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**Resilience and Grit: Foundations of Mindset Differences in Adult Children of Alcoholics
and Adult Children of Non-Alcoholics**

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Abstract

Alcoholism is a destructive consequence of a combination of environmental, genetic, and social influences. While it is the choice of an individual to consume alcohol, their family is facing the consequences as well. Children of alcoholics (CoAs) face a unique set of challenges growing up with one (or two) alcoholic parents. This study seeks to investigate the presence of a difference in grit and resilience in adult children of alcoholics (ACoAs). Furthermore, the study aims to uncover the influence grit and resilience have on an individuals' mindset; whether they maintain a growth or fixed mindset. A survey containing four different aspects of measure was distributed. The first section collected demographic data. The participants were then to complete the Children of Alcoholics Screening Test (CAST) to determine which population they belonged to. The third section measured resilience using a 37-question questionnaire. Lastly, grit was measured using the Short Grit Scale. The study found that Non-ACoAs ($M=3.24$, $SD=0.72$) had significantly higher levels of grit than ACoA ($M=2.97$, $SD=0.60$) ($t_{(165)}=2.56$, $p<.011$). Aspects of resilience, such as family coherence, were also higher in Non-ACoAs ($M=56.48$, $SD=24.85$) than in ACoA ($M=38.75$, $SD= 22.45$), ($t_{(165)}=4.67$, $p>.001$). This study brings forth data to support the idea that those who live with a parent with alcoholism have lower levels of grit and resilience, leading to a fixed mindset. Future investigation is needed to better grasp the influence that interactions with alcoholic parents have on the development of children in many aspects, including grit and resilience.

Keywords: grit, resilience, mindset, alcoholism, alcoholics, children

Resilience and Grit: Foundations of Mindset Differences in Adult Children of Alcoholics and Adult Children of Non-Alcoholics

Alcoholism affects more than the one under the influence. It is estimated that more than 7 million children throughout the United States live with at least one parent who has an alcohol use disorder (AUD) (Kosty et al., 2020). Alcohol abuse within families is a serious potential detrimental factor contributing to the environment of which a child is raised in (Velmurugan & Marirajan, 2020). Loving parents throughout the world have the same goal in mind, to create a positive, loving, and safe environment for their children to grow up in. This is hindered by the abuse that comes with overconsumption, and eventual dependence, on alcohol. The influences that parental alcoholism has on children range a wide deal, with psychological disorders such as depression being studied and reported as significantly higher in prominence (Kuriakose, 2018). It are the experiences had by these individuals and their influence on grit and resilience that this study aims to better understand. Furthermore, this study looks into differences in mindsets and how they are influenced by the grit and resilience as a result of being an ACoA.

Grit

Grit is constructed of the passion and perseverance for long-term goals and was formulated to assist in the explanation of the reasoning of why some individuals are more likely to maximize their potential (Duckworth et al., 2007). Studies have indicated that grit is a cross-culturally significant identifier for the achievement outcomes, more so than conscientiousness (Park et al., 2020). Therefore, if there are negative influences on grit from being a CoA, even if the conscientiousness is relegated mostly unharmed, there could potentially still be major influences on academic performance.

Research on child and adolescent levels of grit in order to determine predictive power is not only what this research is interested in but is also a direction of further research that needs to be understood, indicated by Clark & Malecki (2019). If there is some connection between levels of grit and the exposure to an alcoholic parent, then it is possible to better understand outcomes such as career choices and educational aspirations. The influence grit can have onto a relationship is not to be overlooked, either. Being grittier may overall benefit one's willingness to see a protect or relationship through to those long-term goals, such as a promotion or marriage. Grit, as a personality trait, has the ability to help scientists better understand passion for projects, thoughts around long-term relationships, and career or academic desire.

Resilience

Past studies have identified there are vital differences in areas of personality development between ACoA and ACoNA, not only in levels of grit, but resilience as well (Redlin & Borchardt, 2019). Resilience serves as the personality trait that identifies to what level one is able to regulate negative effects that accompany stress and buffers the ability to adapt to a positive lifestyle (Wagnild & Young, 1993). The distinction between the two is an important one to make; grit acts as a measure of seeing plans through long-term. Resilience is the ability to persevere through setbacks and obstacles that would hold one back, including stress.

Resilience, much like grit, is influenced heavily by the environment in which an individual is surrounded by as they grow. There have been results showing that there is a possibility that the genetic factors associated with resilience can affect brain structure if the individual is met with an adverse childhood (Herrman et al. 2011). With indications that ACEs may effect resilience and subsequently brain structure, it is important to understand the link between alcoholic parenting and their children resulting levels of resilience.

