

# Grit at Work: The Role of Perceived Social Support on Grit in Government Employees by Age

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**Abstract.** In every organization, whether profit-oriented or not, humans are the primary resource that plays a crucial role in achieving organizational or institutional goals effectively and efficiently. In carrying out their duties and responsibilities, several employees at DP3AP2KB of Malang City and Malang Regency face similar problems and challenges related to workload, which affects their performance. This study aims to examine the effect of perceived social support on grit among government employees and to investigate whether age moderates this relationship.

This research uses a quantitative approach with Moderated Regression Analysis (MRA) as the analytical technique. The study involved 107 employees from two government institutions in Malang City and Malang Regency, selected using proportionate stratified random sampling. The instruments used were the Grit Scale and the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS).

The analysis results show that perceived social support has a positive and significant effect on grit ( $p = 0.001$ ). However, age does not have a significant effect ( $p = 0.829$ ) and does not moderate the relationship between perceived social support and grit ( $p = 0.178$ ). Descriptively, employees over the age of 50 have the highest average levels of both grit and perceived social support compared to other age groups.

**Keywords:** Grit, Perceived Social Support, Employees

## 1. Introduction

Human resources are the most important element in any organization, whether profit-oriented or non-profit. The effectiveness and efficiency of an organization are greatly influenced by the quality of human resource management and development, one of which is employees who play a crucial role in achieving organizational goals. Employees who perform optimally will contribute significantly to the productivity and success of the organization.

According to the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), an employee is defined as someone who works in an institution (such as an office or company) and receives a salary or wage as compensation. Meanwhile, Hasibuan (2007) explains that employees are all individuals who work for a company by sacrificing their physical and mental energy, then receiving compensation in accordance with the agreed terms. Optimal employee performance has a significant impact on the overall productivity and success of an organization, as they are the primary resource responsible for carrying out various tasks and functions.

Based on data from the State Civil Service Agency in 2024, the total number of Civil Servants (PNS) was 3,655,685, while the total number of Government Contract Employees (PPPK) was 1,103,045, bringing the total number of employees in Indonesia in 2024 to 4,758,730. Within government institutions, employees can be found at various levels, ranging from operational staff to structural officials, such as department heads, depending on the organizational structure and operational needs of the institution. Employees are crucial to achieving organizational goals. Optimal employee performance has a significant impact on the organization's overall productivity and success, as they are the primary human resources responsible for carrying out various tasks and functions. To design an effective human resource management strategy, organizations must thoroughly understand what their employees do and how they perform their duties.

According to Law Number 5 of 2014 on the State Civil Apparatus, the minimum age for ASN applicants is 18 years, while the maximum age varies by position and agency regulations generally up to 58 years for most roles and 60 years for certain functional positions. Employees in the younger age group (18–30) are at the early stage of their careers, showing high enthusiasm, strong learning motivation, and quick adaptability to technology, making them ideal candidates for mentoring and guidance. Meanwhile, those in the productive age range (31–50) typically have well-developed technical skills, significant work experience, and greater efficiency, making them vital to the implementation of government programs. As for employees nearing retirement (51–60), their extensive experience and deep understanding of work values enable them to serve as mentors for younger staff and contribute effectively to strategic decision-making and problem-solving.

In 2021, the Central Statistics Agency reported that 13.6-19.4% of Indonesia's 150 million adult population experienced emotional mental disorders or mental health issues such as work-related stress, one of which was triggered by excessive workloads. This condition has the potential to reduce performance within an organization. However, in 2024, the latest data from Gallup's State of the Global Workplace 2024 indicates that the daily stress levels caused by work among Indonesian employees are the lowest compared to other countries in Southeast Asia.

In carrying out their duties and responsibilities, some employees at the DP3AP2KB City of Malang and DP3A Regency of Malang face similar challenges, particularly related to high workloads. These issues are primarily caused by the limited number of available human resources, leading to delays in task completion, reduced quality of work outcomes, and exceeding the established working hours. Additionally, discipline-related issues also impact performance outcomes, characterized by low attendance rates and employee tardiness in starting work hours, particularly on certain days. The hybrid work system implemented also creates psychological pressure

because work hours are not well structured, ultimately leading to boredom and fatigue.

