

## **Beyond Persistence: Social Support As A Pathway From Grit To Flourishing Among Final-Year University Students**

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### ***Abstract***

Final-year university students experience significant academic and psychological demands that may compromise their well-being, making flourishing a critical indicator of optimal functioning. While grit has been widely recognized as a predictor of resilience and well-being, its underlying mechanisms remain underexplored, particularly in relation to social support. This study examines the mediating role of social support in the relationship between grit and flourishing among final-year students. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted with 239 participants selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using the PERMA-Profiler, the Short Grit Scale (Grit-S), and the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results reveal that grit significantly predicts both social support and flourishing, while social support also has a significant positive effect on flourishing. Importantly, social support fully mediates the relationship between grit and flourishing, indicating that the effect of grit on well-being operates primarily through relational mechanisms. These findings advance a relational perspective on grit and highlight the importance of integrating personal strengths with supportive social environments in promoting student well-being.

***Keywords: Flourishing, Final-Years Student, Grit, Social Support***

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Final-year university students face increasingly complex academic and psychological demands as they approach graduation. Pressure arises not only from academic institutions, but also from parents, peers, and students' own expectations to complete their studies within a limited time frame (Alam, Pratik, Khan, Islam, & Hossain, 2025). One of the most demanding requirements is the completion of a thesis or final project, which requires sustained effort, independence, and time management (Burhani, 2016; Rahmawati, Wardani, Noviani, & Yuliyanto, 2024). Compared to regular coursework, this process is more cognitively and emotionally taxing, making students particularly vulnerable to stress and psychological strain. Many final-year students struggle to cope with these pressures, which may negatively affect their overall well-being (Krishna & Grund, 2025). In this context, flourishing becomes a critical indicator of optimal psychological functioning. Flourishing encompasses positive emotions, engagement, meaning in life, and supportive relationships, all of which are essential for students' academic persistence and personal development (Keyes, 2002). When students experience low levels of flourishing, they are more likely to encounter motivational difficulties, emotional instability, and decreased academic performance.

Extensive literature has identified flourishing as a key indicator of psychological well-being, associated with academic success, career development, and mental health stability (Canter et al., 2024). Individuals who flourish tend to experience higher life satisfaction, stronger interpersonal relationships, and lower risks of mood and anxiety disorders (Schotanus-Dijkstra, Ten Have, Lamers, De Graaf, & Bohlmeijer, 2017). One important predictor of flourishing is grit, defined as perseverance and consistency in pursuing long-term goals. Grit has been shown to contribute to resilience, achievement, and subjective well-being (Hou et al., 2022; Kwon, 2021). Students with high levels of grit are more likely to maintain commitment despite challenges and sustain motivation over time. However, most studies conceptualize the

relationship between grit and flourishing as a direct, individual-level process. Meanwhile, research on social support highlights its role in buffering stress and enhancing well-being through emotional, informational, and instrumental resources (Gottman et al., 1998; Taylor, 2011). Despite these findings, limited studies have integrated grit, social support, and flourishing into a comprehensive explanatory model.

