



## The Impact of Teachers' Emotional Support on Academic Grit Among Junior High School Students in Kupang City

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**Abstract.** Junior high school students confront diverse academic challenges, including examinations, unsatisfactory academic performance, and increasingly demanding curriculum requirements. In navigating these obstacles, academic grit serves as a vital psychological characteristic that enables students to maintain persistence. This study examines the influence of teachers' emotional support on students' academic grit among public junior high school students in Kupang City. Employing a quantitative approach with a causal research design, the study involved 316 students selected via proportional stratified random sampling. Data were gathered using the Teacher Emotional Support Scale and the Academic Grit Scale, and subsequently analyzed through simple linear regression using SPSS version 22. The results indicate that teachers' emotional support exerts a significant positive influence on students' academic grit ( $p < 0.05$ ). Specifically, teachers' emotional support accounts for 29.5% of the variance in academic grit, while the remaining 70.5% is explained by factors outside the scope of this investigation. These findings underscore the critical role that supportive teacher-student interactions play in cultivating perseverance, tenacity, and resilience in academic activities. From a practical perspective, these results suggest that guidance counselors and subject teachers should strengthen emotionally supportive interactions and enhance the classroom environment to foster students' academic grit and improve their capacity to cope with academic challenges.

**Keywords:** Academic support, emotional support, junior high school, student grit, teacher emotionality.

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## Introduction

Strengthening academic grit among junior high school students is very important. Junior high school students are in the early stages of adolescence, characterized by rapid physical changes, abstract thinking abilities, emotional instability, and a need for social, moral, and religious recognition as they search for their identity. These conditions make them prone to instability in their academic interests and motivation (Fauzi et al., 2021). Students with high academic grit will be able to achieve higher learning outcomes than other students with less grit (Anisah et al., 2022). Conversely, low academic grit has an impact on low student learning motivation, students easily give up on academic tasks, and a decline in academic achievement (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014).

Empirical studies show the impact of low academic grit, found in several junior high schools, especially in rural areas. Research by Rizki et al. of 152 junior high school students found that 52.6% of students had low learning motivation (Rizki et al., 2023). Furthermore, research by Gustiana et al. shows that the majority of junior high school students in grades VII, VIII, and IX are in the low learning achievement category, with percentages of 55% in grade VII, 59% in grade VIII, and 57% in grade IX (Gustiana, 2025). These findings indicate that, at some levels of junior high school education, there is a low level of academic grit, as seen in low learning motivation and declining academic achievement among students.

Academic grit is a non-cognitive aspect that reflects students' persistence, perseverance, and consistency in facing academic challenges. Grit enables students to be fully committed to their tasks or work and consciously motivate themselves to achieve their goals or successfully complete their tasks (Charoline & Mujazi, 2022). High academic grit can be considered a better predictor than IQ in determining student success (Muhibbin & Wulandari, 2021). Therefore, strengthening academic grit is an important aspect of the educational process, as a form of determination or commitment to the student's own future. Students with high levels of academic grit do not easily give up or back down in the face of academic dynamics and challenges (Syifa, 2022).

Academic grit can be influenced by several internal and external factors. Internal factors such as optimistic explanatory style (Polii & Dirgantara, 2020), academic resilience and gratitude (Syifa, 2022), internal and external locus of control (Saleh et al., 2023), greatly influence students' academic grit. Furthermore, several external factors influence students' academic grit. House explains that external factors such as social support greatly influence students' grit, which includes providing a sense of comfort, care, and available assistance (Isnaini & Prasetyo, 2023).

Teacher support related to emotional aspects is an important foundation for student progress at school (Pianta, Bridget K. Hamre, 2012). Teacher emotional support is the ability of teachers to foster positive relationships and atmospheres with their students, as well as their ability to proactively respond to student needs and support student interactions (Pakarinen et al., 2020). Research conducted by He et al found that teacher emotional support has a positive effect on academic efficacy and student engagement in the classroom (He et al., 2024). Furthermore, in Lobo's research, it was found that there is an influence of teachers' emotional support on the process of student engagement in the classroom (Lobo, 2023). It can be further explained that students who receive good emotional support from teachers are greatly influenced by their belief in their ability to do schoolwork and have a high level of engagement in the learning process in the classroom.

