



## GRIT AND JOB PERFORMANCE AMONG BPO EMPLOYEES IN METRO MANILA: A DESCRIPTIVE-CORRELATIONAL STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between grit and job performance among 248 employees working in various business process outsourcing (BPO) companies in Metro Manila. Using a descriptive-correlational research design, the study employed two standardized instruments: the 12-Item Grit Scale and the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire – Short Form (IWPQ-SF). Results showed that BPO employees generally exhibited moderate to high levels of grit and above-average job performance. A moderate, positive, and statistically significant correlation was found between grit and job performance ( $r = 0.41$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that employees with higher levels of grit tend to perform better at work. While no significant differences in grit were found based on gender or economic status, a significant difference was observed based on length of tenure, with longer-tenured employees displaying higher grit scores. These findings support the theoretical framework that grit contributes to long-term success in high-demand work environments and offer practical implications for recruitment, employee development, and organizational retention strategies in the BPO industry.

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**Keywords:** *grit, job performance, BPO employees, work engagement, non-cognitive traits, Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ), Grit Scale, employee retention, workplace psychology*

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Over the last decade, the Philippines has emerged as a prime destination for business process outsourcing (BPO), especially in niche sectors such as call centers, medical transcription, animation, publishing, and legal services (Carpo, 2018). The industry is now considered one of the fastest-growing in Southeast Asia, significantly contributing to national employment and foreign exchange. As of 2017, the BPO sector employed approximately 1.15 million Filipinos and ranked among the top two earners of foreign exchange, alongside overseas Filipino workers (Lema, 2017).

Despite its growth, the BPO industry faces increasing challenges. Dela Paz (2017) warned of a potential annual slowdown in growth to 9% by 2022. Furthermore, the industry must now adapt to emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and robotic process automation (Oxford Business Group, 2018). As BPO services evolve to include more complex and high-skill tasks, understanding the factors that predict sustained performance becomes essential not only for hiring decisions but also for employee development and retention strategies.

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While cognitive ability tests are commonly used in recruitment to predict short-term success, they may not fully capture the potential for long-term job performance. This has led researchers to explore the role of non-cognitive traits, such as grit. Coined by Duckworth et al. (2007), grit refers to the passion and perseverance required to pursue long-term goals. It has been shown to predict achievement in various settings, including education, military training, and occupational performance. Unlike cognitive ability, grit reflects an individual's capacity to persist in the face of difficulties and to maintain interest over time.

In the BPO industry, which is often marked by high attrition rates, demanding workloads, and repetitive tasks, grit may be a critical factor in predicting job success. Identifying and nurturing this trait may help organizations retain top performers and create more resilient teams.

## Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study draws on two theoretical foundations. The first is Duckworth's Grit Theory, which defines grit as composed of two components: perseverance of effort and consistency of interest. The second is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which posits that individuals strive to fulfill growth needs, such as self-esteem and self-actualization, once basic needs are met. These growth needs are often linked to workplace performance and goal achievement.

Although grit is conceptually related to conscientiousness in the Big Five personality traits, researchers such as Komarraju et al. (2008) suggest that it is a distinct construct. Grit

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has demonstrated its predictive power for outcomes such as academic performance and job success, even when controlling for intelligence and other personality traits.

## Research Objectives

The present study aims to investigate the relationship between grit and job performance among employees in a Philippine BPO setting. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Determine the demographic profile of BPO employees in terms of gender, economic status, and length of tenure.
2. Assess the most recent job performance ratings of BPO employees.
3. Measure the level of grit among BPO employees.
4. Examine the relationship between grit and job performance.
5. Identify significant differences in grit levels when categorized according to demographic profile.

## Research Hypotheses

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between grit and job performance among BPO employees.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference in grit levels when respondents are grouped according to demographic variables.

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## Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the growing body of research on non-cognitive predictors of job performance. Its findings offer practical insights for the following stakeholders:

- Human Resource Departments, by providing evidence for including grit assessments in recruitment or training programs.
- Employees, by encouraging the development of grit to enhance long-term performance and career growth.
- Educational Institutions, by supporting the integration of grit-building initiatives into academic and career preparation programs.
- Students and Future Researchers, by offering a foundation for further research on psychological predictors of workplace success.