These issues reflect weaknesses in the aspect of grit, particularly in terms of perseverance of effort and consistency of interest. The high workload and pressure from job demands have the potential to weaken employees' perseverance and resilience in consistently completing tasks. On the other hand, the decline in enthusiasm and motivation to maintain interest in work indicates a decrease in commitment to long-term goals. This finding is also supported by the results of observations conducted by researchers, which show that some employees tend to shift their attention to non-productive activities such as watching movies, sleeping, or playing online games when they feel bored, and some even leave the office without permission. Additionally, there are employees who choose to resign because they are more interested in other jobs that are perceived as more promising. This phenomenon indicates the importance of strengthening the aspect of grit in the workplace as one of the efforts to enhance mental resilience, work enthusiasm, and employee productivity sustainably.

In this context, grit is highly important for employees. The complexity of tasks and the heavy workload require employees to have mental resilience and strong commitment in facing various challenges. Employees with high levels of grit (perseverance and determination) are generally better able to cope with stress and pressure arising from work demands, enabling them to remain focused on achieving organizational goals (Duckworth et al., 2007). According to Prabandari et al (2023), to increase productivity, employees must possess personal resources such as grit. Grit involves working hard in the face of difficulties and maintaining effort and goals despite failure. This indicates that if an employee has high grit, they will be able to overcome the pressures they face.

Grit is perseverance and strong determination in achieving long-term goals. Individuals with high levels of grit are typically characterized by an unwavering determination to achieve their goals, a relentless work ethic, and a resistance to being distracted by other objectives when faced with challenges or obstacles (Anindhyta & Yudianto, 2022; Duckworth et al., 2007; Fabelico & Afalla, 2020; Kwon, 2021). What determines an individual's success is not talent or intelligence (IQ), but grit can predict success and satisfying achievements in various fields, including education and the workplace. Additionally, grit is often associated with subjective well-being and the ability to remain focused, work hard, and persistently tackle challenges (Credé, 2018; Duckworth et al., 2007; Jachimowicz et al., 2018; Moen & Olsen, 2020). According to Anderson & Bergman (2011), grit is considered one of the factors that enables individuals to achieve better results compared to the general population.

## **2. Method**

This study uses a quantitative approach with a descriptive analysis design and regression analysis. The research was conducted in three main stages: pre-research, data collection, and analysis. In the pre-research stage, the researcher conducted observations and initial interviews to formulate the topic and develop instruments based on relevant theory. The next stage involved data collection using questionnaires

distributed directly to employees of the DP3A of Malang Regency and the DP3AP2KB of Malang City, conducted from February 14, 2025, to February 23, 2025. The final stage included instrument verification, data analysis using statistical software, interpretation of results, and a descriptive discussion of findings.

The research population consists of 147 active employees in two agencies, namely DP3AP2KB Malang City (117 employees) and DP3A Malang Regency (30 employees). The sampling technique used proportionate stratified random sampling, in accordance with the heterogeneous characteristics of the population. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% error rate, resulting in a total sample of 107 respondents, comprising 85 employees from DP3AP2KB City of Malang and 22 employees from DP3A District of Malang.

The grit variable was measured using the Grit-O scale developed by Duckworth et al. (2007) and translated by Maarif (2024), which was then modified by the researcher. The scale consists of 12 original items and 7 additional items, covering two main aspects: consistency of interest and perseverance of effort. Meanwhile, the perceived social support variable uses the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) developed by Zimet et al. in 1988 (in Izzah & Ariana, 2022). This instrument consists of 12 statements that were translated into Indonesian by (Wulandari, 2020) and then modified by the researcher to better suit the conditions at the research location. This scale measures three main aspects, namely family support, peer support, and significant others. All items in both scales use a 4-point Likert format, with positive and negative statements scored oppositely.