Several studies have examined the factors associated with students' academic grit. Charoline and Mujazi (2022) found that parental support contributes significantly to the development of academic grit among primary school pupils. Trisna (2021) reported that teacher support positively influences students' academic grit in the context of memorising the Qur'an. Furthermore, research by Ruzek et al. (2016), Lobo (2023), and He et al. (2024) indicates that teachers' emotional support contributes to students' motivation, engagement, and academic self-efficacy. However, previous research has rarely examined teachers' emotional support as a specific predictor of academic grit among lower secondary school students. Most existing research focuses on teacher support in general or investigates other educational outcomes. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by specifically examining the influence of teachers' emotional support on academic grit among lower secondary school students in Kupang City.

Based on the above description, this study aims to analyse the effect of teachers' emotional support on students' academic grit at Kupang City Public Junior High School. In practical terms, the results of this study are expected to provide an empirical basis for teachers and schools in designing more emotionally supportive learning strategies to improve students' perseverance, consistency, and academic grit. Theoretically, this study contributes to enriching the study of external factors that influence academic grit, particularly at the junior high school level, which has been relatively limited in previous studies. Thus, this study not only broadens the understanding of the role of teachers' emotional support in the context of junior high school education but also strengthens the empirical evidence of the importance of a supportive learning environment in building students' academic persistence.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

This study utilizes a quantitative approach with a causal research design. Comparative causal research is a form of quantitative research and is classified as inferential research (Soesilo & Danny, 2018). Furthermore, comparative causal research is always based on quantitative data, using advanced statistical analysis techniques with the aim of testing comparisons or testing the effect of teachers' emotional support (x) on academic grit (y). According to Sugiyono, comparative causal research is research into causal relationships, including associative formulations, which question the relationship between two or more variables (Ibrahim, et al 2019).

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were recruited from three state junior high schools in the Oetote sub-district of Kupang City, namely State Junior High School No. 2 Kupang, State Junior High School No. 1 Kupang, and State Junior High School No. 20 Kupang City. The total population comprised 2,888 students, comprising 1,004 students from SMP Negeri 2 Kupang, 1,054 students from SMP Negeri 1 Kupang, and 830 students from SMP Negeri 20 Kota Kupang. These schools were selected because they represent state junior high schools in the study area and have a diverse student population relevant to the research objectives. A proportional stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure proportional representation across all year groups. First, the population was grouped into three clusters based on year group (Year 7, 8 and 9). Next, the number of participants selected from each stratum was determined proportionally according to the size of

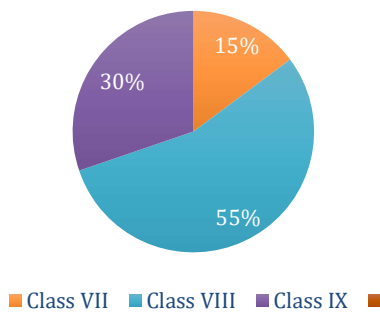
each group, and respondents were selected at random within each stratum. Through this procedure, a total of 316 students participated in this study. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of Participants (N = 316)

| Characteristics    | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------|---------------|----------------|
| <b>Gender</b>      |               |                |
| Male               | 190           | 60             |
| Female             | 126           | 40             |
| <b>Class Level</b> |               |                |
| Class VII          | 47            | 15             |
| Class VIII         | 174           | 55             |
| Class IX           | 95            | 30             |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>316</b>    | <b>100</b>     |

### Participant Recruitment Procedure

The population in this study consisted of students at public junior high schools in the Oetote sub-district of Kupang City. The sample was determined using a proportional stratified random sampling technique, and a total of 316 students successfully completed the research instrument. The majority of the students involved were from Year 9 (30%), whilst the remaining 15% were from Year 7 and 55% from Year 8. For further details, see Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Percentage of Population

### Research Instruments

Data collection was carried out using the Teacher Emotional Support Psychological Scale and the Academic Grit Psychological Scale. The Teacher Emotional Support Psychological Scale was developed based on the theoretical framework proposed by Pianta et al. (2012), which encompasses aspects of a positive classroom climate, teachers’ sensitivity to students’ needs, and respect for students’ perspectives. Meanwhile, the Academic Grit Scale was developed based on the grit construct proposed by Duckworth et al. (2007), comprising the dimensions of perseverance in effort and consistency of interest in academic activities.