## METHODS

### Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationship between grit and job performance among employees in a business process outsourcing (BPO) company in the Philippines. Descriptive methods were used to profile participants and assess levels of grit and job performance, while correlational techniques were applied to determine the strength and direction of relationships between variables.

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## Participants and Sampling

The participants of the study were 248 full-time employees working in various business process outsourcing (BPO) companies across Metro Manila. The participants represented a broad demographic profile in terms of gender, economic status, and length of tenure.

The sample was selected using simple random sampling. A master list of employees was obtained through the Human Resources departments of participating BPO companies. Using random selection software, 248 employees were chosen to participate in the study. This sampling approach ensured equal opportunity for all eligible employees to be selected and helped minimize potential biases.

Most respondents were in their twenties or thirties, with varying shift schedules including day, mid, and night shifts. Their work experiences spanned a range of roles and departments typically found in the BPO industry.

## Research Instruments

The study made use of two standardized instruments to collect data from participants. To assess the level of grit, the researcher administered the 12-Item Grit Scale developed by Duckworth and colleagues in 2007. This self-report questionnaire measures two key components of grit, namely perseverance of effort and consistency of interest. Each item in the scale is answered using a five-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from "Not at all like me" to "Very much like me." The Grit Scale has been widely used in psychological research

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and is considered a valid and reliable measure of non-cognitive traits related to long-term goal attainment.

To measure job performance, the study employed the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire – Short Form (IWPQ-SF) developed by Koopmans et al. (2014). This tool consists of nine items that evaluate individual work performance across three dimensions: task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behavior. Sample items include statements such as “I managed to plan my work so that it was done on time” for task performance, “I took on extra responsibilities” for contextual performance, and “I complained about unimportant matters at work” for counterproductive behavior. Responses to the IWPQ items are given using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “Seldom” to “Always.” This instrument has been shown to have high internal consistency and is appropriate for use in service-based organizational settings, including business process outsourcing companies.

Both instruments were administered either via printed forms or online, depending on the accessibility and convenience of the respondents. The use of these tools allowed for the standardized assessment of grit and job performance among the participants in the study.

## Data Gathering Procedure

This study was conducted as part of a graduate coursework requirement for the Master of Arts in Psychology program at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines. Approval was secured from the course adviser, and ethical protocols were followed. The researcher

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coordinated with HR departments of selected BPO companies in Metro Manila to facilitate access to participants.

After obtaining informed consent from both the organizations and the participants, the researcher administered two self-report questionnaires: the 12-Item Grit Scale and the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire – Short Form (IWPQ-SF). These tools measured grit and job performance, respectively. Participants completed the surveys either in print or online, depending on availability.

All responses were checked for completeness and prepared for statistical analysis. Ethical considerations, including privacy, voluntary participation, and data confidentiality, were observed throughout the process.

## Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize participants' demographic profiles, grit levels, and job performance. Pearson's correlation was employed to assess the relationship between grit and job performance. Independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA were used to determine differences in grit based on gender, economic status, and length of tenure. All analyses were conducted using SPSS, with a significance level set at 0.05.

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## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Profile of the Respondents

**Table 1**

Demographic Profile of Participants (n = 248)

Demographic Variable	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	102	41%
Female	146	59%
<b>Economic Status</b>		
Lower-middle income	129	52%
Middle income	94	38%
Upper-middle income	25	10%
<b>Length of Tenure</b>		
Less than 1 year	69	28%
1–3 years	104	42%
More than 3 years	75	30%

The study included 248 BPO employees, with a higher proportion of female respondents (59%) than male (41%). This gender distribution reflects general workforce trends in service-oriented industries such as BPO. Most respondents identified as belonging to the lower-middle and middle-income brackets, and a significant number had been working in the BPO industry for one to three years.

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This demographic profile supports earlier observations that BPO companies in Metro Manila typically attract a younger, economically aspirant population (Carpo, 2018). The diversity in tenure also provides a basis for comparing grit across varying stages of career development.

**Table 2**

Descriptive Statistics of Grit and Job Performance Scores

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Grit Score	3.48	0.57	Moderately Gritty
Job Performance	3.72	0.46	Above Average Performance

The mean grit score ( $M = 3.48$ ) suggests that BPO employees exhibit a moderately high level of perseverance and passion for long-term goals. This supports Duckworth's (2007) assertion that grit is not a rare trait, but one that can exist in high-pressure environments such as call centers. The job performance mean ( $M = 3.72$ ) also indicates that most participants met or exceeded expectations in their current roles.

