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## Grit as a resource conducive to compliance with the rules during the Covid-19 pandemic in the group of young women and men – resocialization inspirations

**Abstract:** The article presents connections of grit and its two factors – perseverance of effort and consistency of interests, with a propensity to follow the rules and recommendations established by the government during the Covid-19 pandemic. The presented results are based on data collected during the study carried out in a group of 275 secondary school students from the Podlaskie voivodeship. Research tools included an original questionnaire for measuring the functioning of youth during the Covid-19 pandemic and a Polish adaptation of A. Lee Duckworth's Short Grit Scale (SGS) by P. Wszyńska (Wszyńska et al. 2017). The obtained results indicate correlations of grit and, in particular, perseverance of effort with the propensity to comply with epidemic recommendations in the group of female respondents. No statistically significant correlations were found in the group of male respondents. This suggests that the grit factor may be among the important personal resources contributing to prosocial behavior, which should be capitalized in the course of taking preventive measures and resocialization practice addressed to the group of young women.

**Key words:** grit, adherence to rules, resocialization, prosocial behavior, youth.

### Introduction

Following rules is one of the basic elements of effective functioning in a society. The ability to adhere to social, cultural, and legal norms is the basis for

successful cooperation and benefiting from being part of a complex community. Young people who have difficulty conforming to rules derived from social and legal regulations often drift into antisocial behavior. This means that they may engage in criminal behavior and, as a consequence of their actions, become the target of resocialization. In the context of preventive measures and resocialization that are administered to juveniles, looking for factors that can foster compliance and increase the chances of prosocial behavior becomes of importance. One such factor that thus far has received little attention in the context of resocialization is grit, which is an important element responsible for the ability to cope with difficulties and achieve long-term goals despite opposition.

## Grit – resocialization aspect

The concept of grit was popularized by Angela Lee Duckworth (2007) defining it as a mixture of passion and persistence in pursuit of long-term goals. Duckworth interprets grit as a construct for assessing an individual's chances of making the most of their potential. The word "grit" means firmness of mind or spirit, unyielding courage in the face of difficulties, hardship or danger.

Grit consists of two primary factors: **perseverance of effort (PE)** and **consistency of interest (CI)**. PE describes the determination to overcome difficulties in pursuit of ambitious goals, while CI emphasizes focus on a specific goal over an extended period of time (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). In light of research conducted around the world in recent years, grit has grown to be a strong predictor of achievement in both educational and professional areas. This construct predicts school achievement and is also related to job satisfaction among youth and adults, or a generalized sense of efficacy (Credé i in. 2017). A number of studies have also found correlation of grit with life satisfaction, positive emotions, and psychological well-being (Datu i in. 2016; Datu, Yuen i in. 2018; Vainio & Daukantaitė 2016). However, it is worth remembering that grit is primarily an element that directly determines persistence in completing difficult tasks, such as following rules and requirements even if they are difficult or aggravating, making it a variable that can have a direct bearing on prosocial behavior. The findings from a number of studies indicating that grit is a malleable construct that is subject to modification, which increases its usefulness in the context of resocialization are also of importance (Kirchgasler 2018; Shechtman i in. 2013).

## Key factors in the resocialization process

One of the most important goals of resocialization is to optimize a person's relationship with the environment. However, the success of this process depends

on an extensive group of factors. The traditional positioning of resocialization activities in the functional-structural paradigm and the pursuit of social common good has reduced the process of resocialization to the task of transforming the personality of the charge in a socially desirable direction (Pytka 2005). Socio-cultural changes and contemporary trends in social sciences have redirected the center of gravity of educational interventions in the process of resocialization towards an attempt to achieve homeostasis between the resocialized subject and their environment, so that both sides benefit equally (Jaworska 2012, p. 25). Resocialization activities aim at enabling proper functioning in commonly accepted life and social roles (Konopczyński 2014, p. 9).