Prior to data collection, both instruments underwent validity and reliability testing. Instrument validity was tested using Pearson’s product-moment correlation analysis at a 5% significance level ( $r_{table} = 0.1927$ ). The validity test results indicated that of the 34 initial items on the Teacher Emotional Support Psychological Scale, 29 items were deemed valid and 5 items were excluded for failing to meet validity criteria. Similarly, of the 30 initial items on the Academic Grit Scale, 26 items

were deemed valid and 4 items were excluded. A summary of the validity test results is presented in Table 2.

In addition, reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients. The results showed that the Teacher Emotional Support Scale achieved a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.764, whilst the Academic Grit Scale achieved a value of 0.734. These coefficients exceed the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating that both instruments possess adequate internal consistency and are reliable for use in this study. A summary of the reliability test results is presented in Table 3.

**Table 2.** Validity Test Results of Research Instruments

| Variable                  | Initial Items | Valid Items | Invalid Items | r-table | Decision |
|---------------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|---------|----------|
| Teacher Emotional Support | 34            | 29          | 5             | 0.1927  | Valid    |
| Academic Grit             | 30            | 26          | 4             | 0.1927  | Valid    |

**Table 3.** Reliability Test Results

| Variable                  | Cronbach's Alpha | Number of Items | Interpretation |
|---------------------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Teacher Emotional Support | 0.764            | 29              | Reliable       |
| Academic Grit             | 0.734            | 26              | Reliable       |

### Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using simple linear regression with the aid of SPSS version 26. Prior to conducting the regression analysis, several assumption tests were performed to ensure that the data met the requirements for parametric analysis. A normality test was conducted using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test to determine whether the data were normally distributed. The results showed a significance value of 0.200 ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating that the data were normally distributed (Widodo et al., 2023). Furthermore, a linearity test was conducted to examine whether there was a linear relationship between teachers' emotional support and academic grit. The results showed a significance value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating a significant linear relationship between the two variables (Machali, 2021). Furthermore, a heteroscedasticity test was conducted to assess the homogeneity of residual variances in the regression model. This test yielded a significance value of 0.100 ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating that no heteroscedasticity issues were detected (Machali, 2021). Therefore, all the necessary assumptions for simple linear regression analysis were met, and regression analysis could be conducted to test the effect of teachers' emotional support on students' academic grit.

**Table 4.** Assumption Test Results

| Assumption Test    | Significance Value | Criterion  | Decision                       |
|--------------------|--------------------|------------|--------------------------------|
| Normality          | 0.200              | $p > 0.05$ | Normal Distribution            |
| Linearity          | 0.000              | $p < 0.05$ | Linear Relationship            |
| Heteroscedasticity | 0.100              | $p > 0.05$ | No Heteroscedasticity          |
| Conclusion         | -                  | -          | All assumptions were fulfilled |

### Results

Prior to conducting a simple linear regression analysis, a descriptive statistical analysis was carried out to obtain an overview of teachers' emotional support and pupils' academic perseverance amongst pupils at state junior secondary schools in Kupang City. In addition, scores were grouped

to facilitate the interpretation of respondents' scores. This grouping was determined using an interval formula, namely:

$$\text{Interval} = \frac{\text{Maximum Score} - \text{Minimum Score}}{\text{Number Of Categories}}$$

Based on this formula, the scores were classified into five categories: very low, low, moderate, high, and very high. This categorization was used to provide a clearer picture of the distribution of teachers' emotional support and academic grit amongst the participants. The results of the descriptive analysis are presented in Table 4.

