



## Perseverance of Effort and Goal Achievement among College Students: The Moderating Role of Gender

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**Abstract:** *The present study examined the relationship between perseverance of effort and goal achievement among college students, with gender considered as a potential moderating variable. A correlational research design was employed with a sample of 130 undergraduate and postgraduate students aged 18–23 years in the Thaloor region. Perseverance of effort was measured using the four-item Perseverance subscale of the Grit Scale, and goal achievement was assessed through a self-report measure of perceived goal progress developed for the study.*

*The findings revealed a significant positive association between perseverance of effort and goal achievement, indicating that sustained effort is meaningfully related to perceived goal progress. Although a gender difference was observed in levels of perseverance of effort, gender did not significantly moderate the relationship between perseverance of effort and goal achievement. These findings highlight the importance of sustained effort in supporting adaptive goal-directed behavior among college students.*

**Keywords:** *Perseverance of Effort, Goal Achievement, Gender, College Students, Positive Psychology.*

**Introduction:** Goal pursuit plays a central role in human development, particularly during emerging adulthood. The college years represent a formative stage in which individuals clarify career paths, define personal aspirations, and actively work toward long-term objectives. Students function within academic environments that demand persistence, adaptability, and sustained effort. In this context, understanding the psychological factors that influence goal-directed behavior is essential. The present study examines the relationship between perseverance of effort and goal achievement among college students and further explores whether gender moderates this relationship.

**Perseverance of Effort:** Perseverance of effort is conceptualized as a component of grit. Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, and Kelly (2007) defined grit as perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Within this framework, perseverance of effort refers to the sustained and consistent investment of effort toward objectives despite setbacks or slow progress. It reflects persistence and determination in the pursuit of long-term aims.

Duckworth and Quinn (2009) emphasized that perseverance represents consistency of effort over time rather than temporary motivation. In the college context, where students face academic pressure and uncertainty,

perseverance of effort may influence whether individuals continue striving toward their goals or disengage when encountering challenges. Although sustained effort facilitates progress, its significance becomes clearer when examined in relation to goal attainment.

**Goal Achievement:** Goal achievement refers to the attainment of, or meaningful progress toward, desired objectives. Locke and Latham (1990), through Goal-Setting Theory, emphasized that goals direct behavior, mobilize effort, and sustain persistence. Commitment to goals and continued effort are central to achieving them.

In the present study, goal achievement is conceptualized as perceived progress toward personally significant goals rather than solely final outcomes. Sheldon and Elliot (1999) noted that progress toward self-concordant goals is closely related to well-being and satisfaction. For college students, goals may involve academic targets, career preparation, skill development, or personal advancement. Because students are typically pursuing long-term aspirations, assessing perceived progress provides a developmentally appropriate indicator of achievement rather than relying exclusively on final performance metrics.

**Gender as a Moderating Variable:** Gender was included as a moderating variable due to the evolving social and educational landscape in which both male and female students pursue leadership roles, higher education, and career advancement. Contemporary shifts in participation patterns highlight the growing representation of women in academic and professional domains, making it relevant to examine whether motivational strengths operate similarly across genders.

Previous research suggests that socialization processes, achievement expectations, and coping strategies may differ across gender groups, potentially influencing how effort is invested and sustained. By examining gender as a moderator, the study seeks to determine whether the strength of the relationship between perseverance of effort and goal achievement differs across male and female students. This approach allows for an objective investigation of potential variations without assuming superiority of one group over another.

**Rationale of the Study:** Existing research has examined grit in relation to academic performance and achievement outcomes. However, fewer studies have isolated perseverance of effort as an independent variable to understand its specific contribution to perceived goal progress. This creates a conceptual gap, as perseverance of effort may function differently when examined separately from the broader grit framework.

Additionally, much of the literature relies on external performance indicators such as grades or standardized measures of achievement. Such indicators may not adequately capture the subjective experience of goal progress, particularly during the college years when students are still working toward long-term aspirations.

Furthermore, limited attention has been given to the potential moderating influence of gender in the relationship between perseverance of effort and goal achievement. By addressing these gaps, the present study aims to contribute to a focused understanding of perseverance of effort and its role in perceived goal achievement while also exploring the moderating role of gender.