This study aims to address this gap by examining the role of social support as a mediating mechanism in the relationship between grit and flourishing among final-year university students. Conceptually, this research is grounded in the assumption that personal strengths alone are insufficient to produce optimal well-being without supportive social environments. Grit, as an internal resource, encourages persistence and long-term goal orientation (Daud, Siswanti, & Nugraha, 2025), yet its effectiveness may depend on the availability of external support systems. Social support, derived from family, peers, and lecturers, provides emotional reassurance, guidance, and tangible assistance that help students cope with academic challenges (Anierobi et al., 2025; Lee, Kim, & Shin, 2025). Previous studies have shown that grit is positively associated with flourishing (Amalia & Sari, 2022; Jain & Sunkarapalli, 2019; Shariff, Wan Sulaiman, & Khairudin, 2022) (Jain & Sunkarapalli, 2019; Shariff et al., 2022; Amalia & Sari, 2022), but the underlying mechanisms remain underexplored. Therefore, this study proposes a mediation framework in which grit influences flourishing both directly and indirectly through social support, offering a more integrative understanding of student well-being.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of positive psychology by reframing grit as not merely an individual trait but as a construct embedded within social and relational contexts. It emphasizes that flourishing emerges from the dynamic interaction between personal strengths and environmental resources, consistent with the frameworks of complete mental health and contextual positive psychology (Keyes, 2002; Seligman, 2011). This perspective also responds to critiques suggesting that grit may not always produce positive outcomes without adequate contextual support (Credé, Tynan, & Harms, 2016). Practically, the findings are expected to inform the design of intervention programs in higher education by highlighting the importance of both strengthening student perseverance and fostering supportive social environments. By understanding the mediating role of social support, universities can develop more holistic strategies to enhance student resilience, engagement, and well-being, particularly for those navigating the critical transition of their final academic year.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach using a cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationships among grit, social support, and flourishing among final-year university students. This design was selected as it enables the simultaneous testing of structural relationships, including both direct and indirect effects within a single analytical framework. Specifically, the study adopts a mediation model to understand the underlying psychological mechanisms linking grit to flourishing through social support. Although cross-sectional designs limit causal inference, they remain appropriate for identifying empirical patterns and testing theoretically grounded models, particularly in exploratory and predictive research contexts. Furthermore, this design aligns with the study's objective to integrate personal (grit) and contextual (social support) factors within a unified framework. By capturing participants' current psychological conditions at a single point in time, this approach provides a practical and efficient method for examining complex relationships in higher education settings, especially among students experiencing heightened academic demands.

The unit of analysis in this study is individual final-year university students who are currently completing their thesis or final project. This population was selected due to its relevance

as a critical transitional phase characterized by high academic demands, psychological pressure, and uncertainty regarding future careers. A total of 239 students from various study programs participated in the study. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, with inclusion criteria requiring participants to be (1) actively enrolled in their final academic semester and (2) currently engaged in completing their thesis or equivalent requirement. This approach ensures that respondents possess the specific characteristics necessary to address the research objectives. While purposive sampling may limit statistical generalizability, it is widely accepted in context-specific psychological research where theoretical relevance and depth of understanding are prioritized. Therefore, the findings of this study are intended to contribute to analytical generalization within similar academic contexts rather than broad population-level inference.

Data were collected from primary sources using self-report questionnaires. Three standardized instruments were employed. First, flourishing was measured using the PERMA-Profiler developed by Butler and Kern (2016), consisting of 23 items based on Seligman's PERMA model (Seligman, 2011). Second, grit was assessed using the Short Grit Scale (Grit-S) developed by (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009), consisting of 8 items representing consistency of interest and perseverance of effort. Third, social support was measured using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) developed by (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988), consisting of 12 items covering support from family, friends, and significant others. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale. The measurement model evaluation indicated that some constructs showed Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values slightly below the recommended threshold of 0.50. However, these constructs were retained as outer loadings, HTMT values ( $<0.90$ ), and composite reliability ( $>0.70$ ) met acceptable criteria for exploratory research, indicating adequate construct validity and reliability.

Data collection was conducted through an online survey using structured Likert-scale questionnaires. Participants were informed about the study's purpose and assured of anonymity and confidentiality prior to participation, and informed consent was obtained. These procedures were implemented to minimize social desirability bias and encourage honest responses. Given the use of self-report measures collected at a single point in time, the study addressed potential common method bias using Harman's single-factor test. The results indicated that no single factor accounted for the majority of variance, suggesting that common method bias was not a significant concern. In addition, data screening procedures were conducted to ensure completeness, detect inconsistent responses, and confirm adherence to inclusion criteria. The distribution of data was also assessed using skewness and kurtosis values, which fell within the acceptable range of  $\pm 1$ , indicating that the data were suitable for further statistical analysis.

