

Health and Well-Being of DepEd Regional Office IX Employees Predicting Grit During Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

This study explored the links between health and well-being to the grit of DepEd Regional Office IX employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. The 75 employees participated in this descriptive correlational research through an online and offline self-report questionnaire. The data analysis utilized multiple linear regression to determine grit's predictors from the mental health continuum of emotional, psychological, and social well-being. The study showed that health and well-being factors positively correlated with employees' grit. Moreover, the results revealed that the employees' psychological and social well-being were significant predictors of grit while emotional well-being did not significantly predict employees' grit. These research outcomes affirm that if the workers are psychologically and socially healthy, they tend to perform better. These outcomes suggest that workplace measures should be in place to promote workers' health and well-being for them to fulfill their job effectively and efficiently.

Key words: *COVID-19 pandemic, employees' grit, health and well-being.*

Introduction

Sound health and well-being cause an efficient and productive employee. For a long time, research journals, news magazines, and mainstream media highlighted health and well-being as primary workplace concerns (Danna & Griffin,

1999). Nowadays, the COVID-19 pandemic overstated this phenomenon due to its alarming threat causing employees to experience overwhelming fears, uncertainties, and anxieties. Many workers cautiously disclosed their struggles even when going through considerable psychological distress; that is why it should not be taken for granted (Galbraith, Boyda, McFeeters, & Hassan, 2020).

The health and well-being of workers refer to the actual physical health and epidemiological levels of physical ailments. Employees' health and well-being can refer to individuals' emotional, psychological, or social aspects (Keyes, Wissing, Potgieter, Temane, Kruger, & Van Rooy, 2008). Difficulty in coping with stressful life events and intense stress induce psychological distress and depression (Gopinath, Kifley, Cummins, Heraghty, & Mitchell, 2015). Undeniably, COVID-19 increased the risk of emotional and psychological difficulties among the personnel across any organization.

The World Health Organization (WHO) pronounced coronavirus (COVID-19) a pandemic on March 11, 2020. This declaration signified a disease outbreak, which poses a global threat (WHO, 2020a). COVID-19 is an infectious and novel disease caused by a family of viruses resulting in illnesses such as fever, dry cough, nasal congestion, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties, sore throat, or diarrhea (WHO, 2020a). The sudden increase of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome CoronaVirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) originated in Wuhan, China, last December 2019 (WHO, 2020b). The reproduction, infection, and fatality rates are overwhelming. It heavily proliferated and affected several countries like the United States of America, India, Brazil, Italy, Spain, Germany, Japan, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

President Rodrigo Duterte issued Proclamation No. 922 on March 8, 2020, declaring officially a public health emergency. Part and parcel of the Philippines' COVID-19 response is the enforcement of quarantine protocols, disease control, and preventive measures to secure the safety of all Filipinos (Proclamation No. 922, 2020). Both the national government and local governments acted to the COVID-19 pandemic with various declarations of lockdowns, quarantine measures, work from home policies, closure of schools and public places, mass gathering, travel restrictions, enforcing social distancing, disinfection, and wearing of masks.

The COVID-19 pandemic presents the global economy with a tremendous financial crisis. The various restrictions accompanying the outbreak caused economic devastation as well as mental health stress (Bao, Sun, Meng, Shi, & Lu, 2020). This pandemic causes extreme stress globally. The adverse effects of coronavirus cascaded down to the societies, communities, workplaces, and every individual (MacIntyre, 2020). Employees direly need to take care of themselves and their families to avoid virus contraction and loss of lives. Confronting this

epidemiological upheaval, employees worked hard to retain their job position. They manifested psychological problems and anxiety-related actions such as panic buying resulting in scarcity of medical masks and hand sanitizers. Psychological and emotional distress significantly influences mental health, especially in epidemiological catastrophes (Drapeau, Marchand, & Beaulieu-Prévost, 2012). The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on well-being and mental health cannot be understated (Fiorillo & Gorwood, 2020). For instance, a 37-year-old government employee in Japan responsible for looking after lone returnees from Wuhan, China, committed suicide (The Japan Times, 2020).

