their exposure to life challenges has allowed them to develop endurance in the face of difficulties throughout their journey. However, this background may also impact their commitment to their chosen vocation when presented with alternative paths. This underscores the significance of providing continuous support and guidance to help them remain dedicated to their chosen path.

The absence of a correlation between birth order, family structure, and family income with grit among emerging adult seminarians implies that the development of grit occurs in a unique and individualized manner, independent of these factors. This suggests that seminarians can develop the necessary grit to persevere in their vocation regardless of birth order, family structure, or family income. However, it may also suggest that the development of grit may be challenging and influenced by external factors. Therefore, it is crucial to provide personalized support and guidance during their formation to help them cultivate the perseverance, passion, and purpose required for success in their chosen path. Overall, the lack of correlation emphasizes the importance of recognizing the individual nature of grit development among seminarians and tailoring support and guidance to assist them on their journey of perseverance.

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