The data analysis used in this study is the Moderated Regression Analysis (MRA) technique for hypothesis testing, utilizing the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software

### 3. Result

#### 3.1 Demography Respondent

This study used subjects from all active employees of DP3AP2KB Malang City and DP3A Malang Regency with a total of 107 employees. The following is a table describing the research respondent:

**Table 1.** Data Demography Respondent

<b>Data Demography Respondent</b>	<b>Frequency (f)</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Age	21-30	24 22.4%
	31-40	30 28.0%
	41-50	27 25.2%
	>50	26 24.3%
Gender	Female	64 59.8%
	Male	42 40.2%
Agency	DP3A Kabupaten Malang	22 20.6%
	DP3AP2KB Kota Malang	85 79.4%

From the table above, it can be seen that employees aged 21-30 years totaled 24 people (22.4%), employees aged 31-40 years totaled 30 people (28.0%), employees aged 41-50 years totaled 27 people (25.2%), and employees aged over 50 years

totaled 26 people (24.3%). Meanwhile, male employees totaled 42 (40.2%) and female employees totaled 64 (59.8%). The research subjects consisted of two agencies, namely DP3A Malang Regency and DP3AP2KB Malang City. The employees of DP3A Malang Regency consisted of 22 employees with a percentage of 20.6%, while the employees of DP3AP2KB Malang City consisted of 85 employees with a percentage of 79.4%.

### 3.2 Descriptive Analysis

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	107	1	4	2,51	1,093
PSS	107	26	48	36,25	4,137
Grit	107	52	78	62,50	5,421
Valid N (listwise)	107				

This study also employed descriptive analysis on the variables of perceived social support, grit, and age. The mean score of perceived social support was 36.25 (SD = 4.137). The grit variable had a mean of 62.50 (SD = 5.421). Meanwhile, the age variable had a mean of 2.51 (SD = 1.093).

### 3.3 Age Categories

**Table 3.** Age Category

		Report	
age		PSS	Grit
1	Mean	35,83	63,00
	N	24	24
	Std. Deviation	4,459	5,695
2	Mean	36,07	61,90
	N	30	30
	Std. Deviation	5,119	5,020
3	Mean	35,70	62,15
	N	27	27
	Std. Deviation	3,123	4,267
4	Mean	37,42	63,12
	N	26	26
	Std. Deviation	3,431	6,737
Mean		36,25	62,50
N		107	107

	Std. Deviation	4,137	5,421
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Next, additional statistical descriptions were conducted based on the respondents age categories:

1. In the age group of 21–30 years (Category 1) with n = 24 respondents, the mean score of perceived social support was 35.83 with a standard deviation of 4.459, while the mean score of grit was 63.00 with a standard deviation of 5.695.
2. In the age group of 31–40 years (Category 2) with n = 30 respondents, the mean perceived social support was 36.07 with a standard deviation of 5.119, and the mean grit score was 61.90 with a standard deviation of 5.020.
3. In the age group of 41–50 years (Category 3) with n = 27 respondents, the mean perceived social support was 35.70 with a standard deviation of 3.123, while the mean grit score was 62.15 with a standard deviation of 4.287.
4. The age group above 50 years (Category 4) with n = 26 respondents showed the highest mean score of perceived social support at 37.42 with a standard deviation of 3.431, and a mean grit score of 63.12 with a standard deviation of 6.737.

### 3.4 The Role of Perceived Social Support on Grit

**Table 4.** Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,311 <sup>a</sup>	,097	,080	5,201

a. Predictors: (Constant), Usia\_C, PSS\_C

Based on the results from the Model Summary, the R value is 0.311 and the R Square is 0.097. This indicates that perceived social support and age simultaneously explain 9.7% of the variance in employee grit. The remaining 90.3% is explained by other factors not included in this model.

**Table 5.** Anova

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	301,788	2	150,894	5,579	,005 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	2812,960	104	27,048		
	Total	3114,748	106			

a. Dependent Variable: total\_y

b. Predictors: (Constant), Usia\_C, PSS\_C

The ANOVA test shows an F value of 5.579 with a significance level of 0.005. Since the significance value ( $p < 0.05$ ), it can be concluded that the regression model involving perceived social support and age has a significant effect on grit. In other words, this regression model is generally appropriate for predicting grit.

**Table 6. Coefficient**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	62,504	,503		124,318	,000
	PSS_C	,410	,123	,313	3,336	,001
	Age_C	-,101	,465	-,020	-,217	,829

a. Dependent Variable: total\_y

The regression analysis results indicate that perceived social support has a positive and significant effect on grit ( $B = 0.410$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). This suggests that the higher the perceived social support felt by employees, the higher their level of grit.

Conversely, the age variable does not show a significant effect on grit ( $B = -0.101$ ,  $p = 0.829$ ). This means that age differences do not have a meaningful impact on employee grit.