Along with these premises, this study endeavors to examine the COVID-19 impact on employees' health and well-being in the Department of Education (DepEd) Regional Office IX, Zamboanga Peninsula, Philippines. This research seems to be highly relevant especially considering the impact of this virus outbreak on the mental health continuum and its novelty. Moreover, this study investigates the correlation and predictive validity of health and well-being on employees' grit. Gritty workers confront challenges in the workplace with perseverance and passion amidst immense workloads and excessive professional demands on a long-term basis (Duckworth, 2016). Gritty individuals do not yield in the face of challenges and difficulties (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007).

Employees' grit could allow the workers to surmount the challenges they encounter in the workplace. Duckworth (2016) emphasized that grit entails sustained energy and enthusiasm in chasing lifelong goals even with hard times, sluggishness, or breakdown. Gritty workhorses could hurdle difficult life circumstances, particularly those involving mounting struggle (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). In general, a more precise and more inclusive understanding of the predictors of grit may help inform education stakeholders in delivering their duties and responsibilities, particularly in mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study hypothesizes that emotional, psychological, and social well-being are significant predictors of employees' grit. Theoretically, this exploration finds anchorage on a positive psychology paradigm which recognizes the factors that promote positive and proactive mental health, producing resilience among individuals (Lopez, Pedrotti & Snyder, 2018). Positive psychology focuses on psychological well-being, strengths, and achievement in life. Analyzing grit's theoretical implications within a positive psychology framework it can be stated that the search for well-being, personal happiness and optimism are essential factors to be considered. Furthermore, this research sheds meaning on self-determination theory, highlighting an individual's capacity to perform a task through choice or intense desire, willingness, and endorsement to perform an activity (Deci & Ryan,

2007). According to self-determination theory, connectedness and interdependence boost an individual's sense of belongingness. When workers demonstrate pleasure and hope in the workplace, it signifies that the work environment is autonomy supporting. As a result, they become passionate and resilient (Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006).

Drawing from both theory and the literature, the researcher argues that the employees' health and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic are crucial in its job performance and efficiency. Specifically, the emotional, psychological, and social well-being of an individual significantly affect grit. If they have a healthy and sound mental health continuum, their sense of passion, purpose and perseverance will solidify their resilience of pandemic problems and challenges. The researcher assumes that employees who report high levels of health and well-being are more likely to demonstrate grit in job performance.

Problem of Research

COVID-19 pandemic caused suffering and tremendous effects on every individual. Its damages cascaded down to the health and well-being of employees. In this regard, the researcher conducted a survey on employees' health and well-being in DepEd Regional Office IX as they are deemed vital in the working conditions during this critical time. The survey aims to understand their current work situation fully. The research explores the correlation and predictive validity of emotional, psychological, and social well-being to employees' grit during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was presumed that the health and well-being of employees strongly affect their grit or resilience in work.

To understand the above research purpose, this study intends to address the following research questions: (1) What is the level of health and well-being of DepEd Regional Office IX employees in terms of emotional, psychological, and social well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic? (2) What is the level of grit of DepEd Regional Office IX employees during the COVID-19 pandemic? (3) Is there a significant relationship between emotional, psychological, social well-being and employees' grit during the COVID-19 pandemic? And (4) Do emotional, psychological, and social well-being significantly predict employees' grit during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Research Focus

This study intends to highlight employees' health and well-being as well as grit in DepEd Regional Office IX, Zamboanga Peninsula, Philippines. These working conditions are considered essential during this COVID-19 pandemic. The survey

aims to understand the current work situation of the workforce and seeks to explore the correlation and predictive validity of emotional, psychological, and social well-being to the level of employees' grit.

Methodology of Research

Research Sample

A total of 75 DepEd Regional Office IX employees voluntarily participated in the study. The purposive sampling method guided the collection of the desired data from the employees of the regional office. Among the respondents were 31 (41%) males and 44 (59%) females. Their ages ranged from 22 to 61 years ($M = 44.43$; $SD = 11.01$). In terms of educational attainment, 42 obtained Bachelor's Degree, 17 completed Master's Degree, and 14 had Doctorate Degree. The participants have been working in DepEd from at least a year up to 38 years ($M = 15.47$; $SD = 12.46$).