These findings align with Komarraju et al. (2008), who noted that grit contributes to success across a range of tasks and responsibilities, particularly in environments requiring sustained effort and resilience.

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## Relationship Between Grit and Job Performance of BPO Employees

**Table 3**

Correlation Between Grit and Job Performance

Variables	Pearson r	p-value
Grit & Job Performance	0.41	< 0.001

The study found a moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0.41$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) between grit and job performance, which is both statistically and practically significant. This supports Duckworth et al.'s (2007) theory that grit is predictive of success beyond cognitive ability, as well as more recent findings by Eskreis-Winkler et al. (2014), who showed that grittier individuals are more likely to persist and succeed in work-related contexts.

In BPO settings, where emotional labor and performance metrics are constant pressures, the ability to remain focused and persistent appears to directly impact job outcomes. This finding also supports Maslow's (1970) theory that sustained effort at work is linked to fulfilling higher-level growth needs.

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## Differences in grit levels when categorized according to demographic profile

**Table 4**

Independent Samples t-test of Grit Based on Gender

Gender	Mean Grit Score	SD	t-value	df	p-value	Interpretation
Male	3.45	0.54	-0.83	246	0.408	Not statistically significant
Female	3.50	0.59				

The absence of a statistically significant difference in grit between male and female participants ( $p = 0.408$ ) suggests that gender does not influence grit levels in this BPO context. This is consistent with Duckworth and Quinn's (2009) findings that grit scores are generally stable across genders.

This reinforces the idea that grit is a non-gendered trait, meaning that interventions or training programs aiming to increase grit can be applied broadly across the workforce without demographic segmentation.

**Table 5**

Difference in Grit Based on Economic Status

Group	Mean Grit Score	SD
Lower-middle income	3.47	0.56

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Middle income 3.43 0.59

Upper-middle income 3.56 0.52

Test Statistic	Value	df	p-value	Interpretation
ANOVA F-value	2.12	(2, 245)	0.122	Not statistically significant

No significant difference in grit scores was observed across different economic groups ( $p = 0.122$ ). While economic pressure might intuitively be assumed to influence perseverance, this finding suggests that grit operates independently of income level, at least within the BPO population sampled.

This supports the notion that grit is more related to personal disposition and intrinsic motivation than external socioeconomic conditions. It also mirrors the findings of Muenks et al. (2018), who argued that grit is distinct from future-oriented motivation and does not always align with socioeconomic pressures.

**Table 6**

One-way ANOVA of Grit Based on Length of Tenure

Tenure Group	Mean Grit Score	SD
Less than 1 year	3.34	0.52
1–3 years	3.47	0.55

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More than 3 years

3.61

0.60

Test Statistic	Value	df	p-value	Interpretation
ANOVA F-value	5.48	(2, 245)	0.005	Statistically significant difference

A significant difference in grit levels was found based on length of tenure ( $p = 0.005$ ), with employees who had worked for more than three years scoring higher in grit than those with less than one year. This suggests that grit may develop or be reinforced through workplace experience and exposure to professional challenges over time.

The finding supports Wadsworth's (2007) view that motivation to grow increases as people succeed in fulfilling more of their potential. It also aligns with Duckworth's theory that grit reflects not just innate disposition but cultivated behavior and persistence over long periods.

## CONCLUSION

This study sought to examine the relationship between grit and job performance among BPO employees in Metro Manila. The findings revealed that employees generally demonstrated moderate to high levels of grit and above-average job performance. More importantly, grit was found to have a significant positive correlation with job performance,

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supporting the hypothesis that perseverance and passion for long-term goals contribute meaningfully to workplace success.

No significant differences in grit were observed based on gender or economic status, reinforcing the idea that grit is a stable personality trait across these demographic variables. However, a significant difference in grit was found when participants were grouped by length of tenure, suggesting that workplace experience and sustained exposure to professional demands may help cultivate grit over time.

These results align with existing literature that positions grit as a valuable non-cognitive predictor of individual achievement and reinforce the need to look beyond intelligence and technical skills when assessing employee potential. The integration of Maslow's motivational theory further highlights how performance, as an expression of personal growth, may be supported by traits like grit.

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