**Table 5.** Descriptive analysis

| Teacher Emotional Support |      | Academic Grit  |      |
|---------------------------|------|----------------|------|
| Category                  | %    | Category       | %    |
| Extremely High            | 6,0  | Extremely High | 6    |
| High                      | 56,3 | High           | 29,4 |
| Moderate                  | 35,8 | Moderate       | 64,9 |
| Low                       | 1,9  | Low            | 5,1  |
| Very Low                  | 0    | Very Low       | 0    |

Based on the descriptive analysis results in Table 1, it shows that the teacher's emotional support variable is dominated by the high category (56.3%). Furthermore, for the student's academic grit variable, it is dominated by the medium category (64.9%). Next are the results of simple linear regression analysis in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

**Table 6.** Coefficients

| Model        | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t      | Sig. |
|--------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
|              | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      |
| 1 (Constant) | 29.475                      | 3.996      |                           | 7.375  | .000 |
| X            | .511                        | .045       | .543                      | 11.459 | .000 |

The results of the simple linear regression analysis in Table 2 show a Sig value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is an influence of teachers' emotional support on the academic grit of students at Kupang City Public Junior High School. Furthermore, from the results of the analysis in Table 2, a constant value of 29.475 and a regression coefficient of 0.511 were obtained. This can be explained further: if teacher emotional support is at zero, then student academic grit is 29.475. Meanwhile, the regression coefficient is 0.511, which indicates that every one-unit increase in teacher emotional support will be followed by an increase in student academic grit of 0.511 units.

**Table 7.** ANOVA

| Model        | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F       | Sig.              |
|--------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| 1 Regression | 7840.938       | 1   | 7840.938    | 131.316 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
| Residual     | 18749.062      | 314 | 59.710      |         |                   |
| Total        | 26590.000      | 315 |             |         |                   |

An F value of 131.316 with a significance of 0.000 (< 0.05) indicates that the regression model is valid and significant for predicting students' academic grit.

Table 8. Model Summary

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .543 <sup>a</sup> | .295     | .293              | 7.727                      |

An R value of 0.543 indicates a fairly strong relationship between teachers' emotional support and students' academic grit. An R Square value of 0.295 indicates that 29.5% of the contribution to students' academic grit comes from teachers' emotional support, while 70.5% is influenced by other variables outside the scope of this study.

## Discussion

Academic grit is an important part of secondary school students' lives. Teachers' emotional support plays a significant role in helping students overcome academic challenges. This study confirms the finding that teachers' emotional support has a significant effect on students' academic grit. These findings are in line with the results of research by Ruzek et al, who found that emotional support from teachers has a significant impact on students' learning motivation, independence, and positive interactions with peers (Ruzek et al., 2016). Furthermore, research conducted by Lobo found that emotional support from teachers influences student engagement in the classroom (Lobo, 2023). This indicates that teachers' emotional support is an important variable for improving and developing students' motivation, engagement in class, and academic grit. Thus, the results of this study are consistent with various previous findings and confirm that teachers' emotional support is a strong predictor of students' academic grit.

Based on the research results, nearly a quarter of the development of students' persistence, perseverance, and academic grit is influenced by the amount of emotional support they receive from teachers. The results of this study, in contrast to the results of Trisna's study on general teacher support, contribute to students' academic grit by 5.1% (Trisna, 2021). Meanwhile, in this study related to more specific emotional support from teachers, it contributed more (29.5%) compared to general teacher support for students' academic grit. Based on these findings, it confirms the importance and urgency of emotional support from teachers for the development of students' persistence and perseverance in academic activities.

The significant influence of teacher emotional support on academic grit can also be explained by the developmental characteristics of junior high school students. Students at this stage are experiencing important physical, emotional, and social changes that often make them more vulnerable to academic pressure and self-doubt (Fauzi et al., 2021). Consequently, emotional support from teachers becomes an important source of encouragement and security. When teachers demonstrate empathy, understanding, and appreciation, students are more likely to feel valued and confident in their abilities (Susanto, 2022). These positive experiences encourage students to persist in the face of academic difficulties, maintain their effort over time, and develop stronger academic grit.

Teachers' emotional support is one of the factors that influence student well-being, academic engagement, and positive peer relationships (Hogekamp et al., 2016). When students feel that their learning environment is comfortable, humorous, sensitive to their pressures and difficulties, and attentive to their perspectives, they will develop greater self-confidence, emotional regulation, and motivation to overcome academic challenges. Furthermore, Shen et al. explain that if teachers meet

students' psychological needs, students will feel more satisfied with their learning environment, which leads to greater involvement in the learning process in the classroom (Shen et al., 2024).