Growth vs. Fixed Mindset

It is the idea of this research that mindset structure, fixed versus growth, is based on the level of grit and resilience that one possesses. On the side of the grittier and more resilient is the idea of a growth mindset. Grit and growth mindset have a relationship that has been identified as reciprocal (Park, et. al., 2020). This research believes there to be a similar association between resilience and growth mindset as well. Along with the research done in this study, it is believed that in the environments created by an alcoholic parent, that a child grows to possess more or less grit and resilience.

The impact that parental interactions have on a child's developing mindset can be impacted by more than the interactions that are had while under the influence. The decision to drink, in itself, can be telling to a child. The difference is in the context of the drinking and is vitally important. A child seeing a parent drink in response to losing a job, having a bad day, or getting in an argument with someone links to a *failure-is-debilitating mindset* (Haimovitz & Dweck 2017). This perception of failure leading to drinking illustrates a type of fixed mindset. A roadblock or obstacle occurred in the life of their parent and the solution was not to go about growing and changing their life to better the situation. The solution was to drink.

Present Study

The affects that being exposed to these toxic environments have on a children's grit, resilience, and overall mindset is what this study aimed to better understand.

Methods

Participants

The study was intended to retrieve responses from a broad range of participants. In order to achieve this, the survey was distributed via the internet, paper fliers, and word of mouth. Of the 217 responses to the survey, 167 were able to be used and 50 were ruled out because they did not fit the age parameter (18-45 years). Of the 167 respondents, 64.7% of them were identified as children of alcoholics, 79.0% were female, and 91.0% were Caucasian (figure 1).

Materials

This survey was divided into four parts. The first section comprises of demographic data questions including age, gender identity, educational background, socio-economic status, relationship status, and ethnicity. The next section comprises of six questions, coming from the modified version of the Children of Alcoholics Screening Test (CAST) established by Jones (1983). These questions are used to determine if the participant is likely a child of alcoholics (COA), with three or more answers of “yes” indicating likelihood of being a COA. The third section of the survey is used to calculate resilience, comprised of ten questions on personal competence, seven questions on social competence, nine questions on family coherence, eight questions on social coherence, and five questions on person structure. These 37 items are scored on a semantic scale on one to seven, with higher scores being indicative of higher levels of resilience (Friborg et al., 2003). The fourth and final section of the survey consists of eight questions to determine the level of grit in each participant. The grit scale being used comes from the research and development done by Angela Duckworth (2007, 2009).

Procedure

Results

The study found multiple interactions that are noteworthy, all processed by SPSS 26. Non-ACoA had statistically significantly higher levels of grit ($M=3.24$, $SD=0.72$) than ACoA ($M=2.97$, $SD=0.60$), ($F_{(165)}=$, $p<.001$). Levels of personal competence were significantly higher in Non-ACoA ($M=58.26$, $SD=11.24$) than in ACoA ($M=54.83$, $SD=9.25$), ($F_{(165)}=$, $p=0.04$). Family competence scores were significantly higher in Non-ACoA ($M=56.48$, $SD=24.85$) than in ACoA ($M=38.75$, $SD=22.45$), ($F_{(165)}=$, $p=.001$). There is a positive correlation between grit score and personal competence ($r_{(165)}=.365$, $p>.001$). A positive correlation was also found between grit and personal structure ($r_{(165)}=.41$, $p>.001$).

Discussion

Alcohol abuse, done by parents of young children, have detrimental effects on the long-term growth of grit and resilience of those children. This study, along with past research, doubles down on the effects that those home environments have.

As grit comes more into focus as a major player in personality, understanding the influences that different environments, such as having an alcoholic parent, have on children will be key.

Resilience, along with grit, have the underpinnings of being some of the most influential determinant factors for the result of a child's resulting adulthood choices. Specifically, having lower levels of resilience

Mindset

Future Studies

References

Appendix (1,2,3,...)