The first important factor in the effectiveness of the resocialization process is a reliable diagnosis of the subject's personality, taking into account the entire spectrum of previous influences, which results in an adequate way of designing interventions and predicting potential changes, using the individual's resources (Pospiszyl 2007; Wysocka 2008). Another factor most commonly mentioned in terms of the effectiveness of the process in question is that the resocialized person is not susceptible to crime (Bartkowicz 2008; Opora 2012; Urban 2008). What is important, from the point of view of the effectiveness of the process, is the realized and internalized motivation for change of the resocialized person, which translates into greater durability of the achieved changes and a sense of obligation in complying with the rules (Kozaczuk 2009; Szymanowska 2003). The desired change also depends on the ability to create an appropriate relationship between the implementers of the resocialization process and the recipient thereof (Jaworska 2012; Szałański 2008). Other factors cited in the literature fall into the area of situational, socio-cultural, and biological and personality predictors of the subject of the interactions (Fidelus 2012; Pytka 2005).

The factor that undoubtedly differentiates both the etiology and specificity of criminal behavior and the process of resocialization is gender. Studies and analyses describing gender differences and showing the specificity of social maladjustment of girls and boys and delinquency of women and men mostly deal with the quantitative aspect. Research on the relationship between gender and crime is explored in three contexts in the literature: the presence of gender differences among offenders, vulnerability to falling victim to crime, and the differential response of the criminal justice system depending on the gender of the offender (Błachut 2001). Knowledge of specific factors that make up the pathomechanism of the process of social derailment of boys and girls should form the basis for undertaking varied resocialization interventions. It is important to consider the specific experiences, needs and interests, often different for young women and young men. However, there is a certain tendency in resocialization practice to pay more attention to the development of social characteristics that foster independence, assertiveness and self-esteem among maladjusted boys than among girls (Szczepanik, 2010). Such biased use of gender stereotypes is not

conducive to socialization processes and builds antagonistic attitudes between men and women. It is therefore worth taking the gender factor into account in the course of resocialization processes, but in a way that accepts these differences and brings out the resources inherent in the diversity of male and female behavior patterns.

Improving the effectiveness of resocialization processes should not only focus on the deficits of the individual, but also (and perhaps above all) on the possibilities and developmental potentials that facilitate their proper functioning. This is the condition for achieving the previously mentioned homeostasis between the well-being of the individual being in harmony with the demands of the social environment. The concept of *resilience* is an answer to such an approach to resocialization processes, which in Polish papers is translated in a variety of ways, as *prężność* (Jarczyńska 2011), *odporność* (Opora 2009) or *rezyliencja* (Junik 2011). The concept of resilience is regarded as mental strength or the ability of a person to mobilize strength in the face of adverse circumstances and setbacks. It is, therefore, the individual's ability to effectively cope with stress and the unusual, due to age and circumstances, psychological strength exerted externally towards the adverse circumstances. Positive adaptation, i.e., achieving the expected level of positive social adjustment, requires that the individual reach a critical point from which it is possible to rebound and change the direction of socialization from negative to positive. As research shows, resilience is among the important personal resources of an individual, conditioning coping with stress and successful adaptation to the stressful demands of the environment (Konaszewski, Kolemba i in. 2019; Konaszewski, Niesiobędzka i in. 2019; Ogińska-Bulik & Zadworna-Cieślak 2015). Resilience also refers to the ability to survive when faced with opposition, or to bounce back from negative experiences, allowing one's own development to take a positive direction. In such a case, we deal with protective processes, in which individuals pursue positive adaptation despite severe misfortune or trauma (Urban 2012).

No less an important resource that could potentially be utilized in the course of resocialization or prevention efforts is the concept of grit discussed in this article. Both perseverance of effort and consistency of interest allow individuals undergoing resocialization to crystallize a clear goal (despite experiencing adversity) and to find the strength and determination to pursue it gradually, sometimes severely delayed.

