The Relationship Between the Grit Approach, Hexaco Personality Trait (HPT) and Tawakal Among Students in Indonesia Institution of Higher Education When Facing the COVID 19 Pandemic

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Abstract: This paper views of the the latest development concerning the Hexaco Personality Trait (HPT) Theory involves six continuums, which are used to describe an individual’s personality trait better than the earlier five continuums in the Big Five Personality theory among students in Indonesia Institution of Higher Education. The HPT theory discusses several characteristics of an individual that is more complex, such as egoism, idealism and honesty-humility, which have not been elaborated by previous personality trait theories. Expansion of the HPT theory involved the addition of one more continuum that is related to a person’s cultural diversity in a person. Patterns in the personality trait theory tend to be similar to that in the Big Five but there is an addition in the continuum (Honesty-Humility), which involves the removal of the neuroticism continuum and the re-definition of the agreeableness trait. This construct based on the six HPTs, namely Honesty-Humility (H), Emotionality (E), Extraversion (X), Agreeableness (A), Conscientiousness (C), and Openness to Experience (O).

Keywords: Grit Approach, Hexaco Personality Trait (HPT), Tawakal, Students in Indonesia Institution of Higher Education, COVID 19 Pandemic

Introduction

Coomer (2016) stated that the HPT theory also influences the
Grit level in an individual. Findings show that the HPT theory has a direct relationship with an undergraduate’s academic achievement (Lin & Chang, 2017; Ab Rahman, Z. et al, 2021), where the Grit factor plays a mediating role between academic achievement and the HPTs. Putri and Uyun (2017; Ahmad Zaki et al, 2021), in a study on the relationship between Tawakal and the resilience of an adolescent memoriser of the al-Quran, found that Tawakal has a positive relationship with resilience in an individual who is facing extreme challenges in life.

Ab Rahman et al (2015) also supported the influence of Takaful by stating that the dimensions of acceptance, forgiveness and gratitude in Tawakal are significant aspects in the HPT theory. Al Jauziyah (2018); Salasiahetg al, (2020) defined Tawakal as the surrendering of oneself to Allah SWT after all efforts have been expanded.

Tawakal refers to the confidence in Allah SWT on anything that HE wishes, surrendering without any feeling of apprehension regarding the outcome as well as willing and consenting to the results of one’s efforts. Manning (2018) also found that the value of resilience among adults from different groups and religious populations can provide the possibility for understanding and identifying the importance of spirituality as a coping style, lifestyle or expression of a certain meaning or intention.

Ahmad Sunawari et al (2018) stated that when a person has a high level of emotional intelligence yet insufficient to enhance his resilience, then he needs to depend on the Tawakal variable. Besides that Mohd Najib et al (2020) stated that a person who has a high ‘surrendering oneself to God’ value, will have the optimum means of solving problems in life.

When an individual’s Tawakal value is low, it causes stress due to the individual’s lack of spirituality when involved in activities (Ab Rahman, Z. et al, 2021). Moreover, when the Tawakal value is low, the person tends to lose meaning, hope
and direction in long-term activities (Hunter-Herna´ndez, et.al, 2015). Javandmard (2013) found that religious belief is a resilience factor in an individual’s life; hence, Tawakal is an indicator of Grit.

**Definition of Grit**

Grit, which was first introduced by Duckworth, et.al., (2007), means “perseverance and passion for long-term goals”. Based on this concept, Grit can be further explained as “to earnestly overcome a challenge after experiencing a failure, difficulty or a long period of sickness”. Grit has a significant impact on a person compared to the person’s cognitive capabilities (Duckworth, et al., 2019).

Persistence in achieving a better command of a field of knowledge indicates a high Grit value in an individual (Credé, Tynan, & Harms, 2016). A person who possesses such Grit knows very well what he wants and has a strong resolve as well as an unwavering intention or desire (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). The dimensions of Grit are very similar to several construct variables in psychology, such as hardiness, resilience and persistence. Grit is an element of personality that contains long-term persistence built by focusing on self-awareness and self-management (Duckworth et al., 2007). One study found that master’s students from institutions of higher learning who possess higher levels of Grit tend to produce better exam results compared to other students (Vela, et.al., 2015), moreover, Grit could enable the student to graduate earlier than expected (Wolters & Hussain, 2014). This is because Grit manifests itself in the decision to sustain the level of persistence when facing a challenge or failure in the learning process, (Li, et.al., 2018), as compared to students who have a low level of Grit.