**Review of Literature:** Perseverance has been recognized as an important strength supporting both achievement and well-being. Margaret L. Kern emphasizes that perseverance should help individuals work hard and persist through challenges while also maintaining balance and life satisfaction. This perspective highlights that sustained effort contributes not only to success but also to meaningful living.

Drayton A. Hammond et al. (2017), in “Grit: An Important Characteristic in Learners,” describe grit as perseverance of effort toward long-term goals. The authors state that success results from the combination of talent and effort, with effort playing a crucial role. They further explain that individuals high in grit tolerate

physical, mental, and emotional stress more effectively and persist despite challenges. The article also introduces non-pharmacy literature and suggests applications of grit within pharmacy education.

Dominik Gutt et al. (2018) examined goal achievement and subsequent effort. Their findings indicate that individuals increase effort after successful goal attainment, particularly when the goal is challenging. Success enhances self-efficacy, which in turn strengthens continued persistence and motivation.

Gender differences in achievement motivation were examined by Chandra Shekhar and Rachna Devi et al. (2012). The study included 80 undergraduate students (40 males and 40 females) from the Jammu region. Using the Achievement Motivation Scale and t-test analysis, the findings revealed significant differences between science and arts students as well as between male and female students, indicating the influence of gender and academic major on achievement motivation.

A major contribution to the concept of perseverance was made by Angela L. Duckworth, Christopher Peterson, Michael D. Matthews, and Dennis R. Kelly et al. (2007) in "Grit: Perseverance and Passion for Long-Term Goals." The study found that grit predicted educational attainment, college GPA, and retention at the United States Military Academy, accounting for about 4% of variance in success outcomes. Although grit was not strongly related to IQ, it was highly correlated with conscientiousness and demonstrated incremental predictive validity beyond IQ and conscientiousness. Overall, the findings emphasize that sustained effort is a significant factor in long-term goal achievement.

**Statement of Problem:** Although perseverance of effort has been associated with achievement-related outcomes, limited research has examined its specific relationship with perceived goal achievement among college students in the Thaloor region. Furthermore, it remains unclear whether this relationship varies across gender groups. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between perseverance of effort and goal achievement and to examine the moderating role of gender in this association.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To assess the level of perseverance of effort among male and female college students.
- To assess the level of perceived goal achievement among male and female college students.
- To examine the relationship between perseverance of effort and goal achievement among college students.
- To examine whether gender moderates the relationship between perseverance of effort and goal achievement.

### **Research Methodology**

**Aim:** The aim of the present study is to examine the relationship between perseverance of effort and goal achievement among college students in the Thaloor region and to investigate the moderating role of gender in this relationship.

**Research Design :** The present study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between perseverance of effort and goal achievement among college students. This design was selected to determine whether a significant association exists between the two variables and to assess whether gender moderates this relationship. As no variables were manipulated and data were collected at a single point in time, the study follows a cross-sectional approach.

**Sampling Design and Description:** The study employed a non-probability purposive sampling technique. The sample consisted of 130 undergraduate and postgraduate students aged between 18 and 23 years. Participants were selected based on accessibility and willingness to participate in the study.

Both male and female students were included to examine the moderating role of gender. Students who were currently enrolled and provided informed consent were included in the study.

**Procedure:** Data were collected through a questionnaire distributed online to college students, as it was easy to access and administer. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study prior to their participation. In the online form, participants were required to provide informed consent before completing the questionnaire.

The data collection process included socio-demographic information, perseverance of effort scores, and goal achievement scores. Goal achievement was assessed using a self-report measure of perceived goal progress. These two scales served as the primary tools for data collection. Confidentiality of participants was maintained throughout the data collection process.

**Tools and Techniques:** i.Sociodemographic datasheet: A self-constructed socio-demographic data sheet was used to collect basic information such as age, gender and academic stream. Gender was considered as a moderating variable in the study.

ii.Perseverance of Effort Scale: Perseverance of effort was assessed using five items selected from the Perseverance component of the original Grit Scale developed by Angela Duckworth et al. (2007). These items measure sustained effort and persistence toward long-term goals despite obstacles and setbacks. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The total score was obtained by summing the item responses. Higher scores indicated greater levels of perseverance of effort.

iii.Goal Achievement Scale: Goal achievement was measured using a self-developed self-report scale designed to assess perceived progress toward personally meaningful goals. The scale consisted of 5 items. Participants responded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). Total scores were calculated by summing the responses, with higher scores indicating higher perceived goal achievement.