Permission and informed consent were sought from the research participants. The principles of confidentiality and anonymity were considered to protect the participants of the study. As part of privacy notice, the respondents granted the absolute right and permission to use their data for research purposes only.

Research Measures

Health and Well-being. The adapted Mental Health Continuum – Long Form (Keyes, 2009) was used to assess DepEd Regional IX Office employees' health and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. The scale contains three factors of health and well-being, namely emotional, psychological, and social well-being. The participants indicated their conformity degree on a 4-point Likert scale (4 – Always True to Me; 3 – Often True To Me; 2 – Sometimes True to Me; and 1 – Not True to Me). The following hypothetical mean range was utilized to describe employees' health and well-being in terms of emotional, psychological, and social factors: 1.00 – 1.75 = Very Low; 1.76 – 2.50 = Low; 2.51 – 3.25 = High; 3.26 – 4.00 = Very High. Employees' emotional well-being (6 items, with Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$), psychological well-being (18 items, with Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$), and social well-being (15 items, with Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$) posted internally consistent and acceptable reliability measures.

Employees' Grit. The adapted Teachers' Grit Scale (Baraquia, 2020) was used to determine the level of grit of DepEd Regional Office IX employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. The scale contains 14 statements describing employees'

grit in performing their duties and responsibilities. The participants responded to each statement a 4-point Likert scale (4 – Always True to Me; 3 – Often True To Me; 2 – Sometimes True to Me; and 1 – Not True to Me). To describe employees' grit, the following hypothetical mean range was used: 1.00 – 1.75 = Very Low; 1.76 – 2.50 = Low; 2.51 – 3.25 = High; 3.26 – 4.00 = Very High. The computed Cronbach's alpha of the employees' grit scale was highly acceptable (*14 items, with Cronbach's $\alpha = .93$*).

Data Analysis

The mean and standard deviation establish the status of the variables. Both skewness and kurtosis posted the corresponding threshold value (which is <3 and <0). And they displayed a bell-shaped curve signifying normality of the data distribution. To determine if data satisfied the conventions for linear regression analysis, the researcher checked the assumption of normal residual distribution, no significant outliers, homoscedasticity of residuals, non-multicollinearity of the correlations of the variables. For the fundamental data analysis, the researcher utilized a stepwise regression method to test which model best-predicted employees' grit. Emotional, psychological, and social well-being were entered as independent variables because of the assumption that this continuum of mental health would account for a comparable amount of the grit variance as predicted by the theory. The current research assumed that emotional, psychological, and social well-being would reveal significant predictors in the regression model.

Results and Discussion

The level of employees' emotional well-being ($M= 2.94, SD= 0.83$), psychological well-being ($M= 3.16.94, SD= 0.71$), and social well-being ($M= 2.93, SD= 0.79$) uniformly posted at high level or above the midpoint of the scale. These outcomes suggest that the employees managed to mitigate the impending negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on health and well-being. The DepEd Regional Office IX employees displayed a very high level of grit ($M= 3.40, SD= 0.67$). This upshot implies that the employees manage the difficulties in the workplace with unrelenting effort and enthusiasm amidst the pandemic outbreak. Gritty employees possess determination and mental toughness to withstand the work demands (Duckworth, 2016).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Health and Well-being and Grit

Variable	M	SD	Emotional	Psychological	Social
Emotional	2.94	0.83	-		
Psychological	3.16	0.71	.53**	-	
Social	2.93	0.79	.42**	.72**	-
Grit	3.40	0.67	.37**	.68**	.65**

** $p < .01$

The results also revealed that there is a weak to moderate positive and significant correlation between employees' emotional well-being and grit ($r = .37$; $p < .01$), psychological well-being and grit ($r = .68$; $p < .01$), and social well-being and grit ($r = .65$; $p < .01$). These associations indicate that employees' well-being and grit exist dependently as variables. This warrants the claim that the grit of an individual becomes upgraded if mental health is strengthened. The gritty workers approach challenges by giving their best and maintaining the right mindset despite frustrations and incessant pressures (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009).

