



Pathways to Well-Being: Examining the Contributions of Spirituality and Grit to Life Satisfaction in Undergraduates

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ABSTRACT

Life satisfaction can be a significant measure of subjective wellbeing especially in university students who regularly face academic, social and personal challenges. The need to uncover psychological resources that increase life satisfaction has thus become of interest to the research on positive psychology. The current research objectives were to test the correlation among spirituality, grit as well as life satisfaction, and to explore the mediating effect of grit between spirituality and life satisfaction. The sample was comprised of 370 undergraduate students who were recruited in Lahore, Pakistan, both from public and private universities. The subjects answered the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES), the Short Grit Scale (Grit-S) and the Riverside Life Satisfaction Scale (RLSS). The correlation analysis indicated that spirituality had significant positive relationship with grit and life satisfaction, and grit also had a positive significant relationship with life satisfaction. In addition, mediation analysis showed that grit had a significant mediation role in the relationship of spirituality and life satisfaction. The findings also indicate that the development of spirituality and grit might help to enhance well-being in the educational environment of higher education.



1. Introduction

Life satisfaction, defined as a global cognitive judgment of one's quality of life according to chosen criteria (Diener, 1984), is a central component of subjective well-being that reflects overall psychological adjustment. Among undergraduate students, life satisfaction affects academic engagement, mental health, and persistence in higher education; lower life satisfaction has been linked to stress, depressive symptoms, and academic disengagement and procrastination in university populations (Liu et al., 2022; Saleem et al., 2018). Thus, understanding psychological resources that predict greater life satisfaction in undergraduates has become an important focus in educational and positive-psychology research.

One such psychological resource is spirituality, a construct often conceptualized as an individual's personal search for meaning, purpose, and connectedness with a sacred or transcendent reality (de Brito Sena et al., 2021). Spirituality encompasses both cognitive and affective dimensions of beliefs, values, and existential orientations, and differs from religiosity in that it need not be tied exclusively to organized religious practice. Research indicates that spirituality and spiritual well-being are positively associated with indicators of subjective well-being, including life satisfaction, across diverse adult and student samples (Hussain et al., 2025; Hafeez & Rafique, 2013). Specifically, greater spirituality has been correlated with higher life satisfaction in university students in cross-cultural research, including Pakistani samples, where spirituality predicted life satisfaction and contributed uniquely to well-being beyond demographic variables (Meddour & Khairunniza, 2025). Additionally, spiritual well-being and resilience significantly predict life satisfaction among student populations in Pakistan (Ali, 2022). These findings support a directional association, whereby spirituality may act as a psychological resource that fosters greater life satisfaction among undergraduates.

Spirituality may therefore influence life satisfaction through pathways involving meaning in life, coping strategies, and perceptions of connectedness. Although specificity varies by study, conceptual models posit that spirituality enhances meaning and purpose, which, in turn, increase life satisfaction (Hussain et al., 2025). Such directional relationships have been documented in mediational studies of spirituality and subjective well-being in adult populations, wherein hope or meaning served as a psychological mediator (Hussain et al., 2025). Together, this literature suggests that spirituality may predict life satisfaction directly and indirectly through intervening psychological processes.

A key individual difference that may link spirituality with life satisfaction is grit—defined as sustained perseverance and passion for long-term goals, characterized by consistent interests and persistent effort over time (Duckworth et al., 2007). Individuals high in grit show greater goal commitment and resilience in the face of setbacks; such traits have been associated with academic success and psychological well-being in student samples. Research indicates that grit correlates positively with life satisfaction in college students (Liu et al., 2022; Noronha et al., 2024), and conceptual work suggests that the perseverance component of grit may contribute to sustained engagement with personally meaningful and valued life domains—thereby enhancing life satisfaction.

Several studies have explored mechanisms linking grit to life satisfaction. For example, grit predicted life satisfaction indirectly via psychological capital, self-esteem, or academic adaptation in undergraduate and adult samples (Li et al., 2018; Noronha et al., 2024). These mediational findings imply that grit's contribution to life satisfaction may operate through intermediate psychological strengths, suggesting a more nuanced pathway beyond a simple bivariate association.

Although the literature directly linking spirituality to grit is limited, theoretical perspectives argue that spiritual frameworks emphasizing purpose and transcendence may reinforce perseverance toward meaningful goals. Studies in related contexts show that spirituality correlate with grit and positive psychological traits such as purpose in life, gratitude, and resilience factors that are correlated with grit (Adeeb, 2024). Further, research examining spiritual fortitude—an aspect of spiritual resilience—demonstrates that spiritual constructs can function as mediators in psychological models involving perseverance and flourishing (Lesmana et al., 2025). Thus, it is plausible that spirituality may influence grit, which in turn enhances life satisfaction; however, empirical tests of this mediation among undergraduate students remain sparse.