From the perspective of the grit theory developed by Duckworth, grit is formed when individuals have a supportive environment, such as good parenting, a culture or habit of grit in the environment, including attention and encouragement from the adults around them (Duckworth, 2023). Furthermore, according to Sembiring et al., external factors, such as family circumstances, learning facilities and infrastructure, and teaching methods play a significant role in influencing students' academic grit (Sembiring, et al, 2025). In this case, teachers who provide emotional support help students build the perseverance and mental toughness necessary to pursue long-term academic goals. These findings are highly relevant to the educational context in Kupang City. Based on field observations during the research process, the students come from diverse socio and economic backgrounds and face a range of academic challenges that require perseverance and resilience. In such circumstances, teachers who provide emotional support play a vital role in helping students remain motivated and committed to their academic goals. Therefore, strengthening emotional support from teachers could be an effective strategy for fostering academic perseverance among lower secondary school students in Kupang City.

### **Novelty of the Research**

Several previous studies have examined factors associated with students' academic grit. Charoline and Mujazi (2022) found that parental support plays a significant role in developing students' academic grit. Similarly, Trisna (2021) reported that teacher support has a positive influence on the academic grit of students participating in a Qur'an memorisation programme. Furthermore, research conducted by Ruzek et al. (2016), Lobo (2023), and He et al. (2024) indicates that teachers' emotional support contributes positively to students' motivation, engagement, academic achievement, and self-efficacy.

However, previous research has largely focused on teacher support in general or examined the influence of emotional support on outcomes other than academic grit. Research specifically investigating the relationship between teachers' emotional support and academic grit among lower secondary school students remains limited, particularly within the context of Indonesian education. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by examining the impact of teachers' emotional support on academic grit among students at state lower secondary schools in Kupang City. The uniqueness of this study lies in its specific focus on teachers' emotional support as a predictor of academic grit, a relationship that has received little empirical attention in previous research.

### **Implications and Contributions**

The findings of this study have important practical implications for both guidance and counselling teachers and subject teachers. For guidance and counselling teachers, the results of this study highlight the need to develop guidance and counselling programmes aimed at strengthening students' academic grit through increased emotional support from teachers. School guidance and counselling teachers can conduct classroom guidance, group guidance, and individual counselling services that focus on developing students' perseverance, resilience, and self-confidence in facing academic challenges. Furthermore, guidance and counselling teachers can collaborate with subject

teachers to identify students exhibiting low levels of academic grit and provide appropriate interventions. For subject teachers, these findings emphasize the importance of creating an emotionally supportive classroom environment by showing empathy towards students' difficulties, providing positive feedback, listening to students' opinions, acknowledging students' efforts, and fostering warm teacher-student relationships. Such practices can strengthen students' sense of belonging, motivation, and perseverance in achieving academic goals.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on factors influencing academic grit by highlighting the role of teachers' emotional support as a key external factor in students' academic development. Previous studies have largely focused on personal characteristics or general forms of social support, whereas this study specifically examines teachers' emotional support within the context of lower secondary education. Consequently, these findings expand the current understanding of how emotionally supportive teacher-student interactions contribute to the development of academic grit and provide empirical evidence regarding the importance of a supportive learning environment in fostering students' academic perseverance and resilience.

### **Research Limitations**

This study has several limitations. Firstly, this study employs a quantitative approach; consequently, the data obtained is numerical in nature and does not allow for an in-depth exploration of students' subjective experiences regarding teachers' emotional support and academic grit. Secondly, data collection relied solely on psychological scale instruments without the support of other techniques such as interviews or observation; consequently, the research findings are heavily dependent on respondents' perceptions.

### **Conclusion**

This study concludes that teachers' emotional support has a significant positive influence on students' academic grit amongst students at state junior high schools in Kupang City. These findings suggest that teacher-student relationships characterized by emotional support contribute to the development of students' perseverance, consistency and resilience in facing academic challenges. In practical terms, the results of this study highlight the importance of creating an emotionally supportive classroom environment and guidance programmed to strengthen students' academic perseverance. Further research is recommended to examine additional factors influencing academic perseverance, such as family support, self-regulation, and peer relationships, using a more comprehensive research design.

### **Author Contributions**

The first author formulated the study and designed the methodology. The second author collected and analyzed the data. The third author drafted the manuscript and conducted the literature review. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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