**Aspects of Grit**

Duckworth, et.al., (2007) had identified two factors that help
form the dimensions of Grit, which are perseverance in effort and consistency of interest.

1. Perseverance in Effort

This dimension is related to the relentless and continuous efforts of an individual in overcoming challenges until he succeeds and will persevere when facing failure. The individual will always endeavour tirelessly in every process with full vigour and enthusiasm until success is achieved. The determined individual will not give up when faced with challenges in order to achieve his objectives. Perseverance very much means hardiness or resilience. The difference with perseverance in Grit is that it is not within the locus of its control but has a degree of continuous capability in an individual. Hardiness is a pattern of positive thinking in a dire situation, whereas resilience is an active process that regulates the positive attitudes of an individual when facing a challenge (Georgoulas-Sherry & Kelly, 2019; Ahmad Zaki, et al, 2021).

2. Consistency in Interest

The consistency in interest dimension indicates that the individual will persistently endeavour in order to achieve his/her objective(s) in life. The individual will persistently continue to strive, not giving up easily and consistently defending his/her objective(s) in life. The difference between individuals who are relatively motivated lies in the stability reflected throughout time and situations as well as a strong desire to pull through in a difficult situation (Von Culin, Tsukayama, & Duckworth, 2014). This dimension is similar to the commitment dimension in relation to the hardiness and resilience aspects. Whereas the grit aspect will emerge in an individual without any intervention or pressure (Vainio &
Daukantaite, 2015), such as hardness, which first requires the impact of pressure and resilience, which will only emerge when an individual is under stress.

Factors that Influence Grit

Previous studies have mentioned that the grit aspect influences other variables, however, some have argued how other variables influence grit. Grit is a new variable that is still expanding, in a manner where the consistency of interest value is similar to motivation and perseverance of effort, which is also almost similar to the persistence variable. Several factors that influence grit are:

1. Type of Personality
Duckworth & Quinn (2009), in their study on developing a tool for measuring grit, found an important variable that influences grit, which is based on the type of personality trait. Much of the discussion mentions that the conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, neuroticism and openness to experience aspects have a strong relationship with grit.

2. Self-Efficacy
Bingöl, Batık, Hoşoğlu, & Kodaz, (2019) found that a person with a high level of self-efficacy believes in his/her capabilities to achieve an objective, endeavours and has a stronger desire to face challenges with confidence. Confidence that depends on self-efficacy is based on self-capability, persistence and success gained by that individual (Britner & Pajares, 2006). Rojas, Reser, Usher, & Toland (2012) were of the view that self-efficacy has a positive relationship with grit.

Besides that, these individuals set an objective for themselves and multiply their efforts to achieve that objective. They also have confidence in their capability when facing a challenge. Individuals with a low self-efficacy believe that they
do not have the required personality to carry out a task, so much so that they avoid taking action that can increase their confidence. An individual with a low self-efficacy has a low level of trust on his own self-efficacy, is easily stressed and takes high risks compared to those with a higher self-efficacy level.

3. Self-Control
Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly (2007) mentioned that grit also differs from self-control. An individual with a high level of self-control and grit can manage emotions more effectively. Their study also stated that the conscientious aspect in the Big Five personality theory has a relationship with self-control and Grit in terms of focus and perseverance although the level of self-control might become low and cause an individual to fail in life.

4. Resilience
Georgoulas-Sherry & Kelly (2019) mentioned that a combination of the psychology of grit, resilience and hardiness plays an important role in overcoming challenges, failure and difficulties by an individual. The study also found that ‘perseverance of effort’ is strongly and positively related to resilience, which means that an individual’s persistence is influenced by how an individual is able to persevere during an adverse situation.