In Pakistan, although several studies have identified positive links between religiosity/spirituality and aspects of life satisfaction in undergraduate populations (Din et al., 2019; Meddour & Khairunniza, 2025), research integrating spirituality, grit, and life satisfaction into a single model is limited. Cultural emphases on spiritual meaning and collectivist values in Pakistan suggest that spirituality may be a particularly salient predictor of students' psychological well-being; likewise, grit may operate in distinctive ways across academic contexts where perseverance is emphasized as integral to success. Testing a model in which spirituality predicts life satisfaction directly and via grit will extend the international literature by clarifying whether grit accounts for part of spirituality's association with life satisfaction in Pakistani undergraduates. Such insights could inform culturally tailored interventions that integrate spiritual meaning and perseverance skills to support student well-being.

Hypotheses

H₁: Spirituality will be positively associated with life satisfaction among Pakistani undergraduate students.

H₂: Spirituality will be positively associated with grit in undergraduate students.

H₃: Grit will be positively associated with life satisfaction among undergraduate students.

H₄: Grit would be a significant mediator in the relationship between spirituality and life satisfaction among undergraduate students.

2. Research Methods

2.1 Research Design

The present study employed a quantitative cross-sectional correlational design to examine the relationships among spirituality, grit, and life satisfaction in undergraduate university students. This design was considered appropriate as the study aimed to investigate the associations among study variables and to examine the mediating role of grit in the relationship between spirituality and life satisfaction without manipulation of variables.

2.2 Participants

The sample consisted of 370 undergraduate students recruited from public and private universities in Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan, using a convenience sampling technique. The participants included males (60%) and females (40%). Participants were between 18 and 25 years of age and were currently enrolled in undergraduate programs. Participation was voluntary. Questionnaires with incomplete responses were excluded from the final analysis. The demographics details are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographics Profile (n= 370)

Respondent's Characteristics		N	%	M (SD)
Age (Range = 21-25 Years)				24.05 (0.96)
Gender	Male	184	49.7	
	Female	186	50.3	
Home Residence	Urban	155	41.9	
	Rural	215	58.1	
Family System	Separate Family	181	48.9	
	Joint Family	189	51.1	

Marital Status	Unmarried	302	81.6
	Married	68	18.4

2.3 Instruments

2.3.1 Informed Consent

Participants were provided with a written informed consent form explaining the purpose of the study, voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality of responses, and their right to withdraw at any stage without any penalty.

2.3.2 Spirituality Scale (SS)

Spirituality was measured using the 16-item Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES; Underwood & Teresi, 2002), which assesses the frequency of ordinary spiritual experiences in daily life. The first 15 items are rated on a 6-point frequency scale ranging from (1= many times a day, 6=never or almost never) whereas the final item is rated on a 4-point scale. The DSES has demonstrated excellent internal consistency in previous research, with reliability coefficients ranging from .94 to .95. Originally, lower scores indicate greater frequency of spiritual experiences; in the present study, items were reverse scored so that higher total scores reflected greater levels of spirituality.

2.3.3 Grit Scale

Grit was assessed using the 8-item Short Grit Scale (Grit-S; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). The scale measures two dimensions: Consistency of Interest (4 items) and Perseverance of Effort (4 items). Participants responded using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all like me) to 5 (very much like me). Negatively worded items were reverse scored prior to computing the total grit score. Higher scores indicate greater perseverance and passion for long-term goals. The Grit-S has demonstrated good psychometric properties, with internal consistency (Cronbach's α) typically ranging from .73 to .83 across different samples.

2.3.4 Riverside Life Satisfaction Scale (RLSS)

Life satisfaction was assessed using the 6-item Riverside Life Satisfaction Scale (RLSS; Margolis et al., 2019). This scale provides a global evaluation of life satisfaction by incorporating both direct indicators of contentment and indirect indicators such as envy and the desire to change one's life. Participants responded on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The measure includes three reverse-coded items (items 2, 4, and 6) to account for acquiescence bias and increase construct breadth. Higher scores on the RLSS indicate a greater degree of life satisfaction. The scale has demonstrated high internal consistency in previous research, with reliability coefficients (α) typically ranging from .91 to .93.