## Own research

The theoretical rationale for the grit construct points to its potential correlation with the propensity to adhere to rules, particularly when long-term adherence is associated with difficulties and significant burdens for the individual. The rules and

recommendations imposed on the public by the government during the pandemic are essentially a set of prosocial behaviors designed to limit the spread of the disease caused by the Covid-19 coronavirus. However, in this case, behaving in a prosocial manner, and thus complying with the rules and recommendations over an extended period of time for the majority of the population is an inconvenience and a burden, which provides an opportunity to empirically verify the importance of grit for compliance in this type of difficult situation.

The purpose of this study was to explore the correlation between grit and propensity for compliance with rules among adolescents and young men and women. Statistical analyses were performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 26 package.

## Participants and course of study

The survey was conducted on a sample of 275 secondary school students from Bialystok and Bielsk Podlaski in the spring of 2020, during the first major wave of the Covid-19 pandemic and accompanying government restrictions. The students were 16 – 19 years of age. The survey covered 163 women and 112 men. The distribution of age and residence of the subjects are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Age of respondents

		Frequency	Percent
Important	16	104	37.8
	17	94	34.2
	18	61	22.2
	19	16	5.8
	total	275	100.0

Table 2. Place of residence

		Frequency	Percent
Important	village	98	35.6
	medium town/city with up to 200,000 residents	78	28.4
	city with more than 500,000 residents	99	36.0
	total	275	100.0

The survey was conducted via the Internet using Google Forms. The link to the survey was sent out by teachers using remote learning platforms used in the surveyed school, such as Librus Synergy or Microsoft Teams. Formal permission was sought from the school principles to send out the link to the survey. The subjects were guaranteed complete anonymity and the participation in the survey was voluntary.

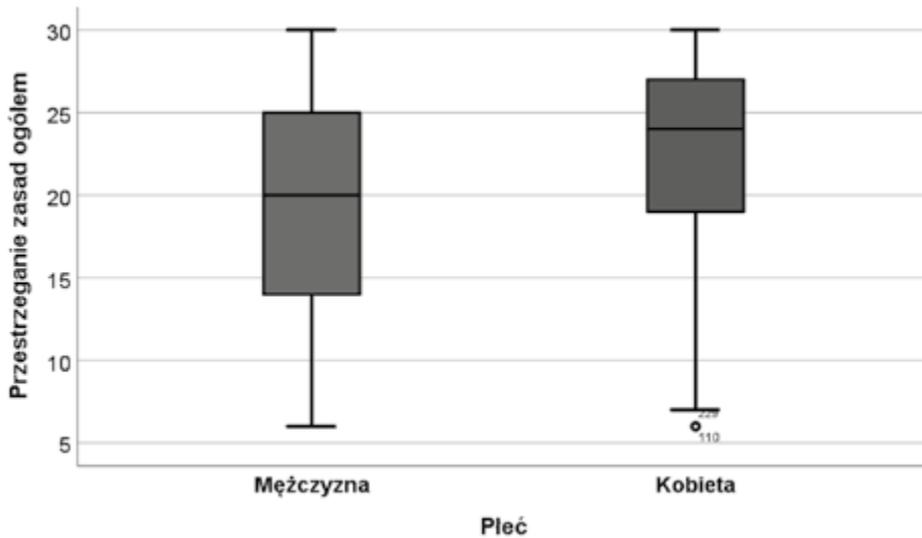
## Tools

The study used the Duckworth's Short Grit Scale (SGS) (Polish adaptation by Wyszynska et al. (2017)) and a proprietary questionnaire to measure adolescent functioning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The results presented in this paper relate to the compliance section of the questionnaire related to epidemic safety during the Covid-19 pandemic. In this section, respondents reacted to statements regarding adherence to specific recommendations related to epidemic safety on a 5-point scale, where 1 indicated that the respondent fully disagreed with the statement and 5 indicated that they fully agreed with the statement.