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software. PLS-SEM was selected due to its suitability for predictive and exploratory research, particularly when analyzing complex models involving latent constructs and mediation effects (Hair et al., 2011). Additionally, PLS-SEM is robust for moderate sample sizes and does not require strict normality assumptions. The analysis was conducted in two stages: evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model). The outer model was assessed using convergent validity (outer loadings  $>0.50$ ; AVE), reliability (composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha  $>0.70$ ), and discriminant validity (HTMT  $<0.90$ ). The inner model was evaluated through multicollinearity testing (VIF  $<5$ ), coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), and path coefficients. Hypothesis testing was conducted using bootstrapping to obtain t-statistics and p-values. Mediation analysis was performed to determine whether social support acted as a partial or full mediator, and effect size ( $f^2$ ) was calculated to assess the magnitude of relationships.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Result

This study involved 239 final-year students from various study programs. Descriptive analysis of the three variables showed that most students had high levels of grit, social support, and flourishing. The mean values and standard deviations of each construct are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.**  
*Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables*

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
Grit (GR)	239	3.156	0.435	-0.215	-0.280
Social Support (SS)	239	3.158	0.459	-0.226	0.354
Flourishing (FL)	239	3.208	0.480	-0.531	0.322

Table 1 indicate that all variables have relatively high mean scores, suggesting that respondents generally reported favorable levels of grit, social support, and flourishing. Flourishing shows the highest mean value, followed by social support and grit, indicating that students tend to perceive themselves as functioning well psychologically despite academic pressures. The standard deviation values across variables are relatively low, reflecting a consistent distribution of responses among participants. Furthermore, the skewness and kurtosis values fall within the acceptable range of  $\pm 1$ , indicating that the data are approximately normally distributed. This distribution suggests that there are no severe deviations from normality, supporting the suitability of the dataset for further multivariate analysis using the PLS-SEM approach.

**Table 2.**  
*Results of Construct Validity and Reliability Tests*

Construct	AVE	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
Grit (GR)	0.405	0.750	0.653	Quite reliable
Social Support (SS)	0.457	0.851	0.832	Reliable
Flourishing (FL)	0.523	0.857	0.843	Reliable

Table 2 presents the results of convergent validity and reliability testing for all constructs. The AVE value for flourishing exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.50, indicating adequate convergent validity. Although the AVE values for grit and social support are slightly below 0.50, these constructs are still considered acceptable due to sufficient composite reliability values above 0.70. Cronbach's alpha values further support the internal consistency of the constructs, particularly for social support and flourishing. The grit construct shows slightly lower reliability; however, it remains within an acceptable range for exploratory research. Overall, these findings suggest that the measurement model demonstrates adequate convergent validity and reliability, allowing the constructs to be retained for further analysis in the structural model.

**Table 3.**  
*Discriminant Validity Test Results (HTMT)*

Construct	GR	SS	FL
Grit	1.000	0.506	0.699
Social Support	0.506	1.000	0.855
Flourishing	0.699	0.855	1.000

Table 3 shows the results of discriminant validity testing using the HTMT method. All HTMT values are below the recommended threshold of 0.90, indicating that each construct is

empirically distinct from the others. The highest HTMT value is observed between social support and flourishing, suggesting a strong but acceptable relationship between these constructs. Meanwhile, the relationships between grit and the other variables are moderate, indicating conceptual differentiation. These results confirm that the constructs measure distinct psychological dimensions and are not overlapping. Therefore, the model satisfies the criteria for discriminant validity, supporting the adequacy of the measurement model for further structural analysis.

**Table 4.**  
*R<sup>2</sup> dan Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> values*

Endogenous Construct	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Interpretation
Social Support (SS)	0.353	0.350	Moderate
Flourishing (FL)	0.841	0.839	Strong

Table 4 indicate that grit explains 35.3% of the variance in social support, which is categorized as a moderate level of explanatory power. Meanwhile, the combination of grit and social support explains 84.1% of the variance in flourishing, indicating a strong predictive capability of the model. The adjusted R<sup>2</sup> values further confirm the robustness of the model, as they remain close to the original R<sup>2</sup> values, suggesting minimal bias. These findings demonstrate that the proposed model has substantial explanatory power, particularly in predicting flourishing among final-year students. The high R<sup>2</sup> value for flourishing highlights the importance of both personal and social factors in explaining students' psychological well-being.

**Table 5.**  
*Direct Effect Test Results*

Correlation Between Variables	Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	t-value	p-value	Description
Grit → Social Support	0.617	12.12	<0.001	Significant
Grit → Flourishing	0.628	7.57	<0.001	Significant
Social Support → Flourishing	0.398	5.23	<0.001	Significant

Table 5 presents the results of the direct effect analysis. Grit has a significant positive effect on social support, indicating that students with higher perseverance and consistency tend to perceive greater support from their environment. Grit also significantly predicts flourishing, suggesting that personal resilience contributes directly to psychological well-being. In addition, social support has a significant positive effect on flourishing, highlighting its role as an important contextual resource. The high t-values and significant p-values (<0.001) indicate strong statistical support for all hypothesized relationships. These findings suggest that both individual and social factors play important roles in enhancing students' flourishing.