Gender	Education	Socio-Pre	Socio-Post	Relationship	Ethnicity	ACoA
Male: 18/6%	Some High School: 1.2%	Impoverished: 4.8%	Impoverished: 2.4%	Single: 22.8%	Caucasian: 91.0%	Yes: 64.7%
Female: 79.0%	Completed High School / GED: 8.4%	Low: 16.2%	Low: 10.2%	Married: 34.1%	African American: 1.2%	No: 35.3%
Non- Binary: 1.8%	Some College: 26.9%	Low-Middle: 26.9%	Low-Middle: 26.3%	Separated: 2.4%	Hispanic/Latino: 3.0%	
Gender Neutral: 0.6%	2-Year Degree: 15.6%	Middle: 37.7%	Middle: 40.1%	Divorced: 6.0%	Asian: 1.8%	
	4-Year Degree: 29.3%	Upper-Middle: 1.8%	Upper-Middle: 18.6%	In a Relationship: 34.7%	Native American: 0.6%	
	Master's or Further: 18.6%	Upper: 0%	Upper: 1.8%		Two or More: 1.8%	
		Affluent: 0%	Affluent: 0.6%		Prefer Not to Disclose: 0.6%	

Figure 1

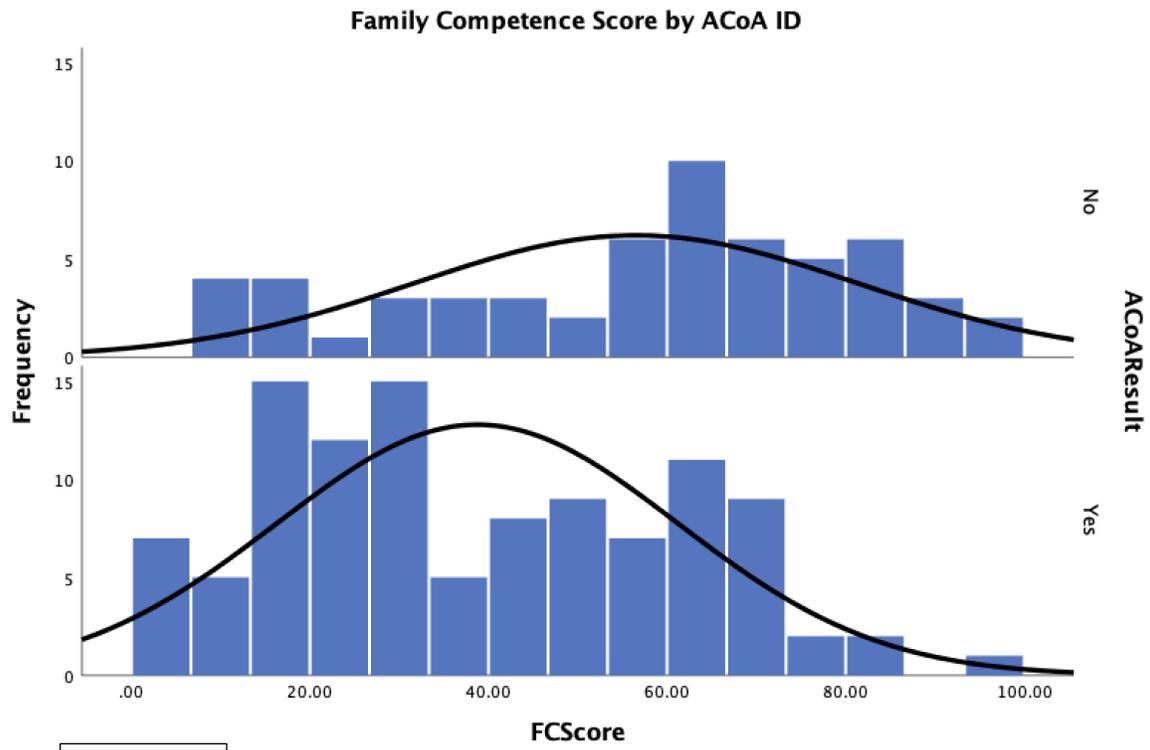


Figure 2

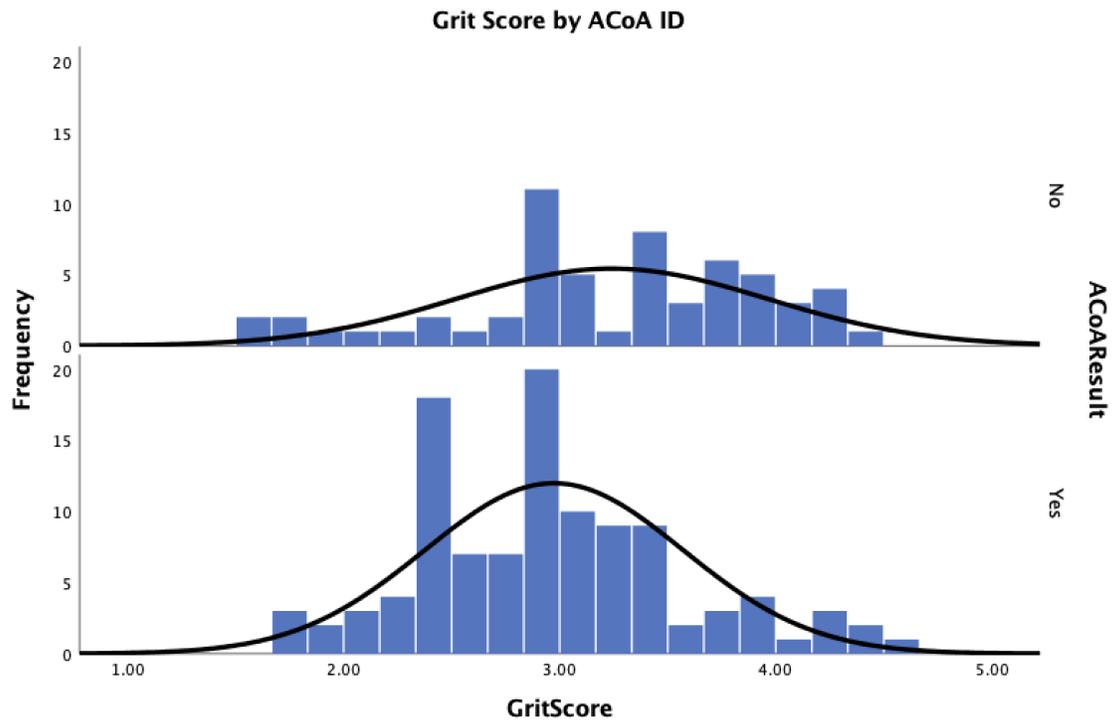


Figure 3

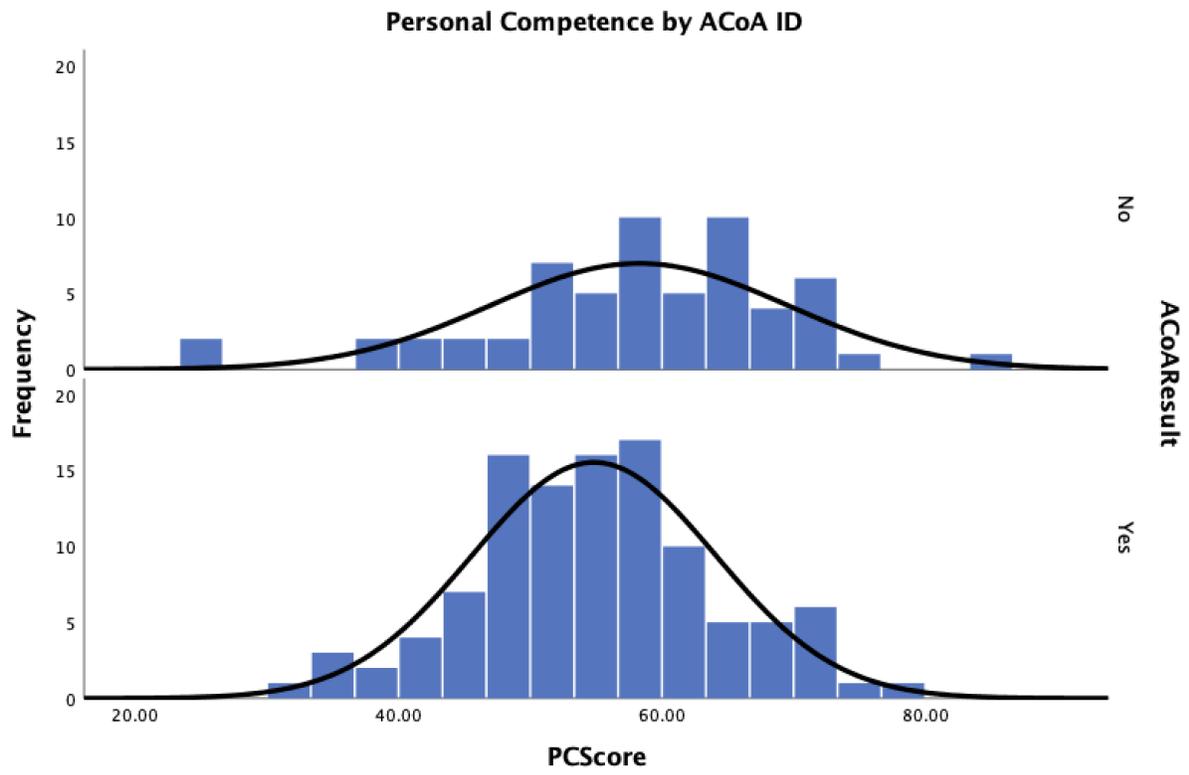


Figure 4