The Polish adaptation of the Short Grit Scale (SGS) (Wyszyńska i in., 2017) consists of eight statements to which the respondent react using a five-point scale, where 1 means that the statement does not apply to the respondent at all and 5 means that it fully applies to the respondent. The Short Grit Scale allows for the calculation of an overall grit value, and the values of two factors included in this construct: perseverance of effort (PE) and consistency of interest (CI). By using confirmatory factor analysis, the authors of the Polish adaptation confirmed the two-dimensional structure of grit, as well as satisfactory reliability and external validity of the scale.

## Research results

Based on the responses regarding six different government compliance behaviors, a summary overall compliance rate was calculated during the Covid-19 pandemic. The box plot below presents the distribution of results among young women (N=163) and young men (N=112). The apparent difference between the median scores in the two groups (men – 20 pts; women – 24 pts), and the fact that among women only two cases reached the lowest possible score indicating complete non-adherence, indicates an overall higher propensity of women to adhere to rules during the Covid-19 pandemic.



Graph 1. Distribution of results of overall adherence to rules during the Covid-19 pandemic among young women (N=163) and young men (N=112).

In order to verify the correlation of each aspect of grit with overall adherence to rules, an analysis of correlation by gender was conducted in the group of young male and female students, the results of which are presented in Table 3 below. It is worth noting that grit shows a positive correlation with overall adherence to rules only in the female student group: for overall grit ( $r = 0.24$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and for perseverance of effort ( $r = 0.26$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ).

Table 3. Correlation of Grit with overall adherence to rules during the Covid-19 pandemic in young women (N=163) and young men (N=112)

		Grit	Grit – consistency of interest	Grit – perseverance of effort
Adherence to rules total	men	-.01	-.07	.05
	women	<b>.24**</b>	.15	<b>.26**</b>

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the level 0.01 (two-sided).

To gain deeper insight into the data, analyses verifying the associations of grit and its components with adherence to various rules introduced in public spaces during the pandemic period were carried out. To capture possible gender differences, we performed a correlation analysis of grit components with adherence to specific rules imposed during the first wave of Covid-19 pandemic. Table 4 presents a summary of the correlation of grit with adherence to rules during the pandemic among young women (N=163) and young men (N=112).

Table 4. Correlation of grit with adherence to rules during the Covid-19 pandemic among young women (N=163) and young men (N=112)

		I try to strictly follow epidemic safety recommendations:					
		I wear a mask in public places	I keep a safe distance from others	I wash/disinfect my hands regularly while away from home	I avoid leaving the house unless it is necessary	I have limited direct contact with friends	I have limited direct contact with my extended family (not including immediate family members: mother, father, brother, sister)
Grit	total	.03	.12	.00	.15	.11	.04
	men	-.07	.02	-.04	.03	.02	.01
	women	<b>.20**</b>	<b>.25**</b>	.10	<b>.29**</b>	<b>.20*</b>	.10
Grit – consistency of interest	total	-.02	.06	-.033	.06	.08	-.01
	men	-.09	-.05	-.04	-.05	-.06	-.03
	women	.11	<b>.18*</b>	.01	<b>.18*</b>	<b>.17*</b>	.03
Grit – perseverance of effort	total	.07	<b>.14*</b>	.04	<b>.19**</b>	.11	.08
	men	-.02	.09	-.02	.01	.08	.04
	women	<b>.25**</b>	<b>.23**</b>	<b>.17**</b>	<b>.31**</b>	.17	.15

\*\* correlation is significant at the level 0.01 (two-sided); \* Correlation is significant at the level 0.05 (two-sided).

The association of grit with adherence to epidemic safety recommendations in the entire group of students was observed for only one of its factors – perseverance of effort. This factor positively correlates with keeping a safe distance from others ( $r = 0.14$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and avoiding leaving the house unless necessary ( $r = 0.19$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). When broken down by gender, the two groups differ significantly.