### 3.5 The Role of Age as Moderate (Moderated Regression Analysis)

**Table 7. Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,336 <sup>a</sup>	,113	,087	5,180

a. Predictors: (Constant), PSSxUsia, Usia\_C, PSS\_C

An R value of 0.336 and an R Square of 0.113 indicate that the inclusion of the interaction variable improves the strength of the model, increasing from 9.7% to 11.3%. This means there is a 1.6% increase in the explained variance of grit after adding the interaction variable.

**Table 8. Anova**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	351,177	3	117,059	4,363	,006 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	2763,571	103	26,831		
Total	3114,748	106			

a. Dependent Variable: total\_y

b. Predictors: (Constant), PSSxUsia, Usia\_C, PSS\_C

The ANOVA results show that the second-stage regression model remains significant, with an F value of 4.363 and a significance level of 0.006 ( $p < 0.05$ ). This indicates that overall, the model involving perceived social support, age, and their interaction still significantly predicts grit

**Table 9. Coefficient**

Model		Unstandardized		Standardize	t	Sig.
		Coefficients	Std. Error	d Coefficients		
	B		Beta			
1	(Constant)	62,419	,505		123,686	,000
	PSS_C	,454	,127	,346	3,584	,001
	Age_C	-,171	,466	-,035	-,367	,714
	PSSxAge	,162	,120	,131	1,357	,178

a. Dependent Variable: total\_y

Based on the second-stage regression results, perceived social support continues to show a positive and significant effect on grit ( $B = 0.454$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). Meanwhile, age still does not have a significant effect on grit ( $B = -0.171$ ,  $p = 0.714$ ).

The interaction variable between perceived social support and age has a significance value of 0.178 ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating that it is not significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that age does not moderate the relationship between perceived social support and grit among government employees.

#### 4. Discussion

The results of this study indicate that perceived social support has a positive and significant effect on grit among government employees. This is evidenced by the results of both simple linear regression and Moderated Regression Analysis (MRA), in which the significance value of perceived social support was  $p = 0.001$  ( $p < 0.05$ ), contributing only 9.7% to the grit variance. The limited contribution may be due to the fact that employees do not solely rely on social support to develop perseverance and enthusiasm; rather, they may also possess strong internal motivation. While perceived social support is important for enhancing psychological well-being, its impact on grit may not be direct and could be mediated by other variables such as resilience or self-efficacy.

Therefore, the higher the level of perceived social support felt by employees, the greater their perseverance and consistency in achieving long-term goals (grit). This finding supports the theory of Cohen and Wills (1985), which explains that social support serves as a critical psychological resource for managing stress, including in the workplace. Support from colleagues, supervisors, and the broader work environment can enhance self-confidence, reduce stress, and foster mental resilience, which are core characteristics of grit (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

This finding is consistent with the study by Oktaviana (2018), which found that self-efficacy and perceived social support collectively contributed 32.8% to the grit of multidisciplinary postgraduate students. Of this, self-efficacy accounted for 43.4%, while perceived social support contributed 26.6%, indicating that students with high grit were better able to face academic challenges. Similarly, research by Khotimah (2023) also found a positive and significant effect of perceived social support on grit ( $p = 0.008 < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, Mulyarti (2022) reported that social support could predict grit levels among students in Makassar, contributing 20.3%.

In the second stage of analysis, the addition of the interaction variable between age and perceived social support increased the R Square value from 9.7% to 11.3%, but this 1.6% increase was not statistically significant ( $p = 0.178$ ). This means that age is not a statistically significant moderator in the relationship between perceived social support and grit. Thus, the influence of social support on grit remains consistent across all employee age groups without meaningful differences.

However, descriptive analysis based on age categories provides important additional insight. Employees over the age of 50 exhibited the highest levels of both perceived social support and grit ( $M_{PSS} = 37.42$ ;  $M_{grit} = 63.12$ ). This suggests that greater age tends to be associated with stronger perceptions of social support and higher levels of work perseverance. This is in line with Erikson's (1963) psychosocial development theory, which posits that individuals in middle to late adulthood are in the stage of generativity vs. stagnation, where they are motivated to make meaningful contributions and demonstrate long-term commitment to their professional roles.