2.4 Procedure

Approval for data collection was obtained from the relevant university authorities prior to the study. Participants were approached in classrooms and common areas and were informed about the purpose and voluntary nature of the research. After obtaining informed consent, participants completed a questionnaire package consisting of a demographic information sheet, the Spirituality Scale, the Short Grit Scale, and the Riverside Life Satisfaction Scale. Data were collected using a paper-and-pencil format, and completion of the questionnaire required approximately 15–20 minutes. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by not collecting any identifying information. All data were used solely for research purposes and were stored securely.

3. Results

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

Variables	M	SD	Spirituality	Grit	Life Satisfaction
Spirituality	75.95	20.06	-	0.41**	0.44**
Grit	21.21	7.27		-	0.38**
Life Satisfaction	16.76	6.90			-

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

The results of Table 2 show the analysis of the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, which revealed a significant as well as positive relationship between spirituality and grit (0.41, $p < 0.01$). Similarly, the results of correlation found a significant as well as positive relationship between spirituality and life satisfaction (0.44, $p < 0.01$). However, grit also revealed significant positive association with life satisfaction (0.38, $p < 0.01$).

For hypothesis of mediation, the results of Table 3 showed that grit confirmed a significant mediator between spirituality and life satisfaction. Whereas, spirituality has significant direct ($B = 0.15$, $p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0.19$, $F = 86.85$) and indirect with grit ($B = .12$, $p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0.24$, $F = 57.07$) predictor of life satisfaction, different between direct as well as indirect effect ($B = 0.03$). Also, grit found significant predictor of life satisfaction ($B = 0.15$, $p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0.17$, $F = 74.33$), while empathy is insignificant predictor of attitude ($B = 0.22$, $p > 0.01$), which indicate that empathy is confirmed insignificant mediator between prejudice and attitude.

Table 3: Grit as mediator between Spirituality and Life Satisfaction

Predictors	Life Satisfaction		
	Model 1 B	Model 2 B	95% CI
Constant	5.35**	3.12*	[0.53, 3.71]
Spirituality	.15**	0.12**	[0.08, 0.15]
Grit		0.22**	[0.13, 0.32]
R^2	0.19	0.24	
F	86.85**	57.07**	
ΔR^2		0.17	
ΔF		74.33**	

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; B for standardized regression coefficient; CI for Confidence interval

4. Discussion

The hypotheses of the current paper were to test the connections between spirituality and grit and life satisfaction among Pakistani undergraduate students and to test the mediation role of grit between spirituality and life satisfaction. Generally, all hypothesized hypotheses were confirmed meaning that spirituality and grit are significant psychological resources beneficial in increasing levels of life satisfaction among students. Whenever it came to the first hypothesis (H1), the findings depicted that spirituality had a strong and positive relationship with life satisfaction in undergraduate university students. This observation implies that students that reported experiencing spiritual events more and having a stronger sense of attachment to transcendent meaning are likely to have higher satisfaction with their lives. These results are in line with the recent studies that have shown that spirituality is a protective factor in psychological wellness and subjective life assessment in young adults.

To illustrate, Meddour and Khairunniza (2025) have found that spirituality was a significant life satisfaction predictor in university students in various cultural environments. On the same note, Ali and Butt (2022) discovered that spiritual well-being and resilience played a significant role in predicting the life satisfaction of Pakistani students. Spirituality can potentially contribute to satisfaction of life by offering human beings with a sense of sense of meaning, purpose and emotional stability in times of stressful academic situations. In collectivist cultures like Pakistan, in which the spiritual beliefs and religious values are very entrenched in the fabric of social life, spirituality can also enhance social connectedness and encourage positive coping processes, thus raising the overall psychological adaptation of students (Sher et al., 2023).

The second hypothesis (H2) was that grit would have positive links with spirituality among the undergraduate students. These findings were consistent with this hypothesis meaning that students who had stronger spiritual orientations also indicated greater perseverance and passion towards long term goals. Though the existing empirical research that directly correlates spirituality and grit is scarce, the new research indicates that spiritual beliefs can help individuals to build on their purpose, persistence, and resilience.

Indicatively, Lesmana et al. (2025) showed that the spiritual resilience aspect leads to the perseverance and personal development in cases where one is faced with difficulties. Spirituality tends to make one have a long-term view of life challenges and how to turn failures into valuable learning lessons (Adeeb, 2024; Dutta & Singh, 2017). This type of cognitive framing can encourage endurance of effort and long-term dedication, which are some of the essential elements of grit. Spirituality, therefore, can be used as an inner motivational tool that helps people to stick with their intentions even when they face challenges.

The third hypothesis (H3) hypothesized that grit would have a positive relationship with life satisfaction of undergraduate students. This relationship was affirmed by the results, which indicated that students who were more persevering and consistent in their practices of long-term goal achievement also reported an increased level of life satisfaction. These results are consistent with the developing literature that implies that grit is a significant predictor of well-being and psychological adaptation in university students. As an illustration, Liu et al. (2022) discovered that grit had a positive correlation with the life satisfaction and academic engagement of college students.