5. Socio-Cultural Aspect
Datu, Yuen, & Chen (2016) found that there is a possibility for the social-culture aspect to influence an individual’s grit. This finding strongly supports King (2015), who found that Asian undergraduates have a presumption that their approach of aggressively studying for hours (and often memorising facts and figures) in order to be academically competent is a factor in
their academic excellence. This culture differs with that of the West, where students who study for long hours are considered as adopting a maladaptive approach and that practice is recommended as part of a healthy studying technique (Elliot & Murayama, 2008). Datu (2016) also stated that it is easy to see a social-cultural situation or context where social influence can effectively change an individual’s motivation and objective so that it functions consistently over time.

6. Gender
In the early part of its development, Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly (2007) stated that age and gender did not influence Grit in an individual. Hodge, Wright, & Bennett, (2017) mentioned that demographic factors do influence the level of grit in an individual. However, Rojas, Reser, Usher, & Toland (2012) found the contrary, whereby Grit differs according to gender as women have a higher level of Grit compared to men.

**Hexaco Personality Trait (HPT)**
There are several different definitions and meanings of the Hexaco Personality Trait (HPT) given by psychologists. Many of them agree that the word personality originates from the Latin word ‘persona’, which refers to a specific Greek mask used by actors in a Greek play. According to the term, it has a greater function when played by an individual (Feist & Feist, 2008). Feist & Feist (2008) stated that HPT is a relative and unique set of traits that focuses on the consistent and individualistic aspects in human behaviour. It does not differ much from the Big Five Factor Personality theory, which was introduced by Robert R. McCrae and Paul T. Costa. The HPT originated from a study based on the lexical approach (implicit meaning) to personality traits (Lee & Ashton, 2016). Hexaco’s six dimensions represent several variants of the personality trait
that are not represented in the Big Five Factor Personality theory (Ashton, Lee, & de Vries, 2014).

In the Big Five Personality theory, altruistic behaviour and character are combined with the agreeableness continuum, which differs with the HPT, whereby altruistic behaviour is divided into two continuums, namely agreeableness and emotionality (de Vries & Kampen, 2010). Explanation from the HPT continuum is based on the Big Five Personality theory. The neurotism continuum can be determined if there is a low value for the agreeableness trait in the HPT theory, as a type of human emotion (Ashton, et al., 2004). There is also the Honesty-Humility trait, which is a behavioural theory about a personality that is transparent, fair and moderate. This was found after a test carried out in 12 countries based on the language and norms practiced in each of the societies in these countries (Lee & Ashton, 2008).

**Dimensions of the Hexaco Personality Trait (HPT)**
Ashton M. C., et al., (2004) had prescribed six dimensions to the Hexaco Personality Trait model, as follows:
1. Emotionality in the HPT refers to the fear in those who face physical danger and experience anxiety when overcoming pressures in life, feel the need for emotional support from others as well as feel the empathy and sentimental connection with others.

2. Agreeableness in the HPT refers the ease in forgiving others, exercising tolerance when evaluating others, readiness to cooperate with others as well as easily manage their emotions.

3. Honesty-Humility in the HPT refers to a person’s quality of being honest, transparent, fair and moderate. It also includes a person’s character as in avoiding being manipulated by others,
feeling challenged when violating regulations or rules, not attracted to riches and luxury as well as not having a desire for a high social status.

4. Conscientiousness in the HPT refers to the self-discipline in managing time within one’s environment, working with discipline in order to achieve the aims of life, endeavour to do the best in work as well as negotiating cautiously when making decisions.

5. Extraversion in the HPT is reflected in a person who feels positive about himself when leading other or discussing with a group of people, enjoying social encounters and when interacting as well as experiencing positive energy.

6. Openness to Experience in the HPT refers to a person who likes natural beauty and uses his imagination freely in everyday life.

**Tawakal**

Tawakal means surrendering to Allah SWT and not to form associations with HIM by implementing what has been instructed. Tawakal originates from the Arabic word ‘wakalah’ (representative), which means a person who surrenders his matters to God with full trust and without a tinge of a doubt (Hawwa, 2005). In this context, individuals sincerely and wholeheartedly surrender everything to Allah SWT without feeling fearful about the future as well as not worrying about whatever that Allah SWT desires. The heart will become calm and tranquil because the individual is confident about Allah SWT’s planning to overcome everything. Therefore, Islam has established that faith (*iman*) should be followed suit by Tawakal (Rosita, 2018). Hence, Tawakal means surrendering decisions on all matters, efforts and endeavours to God of The Entire
Universe (Hamka 2013). Tawakal also means surrendering in this manner to obtain benefits (maslahah) or reject harm (mafsadah) (Abdul Ghoni 2016).