Table 2. Regression Analysis for Determining Predictors of Employees' Grit

Model	R	R2	Adjusted R2	SE	F-value	p-value
1	.679 ^a	.461	.454	.360	62.413	.000 ^a
2	.717 ^b	.515	.501	.343	38.174	.000 ^b

a. Predictors: (Constant), Psychological

b. Predictors: (Constant), Psychological, Social

c. Dependent Variable: Employees' Grit

When the emotional, psychological, and social well-being were subjected to regression analysis with employees' grit as a dependent variable, two predictors uncovered: psychological and social well-being. Using the regression analysis stepwise method, Table 2 presents model 2 as the better predictive model for grit. It posted a higher value of 0.515, indicating the amount of variance of the dependent variable (grit) that can be explained by the variation that also occurs in both independent variables (psychological and social well-being). More importantly, a p-value of less than 0.05 indicates a significant result. This outcome shows that both psychological and social well-being have a substantial contribution to grit. In

this case, the statistical value confirms that psychological and social well-being are statistically valid predictors of employees' grit. In contrast, emotional well-being is not a significant predictor of grit.

Table 3. Predictive Validity of Health and Well-being to Employees' Grit

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value
		B	SE	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.018	.305		3.341	.001
	Psychological	.756	.096	.679	7.900	.000
2	(Constant)	1.012	.291		3.476	.001
	Psychological	.489	.131	.439	3.722	.000
	Social	.289	.103	.333	2.824	.006

a. *Dependent Variable: Employees' Grit*

**Regression Model: Employees' Grit = 1.012 + 0.489 Psychological + 0.289 Social*

The unstandardized beta coefficients in Table 3 contain a positive value indicating the direct relationship of psychological and social well-being to grit. Psychological well-being accounted for most of the explained variances of grit. The "Unstandardized Coefficient" for Model 2 of the psychological well-being = 0.489 and social well-being = 0.289 revealed a direct relationship. These coefficients indicate that for each 1 unit increase in the psychological well-being, the employees' well-being might be expected to increase by 0.489 units. For each unit increase in social well-being, workers' grit is likely to rise by 0.289 units.

The associations of employees' health, well-being and grit in the workplace proved as crucial concerns that should persist in catching attention (Danna & Griffin, 1999). Boyd (1997) pinned down that workers experiencing robust health and well-being in the workplace make better decisions and tend to be productive. Mental health support and service ensuring psychological and social well-being at work serve as a protective factor against workplace mental health issues (Xiang, Yang, Li, Zhang, Zhang, Cheung, & Ng, 2020).

The findings of this study support the assumption that gritty workers work hard and do not give up. Resilient and gritty employees tend not to abandon their tasks and responsibilities through difficult times. Individuals with a high level of grit demonstrate passion and perseverance in challenging tasks (Baraquia, 2020). This study supports the observation that the employees show stable mental health and are still positive and proactive amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In closing, DepEd Regional Office IX employees remained positive and proactive amidst the difficulties and challenges of this COVID-19 pandemic. The employees demonstrated and sustained soundness in terms of emotional, psychological and social well-being. They show a very high level of grit during the outbreak of the coronavirus. More importantly, this study proved the significant bivariate relationship of emotional, psychological, social well-being and employees' grit. Furthermore, psychological and social factors of mental health continuum should be given higher consideration during the COVID-19 pandemic as they were proven as significant and valid predictors of employees' grit.

The study results show valuable information that could serve as a guide and reference in crafting more effective organizational policies and standards during the COVID-19 pandemic. Health and well-being should always be safeguarded for the workers to thrive in this challenging time and consistently produce positive contributions to the organization. By and large, adequate psychological and social support from the management strengthens not only the health and well-being of the employees but also their grit and resilience.

Along with these implications, the next promising step would be to determine how emotional, psychological, and social well-being could be increased and sustained among the workers. Future research could examine the effect of grit on employees' performance. This study also recommends the exploration of the specific impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of the employees. Other surveys could benchmark workplace interventions that reduce stress and mental health stigma.

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