On the same note, Noronha et al. (2024) found that grit was a significant predictor of life satisfaction in undergraduates in sub-plots that were partly mediated by academic adaptation. In previous research, grit had been reported significant positive relationship with mental health in university students. People having better degrees of grit are more likely to continue working on relevant aims, which can bring the feeling of accomplishment, ability, and self-development. These experiences can eventually add to the general satisfaction of people with their lives.

The fourth hypothesis (H4) assumed that the mediation of such a relationship between spirituality and life satisfaction would be by grit. This hypothesis was upheld in the mediation analysis because spirituality was found to have a direct and indirect relationship with life satisfaction mediated by grit. This observation indicates that spirituality does not merely have an independent effect on satisfaction of life but also increases perseverance and goal-oriented action, which in turn leads to the increased level of life satisfaction. In other words, those students who have stronger spiritual experiences can become more persevering and determined and follow meaningful goals in their life and can be more fulfilling. These results are aligned with the theoretical approaches under the positive psychological scientific thinking that spiritual ideology has the capacity to enhance psychological capabilities like resilience, perseverance, and hope that eventually lead to well-being. It has also been proven that grit tends to mediate the relationship between psychological

resources and well-being outcomes in the previous research (Li et al., 2018; Noronha et al., 2024). The current research work builds on this literature by showing that the concept of grit may be an effective tool by which spirituality may boost life satisfaction in undergraduate students.

In a wider developmental context, this result may also be applicable beyond undergraduate populations. Psychological resources such as spirituality and perseverance continue to play important roles throughout adulthood, particularly during middle age when individuals often face multiple responsibilities related to careers, finances, parenting, and caregiving (Lachman, 2004; Lachman et al., 2015). Spirituality can provide a framework for meaning-making, purpose, and emotional support during periods of stress and life transitions (Park, 2013; Koenig, 2012). Likewise, grit, defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals, may enable individuals to remain committed to valued objectives despite setbacks and challenges (Duckworth et al., 2007). Previous research has shown that both spirituality and grit are positively associated with psychological well-being and life satisfaction across different age groups (Steger & Frazier, 2005; Vela et al., 2015). Therefore, the interaction between spirituality and perseverance may contribute to greater life satisfaction not only among young adults but also among middle-aged individuals navigating developmental challenges and significant life transitions.

Strengths of the Study

The current research has a number of strengths. First, it adds up to the accumulating body of knowledge on positive psychology by incorporating spirituality, grit, and life satisfaction into one conceptual framework. Second, the research offers empirical and evidence-based results of a Pakistani setting, which is still underrepresented in the area of psychological research on well-being and perseverance. Third, there was an excellent use of well-established and psychometrically sound measures, such as the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale, the Short Grit Scale, and the Riverside Life Satisfaction Scale, which confirmed reliability and validity of the results. Lastly, the study provides a better insight into the psychological flows by which spirituality affects life satisfaction by analyzing its mediating effect in the form of grit.

5. Limitations of the Study

In spite of its contributions, one must mention a number of limitations. The study adopted cross-sectional design, first, this design does not allow determining causal relationships between the variables. Longitudinal research would also be useful in order to have a better comprehension of the time dynamics between spirituality, grit, and life satisfaction. Second, the sample comprised of undergraduate students in universities located at Lahore only which might restrict the extrapolation of the results to other parts of the Pakistani regions or different age groups. Further researches ought to involve more cases with varied samples such as those living in rural and other educational backgrounds. Third, self-report questionnaires can lead to biases in responses like the social desirability or common method variance. Future studies might be more enlightening with the incorporation of various sources of data or measures of behavior in these studies.

6. Conclusion

Finally, the current research showed that spirituality and grit were important predictors of life satisfaction among Pakistani undergraduates. Both spirituality and grit were positively correlated with life satisfaction and each other. In addition, grit partially mediated the connection between spirituality and life satisfaction, indicating that perseverance and eagerness to long-term objectives is another significant channel by which spirituality contributes to the well-being of individuals. The results suggest that spiritual sense and endurance-oriented abilities should be encouraged in schools. Universities can also take advantage of introducing a program that promotes personal

meaning, resilience, and persistence in goals which could eventually promote the mental well-being of students and their satisfaction with life. Further studies on such correlations ought to be conducted in longitudinal and cross-cultural studies so as to gain extensive insights into the role of spirituality and perseverance as factors of well-being at various adulthood phases.

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