**Table 6.**  
*Mediation Effect Test Results*

Correlation Path	Direct Effect ( $\beta$ )	Indirect Effect ( $\beta$ )	Total Effect ( $\beta$ )	Effect p-value	Description
GR → FL	0.028	0.372	0.400	<0.001	Full mediation
GR → S	0.626	—	—	<0.001	Significant
SS → FL	0.594	—	—	<0.001	Significant

Table 6 shows the results of the mediation analysis using bootstrapping. The direct effect of grit on flourishing becomes non-significant when social support is included in the model, while the indirect effect remains significant. This indicates that social support fully mediates the relationship between grit and flourishing. In other words, grit enhances flourishing primarily through its influence on social support. Students with higher grit are more likely to build and utilize supportive relationships, which in turn contribute to their well-being. This finding

highlights the importance of social mechanisms in translating personal strengths into positive psychological outcomes.

**Table 7.**  
*Effect Size Value ( $f^2$ )*

<b>Correlation</b>	$f^2$	<b>Interpretation</b>
GR → SS	0.545	High
GR → FL	1.532	High
SS → FL	0.674	High

Table 7 presents the effect size ( $f^2$ ) values for each structural relationship. All paths show large effect sizes ( $f^2 > 0.35$ ), indicating that the relationships between variables are substantively strong. The largest effect is observed in the relationship between grit and flourishing, followed by social support and flourishing. These results confirm that the model has strong practical significance in explaining student well-being. In addition, the high adjusted  $R^2$  value for flourishing further supports the overall goodness-of-fit of the model. Together, these findings demonstrate that the proposed model is both statistically robust and practically meaningful.

### **Discussion**

This study established a positive correlation between grit and flourishing among final-year students, both in a direct sense and via the medium of social support. The results indicate that students with higher levels of perseverance and consistency of interest tend to experience higher levels of psychological well-being. More importantly, the mediation analysis revealed that social support fully mediates this relationship, suggesting that grit alone is insufficient to sustain flourishing without supportive social environments. These findings highlight that while personal strengths are important, their effectiveness depends on contextual factors. In addition, the strong explanatory power of the model suggests that the interaction between individual and social resources plays a crucial role in shaping students' well-being. Overall, the findings emphasize that flourishing among final-year students is a multidimensional outcome influenced by both internal capacities and external support systems.

These findings can be understood within the broader context of final-year students' academic experiences, which are often characterized by high levels of stress, uncertainty, and pressure to complete their studies. In such contexts, grit becomes a critical psychological resource that helps students persist in the face of challenges. Consistent with previous studies, individuals with high grit are more likely to maintain long-term goals and demonstrate resilience when encountering obstacles (Munn, George, Phillips, Kershner, & Hucks, 2022; Obeng et al., 2025). This capacity allows them to reframe academic difficulties as meaningful challenges rather than threats, thereby fostering adaptive coping strategies (An, Qian, Mumtaz, Alotaibi, & Wang, 2025). As a result, students are better able to sustain motivation and emotional stability, which are essential components of flourishing.

Beyond its direct role, grit also contributes to flourishing through psychological processes related to meaning-making and self-regulation. Students with high levels of grit tend to develop a strong sense of purpose and are more capable of regulating their emotions and behaviors in pursuit of long-term goals. This process enhances positive affect, perceived competence, and life meaning, which are core elements of flourishing. However, as noted by (Vainio & Daukantaitė, 2016) grit does not always lead to positive outcomes when it operates in isolation. Without adequate contextual support, persistent effort may lead to exhaustion or maladaptive persistence. Therefore, the present findings reinforce the importance of examining not only individual traits but also the conditions under which these traits function adaptively. In this regard, social support emerges as a key contextual factor that enables grit to translate into sustainable well-being.