Tawakal is also an element that proves faithfulness and the Islamisation of a Muslim (QS Yunus [10]: 84-85). The definition of Tawakal, besides being an important element of the Syariat, is also absent in other religious teachings. According to Al-Abbad (2015), Tawakal is the practice of the heart, the self-subjection towards Allah SWT, believing in HIM, returning to HIM, surrendering oneself and willingly accepting whatever that might happen to oneself. According to M. Quraish Shihab, Tawakal does not mean absolutely surrendering to Allah SWT, but rather the surrender should be preceded by a person’s determined effort. A friend of the Prophet SAW approached HIM in the mosque without first tying his camel. When the Prophet SAW enquired about that, he replied, “I Tawakal that to Allah SWT”. The Prophet SAW explained the confusion about the meaning of Tawakal by exhorting, “Tie it (your camel) first, after that only you Tawakal” (M. Quraish Shihab 2007).

Tawakal has an effect on a person’s mental health. When carefully examining the actual meaning of Tawakal, it means surrendering to Allah SWT besides it being a medium in the process of securing a peace of mind. When examining the definition of Tawakal from a psychological perspective, it could mean that Tawakal is the total acceptance of everything about ourselves and the capability to manage ourselves, which would continuously provide a healthy mind and soul (Zakiah Daradjat 2002).

At-Tuwaijiri (2014) argued about the dimension from the Tawakal aspect by saying that a person should believe and willingly accept every decision made by Allah SWT. The feeling of belief and trust must be anchored on a strong belief that only Allah the Almighty can provide the best solution for
every matter as well as problem faced by HIS pious subjects. According to Hawwa (2005), if the feeling of worry about what he has done is still present in a person, then the maturity and confidence of an individual should be enhanced because that is the process called Tawakal. Moreover, a Muslim should believe that there is no strength and fortitude except that bestowed by Allah SWT (lmaal hawla walaa quwwata illa billah) because Tawakal cannot exist except with the strength and confidence in what has been surrendered with full confidence to Allah SWT.

As exhorted by Allah SWT in Surah Hud, verse 123:

“To Allah 'alone” belongs the knowledge of what is hidden in the heavens and the earth. And to Him all matters are returned. So, worship Him and put your trust in Him. And your Lord is never unaware of what you do.” (QS. Huud [11]: 123).

According to Ibnu Katsir’s interpretation, a person who worships should have strong feelings of Tawakal towards Allah SWT because worship is proof of one’s confidence and Tawakal towards what has been determined by Allah the Most Powerful and the Most Knowing of everything (Abdullah, 2008). The approach recommended by Islam for treating a mental patient would be to instil Tawakal in that person.

As exhorted by Allah SWT in Surah Al-Mulk, verse 2:

“'He is the One” Who created death and life in order to test which of you is best in deeds. And He is the Almighty, All-Forgiving. ….” (Surah Al- Mulk 67:2)

According to M. Quraish Shihab, as a Muslim, one should endeavour within the permitted limits or parameters although there is a burning desire or wish to obtain or achieve something.
Hence, when we fail to achieve it, we should not forget all the blessings of God that have thus far been bestowed onto us (M. Quraish Shihab 2015). As a human, each dream that we wish will become a reality must begin with our own effort and not just by surrendering everything (dreams etc.) solely to HIM. Each Muslim must evaluate and study the situation from all aspects before beginning one’s initiatives because sometimes what one does might not be to one’s liking although it could be good or useful, whereas what is presumed to be inappropriate or not good for oneself could actually turn out to be the best option.

As exhorted by Allah SWT in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 216:

“Fighting has been made obligatory upon you 'believers', though you dislike it. Perhaps you dislike something which is good for you and like something which is bad for you. Allah knows and you do not know.” (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:216)

Hence, leaving the element of Tawakal totally to Allah SWT while at the same time expanding one’s total effort, should be the main principle inherent in every Muslim. Thus, if there is a strong belief and confidence that Allah SWT plans everything then surely humans will Tawakal only to Allah SWT and not depend on oneself or others who are equally deficient and weak.