In the male group (N=112), grit shows no correlation with propensity to adhere to epidemic recommendations. In the female group (N=163), significant relationships emerge for correlation of grit with recommendations to wear masks in public places ( $r = 0.20$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), keeping a safe distance from others ( $r = 0.25$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), avoiding leaving the house unless necessary ( $r = 0.29$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), and limiting direct contact with friends ( $r = 0.20$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Consistency of interests is a factor that significantly correlates with adherence to keeping a safe distance from others ( $r = 0.18$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), avoiding leaving the house unless necessary ( $r = 0.18$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), and limiting direct contact with friends ( $r = 0.17$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Perseverance of effort indicates a positive correlation in the female group with behaviors such as wearing a mask in public places ( $r = 0.25$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), keeping a safe distance from others ( $r = 0.23$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), regularly washing or disinfecting hands while away from home ( $r = 0.17$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), and avoiding leaving the house unless necessary ( $r = 0.31$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ).

Further analysis examined the correlation of grit with adherence to rules, divided by gender and age. No statistically significant correlations were found in the male group. The results obtained for the female group are presented in Table 5. Due to the small number of women aged 19, a group of adult women was created for the analysis by combining those aged 18 and 19.

Correlation of grit with adherence to epidemic safety recommendations were found to be significant for five of the six recommendations, in a group of women aged 17 years: wearing a mask in public ( $r = 0.31$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), keeping a safe distance from others ( $r = 0.41$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), avoiding leaving the house unless necessary ( $r = 0.47$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), limiting direct contact with friends ( $r = 0.33$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), and limiting direct contact with extended family ( $r = 0.33$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). No significant correlations of grit with adherence to rules were observed in the groups of 16-year-old female and adult students.

Consistency of interests also shows a positive correlation with adherence to rules only in the group of 17-year-old girls, in this case it concerns three recommendations: keeping a safe distance from others ( $r = 0.35$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), avoiding leaving the house unless necessary ( $r = 0.36$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), and limiting direct contact with friends ( $r = 0.41$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ).

In case of perseverance of effort, a positive correlation with adherence to rules was observed in the groups of girls aged 16 and 17. In the 16-year-old age group: adherence to keeping a safe distance from others ( $r = 0.30$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), regular hand washing/disinfection when away from home ( $r = 0.30$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), and avoiding leaving the house unless necessary ( $r = 0.31$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). In the 17-year-old age group: wearing a mask in public places ( $r = 0.30$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), keeping a safe distance from others ( $r = 0.29$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), avoiding leaving the house unless necessary ( $r = 0.39$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), and limiting direct contact with extended family ( $r = 0.30$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

Table 5. Correlation of grit with adherence to rules during the Covid-19 pandemic among young women of different age groups (16 years – N=60; 17 years – N=65; 18 and 19 years – N=38)

		I try to strictly follow epidemic safety recommendations:					
		I wear a mask in public places	I keep a safe distance from others	I wash/disinfect my hands regularly while away from home	I avoid leaving the house unnecessarily	I have limited direct contact with friends	I have limited direct contact with my extended family (not including immediate family members: mother, father, brother, sister)
Grit	16	.16	.20	.17	.23	.12	-.12
	17	<b>.31*</b>	<b>.41**</b>	.13	<b>.47**</b>	<b>.33**</b>	<b>.33**</b>
	18+19	.11	.04	-.02	.13	.02	.04
Grit – consistency of interest	16	.05	.06	.01	.08	.01	-.20
	17	.22	<b>.35**</b>	.08	<b>.36**</b>	<b>.41**</b>	.24
	18+19	.06	.06	-.01	.08	-.05	.01
Grit – perseverance of effort	16	.23	<b>.30*</b>	<b>.30*</b>	<b>.31*</b>	.27	.04
	17	<b>.30*</b>	<b>.29*</b>	.15	<b>.39**</b>	.04	<b>.30*</b>
	18+19	.12	-.01	-.02	.15	.09	.06

\*\* correlation is significant at the level 0.01 (two-sided); \* Correlation is significant at the level 0.05 (two-sided).