**Statistical Analysis:** Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Since the normality assumption was violated (Shapiro–Wilk test,  $p < .05$ ), non-parametric tests were employed. The Mann–Whitney U test was used to examine gender differences in perseverance of effort and goal achievement. Spearman’s rank-order correlation was conducted to assess the relationship between perseverance of effort and goal achievement.

## Findings

**Table 1:** showing gender differences in perseverance of effort and goal achievement among college students

Variable	Gender	Mean Rank	Significance
PE	male	78.19	.000***
	female	52.81	
GA	male	67.28	.586
	female	63.72	

\*\*\*Significant at 0.001 level

**Table 2:** showing relationship between perseverance of effort and goal achievement among college students

SL	Variable	Correlation
1	PE	
2	GA	.370***

Significance = .000

\*\*\*Significant at 0.001 level

**Table 3:** showing model summary for moderation analysis predicting goal achievement (GA)

Outcome Variable: goal achievement (GA)

Predictors: perseverance of effort (PE), gender, and PE × Gender

R	R <sup>2</sup>	MSE	F	Significance
.417	.174	6.613	8.83	<.001

the model explained 17.4% of the variance in Goal Achievement

**Table 4:** showing regression coefficient for moderation model

Predictor	B	SE	t	Significance	95% CI LL	95% CI UL
constant	10.495	4.262	2.463	.015	2.061	18.930
PE	.361	.224	1.610	.110	-.083	.805
gender	.071	2.789	.025	.980	-5.448	5.589
PE×gender	.009	.152	.062	.951	-.291	.310

the interaction term (PE×gender) was not statistically significant.

**Discussion:** The present study examined gender differences in Perseverance of Effort (PE) and Goal Achievement (GA), the relationship between these variables, and whether gender moderates the relationship between PE and GA among college students.

The findings indicated a statistically significant gender difference in Perseverance of Effort, with male students reporting higher levels of sustained effort compared to female students. Perseverance of effort is conceptualized as a central component of grit, defined as sustained effort toward long-term goals despite setbacks (Angela Duckworth et al., 2007). Previous research has emphasized that perseverance reflects consistency in effort rather than short-term motivation (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). The present finding suggests that within this sample, males reported greater sustained engagement toward long-term objectives.

However, no significant gender difference was found in Goal Achievement. Despite differences in PE, male and female students reported comparable levels of perceived goal progress. Goal attainment, as described in goal-setting theory is influenced by multiple factors including commitment, feedback, and situational conditions (Edwin Locke and Gary Latham,1990). The absence of gender differences in GA suggests that perceived progress toward goals may depend on broader motivational and contextual variables beyond effort alone.

The correlational analysis revealed a moderate positive relationship between PE and GA. This finding supports the theoretical framework which posits that sustained effort contributes to long-term achievement (Angela Duckworth et al. 2007). Students who reported higher perseverance also reported greater perceived progress toward their goals. The moderate strength of the association indicates that while PE plays a meaningful role in goal pursuit, it is not the sole determinant of achievement outcomes.

The moderation analysis further examined whether gender influences the strength of the relationship between PE and GA. The overall regression model was statistically significant and explained 17.4% of the variance in GA. However, the interaction term (PE × gender) was not statistically significant. This indicates that gender does not alter the relationship between PE and GA. In other words, the positive association between perseverance and goal achievement was similar for both male and female students.

The present study is subject to certain limitations. The sample was confined to college students within a specific regional context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. The cross-sectional research design precludes causal inferences regarding the relationship between Perseverance of Effort and Goal Achievement. Furthermore, reliance on self-report measures may introduce response bias. The analysis also considered gender as the sole moderating variable, without examining other potential influencing factors.

**Conclusion:** The present study investigated the relationship between Perseverance of Effort (PE) and Goal Achievement (GA), along with the moderating role of gender among college students. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between PE and GA, indicating that sustained effort toward long-term goals is associated with greater perceived goal progress. Although a gender difference was observed in levels of perseverance, no significant difference emerged in goal achievement, and gender did not moderate the relationship between PE and GA. Overall, the study highlights perseverance of effort as a meaningful psychological strength contributing to goal-directed behavior during the college years, reinforcing its relevance within the framework of positive psychology.

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