As exhorted by Allah SWT in Surah Al-Ma’idah verse 23:

“Two God-fearing men—who had been blessed by Allah—said, “Surprise them through the gate. If you do, you will certainly prevail. Put your trust in Allah if you are ‘truly’ believers.” (Surah Al-Ma’idah 5:23)

Discussions
Rahman, Z.A et al., (2007) explained that the element of Grit is
perseverance as a value of effort as well as a passion for long-term goals due to an individual’s long-term interest and objective that eventually becomes an influencing factor for academic performance. Individuals with a high level of Grit also portray a high level of persistence, are hardworking, do not give up easily, are more focused and inclined to finish tasks entrusted to them (Bazelaïs, et.al., 2016). The HPT categorises personality traits into six constructs, namely Honesty-Humility (H), Emotionality (E), Extraversion (X), Agreeableness (A), Conscientiousness (C), dan Openness to Experience (O).

Lin & Chang (2017) stated that the four characteristics of personality traits are Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, Intellect/Imagination and they significantly influence Grit by excluding the Extraversion aspect. Personality trait aspects are important for determining an individual’s Grit level. These traits together with academic excellence have shown that the relationship between perseverance, creativity and self-concept can become factors that influence students’ academic performance (Durso-Finley, 2016).

In relation to the influence of Conscientiousness on Grit, which includes the characteristics of obedience and self-discipline, it is one of the indicators of the style and product of positive learning. Grit is defined according to the aspects of perseverance and effort, which indicates that an individual should be obedient and possess certain personal interests as well as effective learning. Honesty-Humility, Agreeableness and Emotionality, which are based on an individual’s emotions can influence Grit as long as the individual possesses calmness and there is sympathy shown by others (Lin & Chang, 2017). Extraversion and Openness to Experience are portrayed as being suitable self-values in an individual’s positive characteristic (Dinger, et al., 2015).

Ab Rahman et al (2020) stated that Tawakal should be
initiated not based on the passive and pessimistic aspects but instead, should be combined actively and optimistically. The Tawakal approach should be initiated after maximum efforts have been exerted to achieve all objectives no matter what the outcome fated by Allah SWT. Nevertheless, as an excellent student one must always hold true to the teachings of Islam. One dimension of Tawakal, which is self-confidence in Allah SWT, is very similar to the ‘surrender to God’ variable that has become a factor in enhancing the Grit aspect. Nguyen, Bellehumeur, and Malette (2015) mentioned that an individual who feels the presence of God in his life and completely entrusts himself to God, is one who has the potential to possess the element of resilience or a higher level of competitiveness compared to other individuals.

Pargament, dkk. (1990) strongly indicated that a person who disassociates the power of God with his activities will be inclined to fluctuations in temperament and loss of hope in life. In addition, when that individual feels that he has excessive ego, then he will evaluate and associate God with inappropriate things (Ahmad Zaki Hasan et al, 2021). It is anticipated that the Tawakal variable can reduce these negative relationships and eradicate the ego-filled arrogance in oneself. In the non-anxious dimension, it has been strongly indicated that this dimension is a significant influencing factor in a person’s resilience (Min, dkk., 2011). It is this resilience aspect that can alleviate or eliminate stress in an individual and enable the continuation of daily activities (Rutter, 1985). Moreover, a person must possess anti-anxiety traits to avoid negative emotions, guilty feelings and psychopathological elements (Ahmad Zaki Hasan et al, 2021).

Worshipping has been perceived to be one of the religious coping approaches (Rahman, Z. A. et al 2020). When a person is in a state of quandary when facing problems in life, the
practice that takes the person closer to God is worship and this could be the solution to his problems (Foy, et.al., 2018). When considering the good relationship between spirituality and well-being (Newport, et.al., 2012), the act of worship can be a positive solution that enhances a person’s level of perseverance (Seale, 2014). Based on the research above, each personality trait varies with the value of Grit because there are differences in the achievement of each trait’s objectives. It can be concluded that Tawakal is a person’s self-confidence about the power of Allah SWT that can instigate perseverance from the physical and mental aspects of the person who faces a dire situation in life.

References


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