## Discussion of the results

The situation of government-imposed restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic, provided a natural opportunity to verify the correlation of the grit factor with the propensity to adhere to rules among young people. Adherence of epidemic safety rules and recommendation, in the situation of an actual threat to the life and health of many people posed by the coronavirus, is in fact a manifestation of prosocial behavior, concern not only for oneself but also for others. The ability to cooperate within a social system is one element of a well-

developed, prosocial personality (Kroeber, 2012). At the same time, government-imposed rules are interpreted by many people as burdensome and difficult to comply with in the long term. In the case of young people, there is an additional aspect favoring disregard for the rules, related to the sense of lack of a tangible threat (“it does not concern me”, “I am young and healthy”, “if I get ill, I beat the virus easily”, etc.). Grit, as a factor that determines perseverance in pursuing a goal, that is, in essence, conducive to continuing to carry out actions taken despite discouragement, difficulties encountered or burdens associated with them, is an important personal resource, and its importance for the effective functioning of the individual has been emphasized by research in numerous areas (Datu, King, i in., 2018; Eskreis-Winkler i in., 2014; Tang i in., 2019; Vainio & Daukantaitė, 2016). The results obtained allow us to conclude that this property may also translate into an individual’s propensity to adhere to rules and maintain order imposed by them, especially when they are burdensome from the individual’s point of view. As the results of the analyses show, grit was found to be significantly correlated with the propensity to adhere to rules only in the group of female respondents. In case of men, no significant differences were found. This may imply that grit is a mediator whose effect on behavior is marked in this type of situation only in the female group, but this conclusion requires further research and analysis.

Important insights also emerge from an analysis of results related to propensity to adhere to rules by age group. In the group of 16-year-old girls, significant correlations were observed between perseverance of effort and the propensity to adhere to recommendations that may be particularly burdensome for this age group: avoiding leaving the house unless necessary and keeping a safe distance from others (difficulty in interacting with the peer group) or washing hands regularly while out of the house (additional difficulty when meeting outside the house, e.g., the constant need to make sure to carry disinfectants). In the 17-year-old group, the correlation between grit and both aspects of grit, perseverance of effort, and consistency of interest with the tendency to follow most epidemic safety rules and recommendations are clear. This is consistent with reports that grit is a malleable construct that develops during childhood and adolescence (Kirchgasler, 2018; Shechtman i in., 2013) and may indicate a greater “crystallization” of both aspects of grit in older adolescents. In case of the group of adult women, ages 18 – 19, all of the correlation between grit and adherence to rules observed in the younger age groups disappear. The lack of correlation between grit and prosocial behavior for adults may be due to the relatively small sample size of this age group (N=38), or the effect of young adults being “drunk” with adulthood and the possibility of self-determination. This effect may translate into a temporary decrease in the propensity to adhere the rules imposed.

Nevertheless, in the light of the above results, the grit factor seems to be an important construct from the point of view of preventive actions aimed at children and adolescents, as well as resocialization, especially those that target the group of young women.

## Conclusion

The grit factor is a property of an individual that can be shaped as early as childhood, and work on its aspects – perseverance of effort and consistency of interests – can be intensified in adolescence. Activities aimed at developing grit can significantly translate into a propensity for pro-social behavior, primarily adherence to legal rules and norms among girls and young women. During resocialization interventions directed at this group, work on perseverance in particular could be of importance. Since this factor increases the chance of long-term adherence to rules and generally accepted norms burdensome to the individual, it may play an important role in predicting the person's chances of sustained reintegration into society. The presented results may also inspire further research, exploring the potential usefulness of grit in the process of creating preventive and intervention solutions and in resocialization programs addressed to young men.

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