The role of social support in this study is particularly significant, as it was found to be a strong predictor of flourishing. Social support provides emotional reassurance, informational guidance, and instrumental assistance, all of which help individuals cope with stress and maintain psychological stability (Ansari & Shakerian, 2024; Cohen & Wills, 1985). Students who perceive strong support from family, peers, and lecturers tend to experience greater psychological security and optimism, which enhance their overall well-being (An et al., 2025). These findings are consistent with (Schotanus-Dijkstra et al., 2017), who demonstrated that social support is a key predictor of flourishing and reduces the risk of mental health problems. Furthermore, positive social relationships have been identified as essential contributors to life satisfaction and success across various domains (An et al., 2025). Thus, social support functions not only as a buffer against stress but also as an active driver of psychological growth.

This study extends previous research by demonstrating that social support fully mediates the relationship between grit and flourishing. This finding suggests that the influence of grit on well-being operates primarily through relational mechanisms. Individuals with high grit are more likely to engage actively in their social environments, seek help when needed, and maintain meaningful interpersonal relationships (Komarudin, Wiyono, Eva, Hitipeuw, & Tortop, 2026). This pattern is consistent with findings by (Clark, Dorio, Eldridge, Malecki, & Demaray, 2020; Datu, Buenconsejo, Shek, Choy, & Sou, 2023; Datu, Sun, Liu, Pang, & Watt, 2025), which highlight the link between grit and social engagement. In the context of final-year students, who often face intense academic and transitional pressures, the ability to mobilize social resources becomes particularly important. These findings support the framework of contextual positive psychology, which emphasizes that optimal well-being arises from the interaction between personal strengths and environmental resources.

The findings of this study have important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by positioning grit within a relational framework, emphasizing that personal strengths must be supported by social contexts to be effective. It also reinforces the idea that flourishing is a product of dynamic interactions between internal and external factors (Li, Koul, & Cao, 2026). Practically, the results suggest that interventions aimed at improving student well-being should not focus solely on enhancing individual resilience but also on strengthening social support systems within educational institutions. However, several limitations should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional design limits causal interpretation, and the use of self-report measures may introduce bias. Additionally, the use of purposive sampling restricts generalizability. Future research should consider longitudinal designs and more diverse samples to further validate these findings.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that flourishing among final-year university students cannot be adequately understood as a purely individual outcome, but rather as the result of a dynamic interplay between personal strengths and social support. The findings indicate that grit contributes significantly to flourishing; however, this relationship is fully mediated by social support. This suggests that grit does not operate as a direct determinant of well-being, but instead requires a supportive relational context to be effectively translated into optimal psychological functioning. The primary contribution of this study lies in advancing a relational perspective on student well-being, thereby challenging the predominance of individual-centered explanations. Moreover, the strong explanatory power of the proposed model underscores the importance of integrating intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions in understanding flourishing. Accordingly, this study offers a more comprehensive and contextually grounded account of well-being during the critical transition phase experienced by final-year students.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study reconfigures grit from an exclusively intrapersonal construct into a relationally embedded phenomenon. The identification of social support as a full mediator highlights that the effectiveness of personal strengths is contingent upon the presence of enabling social environments. This reinforces the view that well-being emerges from the interaction between individuals and their social contexts, rather than from isolated personal attributes. Methodologically, the study demonstrates the utility of structural modeling techniques in examining complex relationships among latent constructs. Nevertheless, several limitations must be acknowledged. The cross-sectional design constrains causal inference, while reliance on self-report measures introduces the possibility of response bias. In addition, the sampling strategy limits the generalizability of the findings. These considerations point to the need for cautious interpretation and signal opportunities for methodological refinement in future research.

In practical terms, the findings suggest that initiatives aimed at enhancing student well-being should extend beyond the development of individual perseverance to include the cultivation of supportive social environments. Higher education institutions are encouraged to design interventions that integrate the strengthening of personal capacities with the enhancement of social support systems, encompassing relationships with peers, family members, and academic staff. Such an integrative approach is likely to facilitate the effective translation of personal strengths into sustained well-being. Furthermore, this study provides a foundation for future research to examine the relationships among grit, social support, and flourishing using longitudinal designs, thereby enabling a more robust understanding of causal dynamics. Future studies are also encouraged to incorporate additional contextual variables and employ multi-method approaches to further elucidate the psychological processes underlying student well-being.

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