Additionally, a study by Fun et al. (2023) found that age has a positive relationship with grit, as accumulated life experience helps individuals develop stronger perseverance and determination. Interestingly, employees aged 21–30 also showed relatively high grit scores ( $M = 63.00$ ), although with lower perceived social support. This implies that younger individuals may develop grit through initial career enthusiasm and motivation but still require external support to sustain it. This is supported by Kwon (2021), who noted that younger employees are more emotionally vulnerable and less stable, making social support a crucial factor in building their grit.

Thus, even though age is not a statistically proven moderator, the differences in characteristics across age groups are still important to consider in developing human resource strategies. Younger employees tend to need stronger support systems to build grit, such as mentoring programs and motivation training. Meanwhile, older employees can be empowered as mentors or role models due to their more stable commitment and work perseverance.

Overall, this study highlights the important role of social support in strengthening employee grit, regardless of age. However, grit development strategies should still be tailored to the specific needs and characteristics of different age groups in order to produce effective and sustainable interventions for improving performance in the public sector.

## **5. Conclusions**

This study concludes that perceived social support has a positive and significant effect on grit among government employees. Meanwhile, age does not have a significant effect and does not moderate the relationship between perceived social support and grit. However, descriptively, employees aged over 50 have the highest levels of grit and perceived social support. The regression model explains only a small portion of grit variance, suggesting that other factors such as self-efficacy and motivation also need to be considered in grit development.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that government institutions pay greater attention to the importance of social support in the workplace. Creating a supportive work culture both among coworkers and between supervisors and

subordinates can serve as a strategic step in enhancing employee grit. Furthermore, human resource development programs should be adjusted to the age characteristics of employees. Younger employees may benefit from resilience training, mentoring, and career guidance, while senior employees can be empowered as mentors or role models, given their greater experience and more stable grit.

This study also opens avenues for future research to explore additional variables such as self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, or resilience, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence grit. Such insights can lead to more targeted and sustainable strategies for improving employee performance.

There are several factors that can increase grit in individuals, one of which is perceived social support. This has been proven in previous research by Oktaviana (2018), which revealed that self-efficacy and perceived social support together contribute 32.8% to grit. This indicates that students with high levels of grit have a greater capacity to face challenges in higher education. Meanwhile, Khotimah's (2023) study, with a significant result ( $p=0.008 < 0.05$ ), shows that perceived social support has a positive influence on grit among international students. According to Cohen & Wills (1985), perceived social support is one of the factors that can influence grit in employees or workers. This support can come from several sources, including family, parents, peers, and significant others (Zimet et al., 1988). This support takes the form of families offering material and emotional support in addition to helping make decisions about problems faced. Peers assist in daily activities with emotional support and information. Meanwhile, coworkers or supervisors offer emotional support and information about tasks and responsibilities related to their work. This social support provides a sense of security that allows individuals to focus on their long-term goals, thereby strengthening their commitment and perseverance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). In addition, social support helps employees overcome various obstacles they encounter in the workplace. For example, when employees have difficulty completing tasks or projects, the presence of colleagues who are ready to help can boost their confidence and reduce feelings of frustration.

In addition, demographic factors such as age also influence the increase in grit among employees. Individuals who are more mature in age usually have higher grit than younger individuals, due to their greater life experience in facing various challenges (Credé et al., 2016; Duckworth et al., 2007; Fun et al., 2023). As people age, their mindset, work values, and individual needs also change, which affects their level of grit. In their early working years (18–30 years old), employees are generally enthusiastic and highly motivated, but their grit is not yet fully developed. As they enter their productive years (31–50 years old), employees begin to understand work values and can work more consistently, dedicatedly, and are prepared to face long-term work challenges. Meanwhile, as they approach retirement (51–60 years old), years of work experience and deep-rooted work values make grit stronger and more mature, evident in high work endurance and loyalty in fulfilling work responsibilities until the end of their career.

Employees of different age groups may perceive and receive social support in different ways, which also affects their respective levels of work persistence. For example, more senior employees generally have more work experience, so they tend to be more independent in facing various work challenges. On the other side, younger employees may need and rely more on support from supervisors, peers, and other

social environments to develop and maintain grit within themselves. Therefore, understanding these differences and how age affects the relationship between perceived social support and grit is crucial so that human resource development efforts in government agencies can be designed and tailored to the specific needs of each age group.

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