



# Umbrella Summary

## Grit

A Summary of Workforce Research Evidence Relevant to the Child Welfare Field

### What is grit?

Grit is a personality trait that is defined as “perseverance and passion for long-term goals” (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007, p. 1087) and as “... not just resilience in the face of failure, but also having deep commitments that you remain loyal to over many years” (Perkins-Gough, 2013, p. 14). It has been conceptualized as a higher-order trait comprised of two lower order facets: perseverance of effort (the tendency to work hard even in the face of setbacks) and consistency of interest (the tendency to not frequently change goals and interests). The two primary self-report measures used to assess grit, the *Grit Scale* (Duckworth et al., 2007) and the *Short Grit Scale* (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009), both include subscales for perseverance and consistency, though total grit scores are often created as well. There is some evidence that grit can also be measured using biographical data (known as biodata), but additional research is needed to confirm the validity of this approach (Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014). Whereas grit has repeatedly been shown in the literature to be distinct from cognitive ability, it overlaps significantly with conscientiousness, leading to questions about whether it is a distinct construct (Credè, Tynan, & Harms, 2017).

### Why is grit important?

Grit is important because it is positively associated with generalized self-efficacy, mental toughness, positive affect, and the intent to remain with one’s current employer (Credè et al., 2017). Some evidence suggests that the predictive power of grit is largely driven by the perseverance facet, which has been shown to be a much stronger predictor of performance than the consistency facet or overall grit (Credè et al., 2017); however, these findings are limited to academic performance. Additional research is needed to explore grit within employment settings.

### Can grit be improved?

Similar to conscientiousness, grit tends to increase naturally with age. Although proponents assert that grit can be improved through interventions, there is currently no research that has evaluated the effectiveness of such interventions (Credè et al., 2017). Interventions designed to enhance constructs similar to grit (e.g., resiliency, industriousness) have shown some positive effects (Eisenberger, 1992; Paunesku, Walton, Romero, Smith, Yeager, & Dweck, 2015), which

suggests that grit interventions may have some promise. It should be noted, however, that not all traits are malleable; future research is needed to examine the stability of grit to better assess the potential efficacy of interventions to improve it (Credè et al., 2017).

## QIC-WD Takeaways

- ▶ Research indicates that grit may be a repackaging of conscientiousness, which is a strong predictor of job performance.
- ▶ Grit is positively associated with a number of variables that are often thought to impact success and performance, such as self-efficacy, mental toughness, and positive affect.
- ▶ Research on grit has primarily focused on its ability to predict academic success and retention; there is limited research on grit's ability to predict performance and retention in work settings, but there is reason to believe it could play an important role.
- ▶ Practitioners or researchers who would like to assess grit should consider the 12-item *Grit Scale* or the 8-item *Short Grit Scale*, which can be found at <https://angeladuckworth.com/research/>.
- ▶ Grit measures should not be used for the purpose of personnel selection.
- ▶ Research is needed to explore the effectiveness of interventions intended to improve grit.

## References

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