

ENDORsing PROACTIVE WORK BEHAVIOR IN TRANSMITTING GRIT AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS INTO TASK PERFORMANCE

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Abstract: Task performance is crucial to employee performance, competitive advantage, and organizational performance. Therefore, this study focuses on employee task performance based on the perspectives of grit and interpersonal skills through proactive work behavior (PWB). Research participants included 325 workers from private companies in the finance, investment, trade, and service industries sector in Indonesia. A Likert scale survey was employed to get the data. The results were derived by Partial Least Squares-based Structural Equation Modeling analysis alongside descriptive and correlational analysis. The findings demonstrated that grit, interpersonal skills, and PWB influence employees' task performance; grit and interpersonal skills affect employees' PWB; and PWB mediates the relationship between grit, interpersonal skills, and employees' task performance. This evidence supports a novel empirical paradigm about the effect of grit and interpersonal skills on task performance via the mediation of PWB. These findings offer a theoretical contribution to enhancing task performance research centered on grit, interpersonal skills, and PWB, while also presenting practical implications for organizational operations aimed at improving employee task performance through these attributes.

Keywords: grit; interpersonal skills; proactive work behavior; task performance.

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1. Introduction

The performance of individual employees has consistently been the focal point for practitioners, researchers, and academics due to its vital significance inside organisations. Empirical research indicates that individual performance can enhance competitive advantage (Nurlaila et al., 2024) and organizational performance (Nyathi & Kekwaletswe, 2023). Performance is fundamentally a sequence of activities aimed at accomplishing organizational objectives (Colquitt et al., 2023). Consequently, task performance serves as a crucial indicator of efficacy, denoting the degree to which individuals execute their responsibilities in alignment with both the official and informal expectations of the organization (Mum et al., 2015). Wibowo et al. (2024) assert that task performance embodies particular behaviors and sophisticated cognitive skills essential for executing job duties. Consequently, endeavors to fulfil formal employment requirements exemplify behavior indicative of task performance

(Hussain et al., 2022). This is evident from three factors: workload, work quality, and time limitations (Adekiya, 2024). Task performance encompasses three indicators: the transformation of raw materials into goods and services, the enhancement of efficiency, and the facilitation of organizational effectiveness (Aguinis, 2024). Nevertheless, numerous personnel continue to lack the capacity to convert organizational resources into exceptional products or services. They are also not motivated to work efficiently and utilize their competence well and effectively, so they do not contribute to achieving organizational goals. Empirically, such conditions can be influenced by PWB. Studies by Ying et al. (2022) indicated that PWB significantly affects performance. However, PWB not only affects task performance but is also influenced by grit and interpersonal skills. A study by Gustari and Widodo (2024), for example, reported that grit significantly affects PWB. Furthermore, the study by Gumbri et al. (2021) highlighted that communication skills as a proxy for interpersonal skills contributed positively to PWB. Nonetheless, other prior investigations yielded conflicting outcomes. The research conducted by Ali et al. (2018) and Kueny et al. (2019) demonstrated that interpersonal skills did not significantly influence PWB. The conflicting results of previous studies have led to misunderstandings that require clarification through scientific research. To address this urgency and respond to the phenomena of poor employee task performance, this study will evaluate the influence of grit and interpersonal skills on task performance using the PWB mediation mechanism.

2. Literature Review

2.1. PWB and task performance

Studies by Ying et al. (2022) and Ali and Muhammad (2021) show that PWB significantly affects performance. PWB is an action initiated by individuals themselves by predicting work scenarios and taking the initiative to adapt to their way of working in group and organizational dynamics. It is a complex phenomenon characterized by self-initiative, foresight, and proactive measures, including leadership, advocacy, innovation, and the prevention of emerging issues (Boonyarit, 2023). This behavior encompasses the nature of actively choosing to change the environment and purposeful action planning, which incorporates decision-making, change, and obtaining desired consequences (Li, 2020). In practice, every organization needs employees PWB, including profit-oriented business organizations that face fierce competition and uncertainty in the future. PWB, empirically, has a strong relationship with work-related outcomes, both among individuals and groups (Pratama et al., 2023). PWB enhances professional happiness (Smithikrai, 2022) and promotes greater competence (Bark et al., 2022) and performance (Junker et al., 2022; Gunawan & Widodo, 2023; Ying et al., 2022). The study by Fay et al. (2022) demonstrated that PWB fosters the cultivation of meaningful work among employees.

That is why practitioners and researchers are enthusiastic about studying PWB when employees are more passive than proactive. Such conditions are considered not in line with the company's actual needs, especially when facing various challenges, competition, and uncertainty in the future. PWB comprises four indicators. First, taking charge and assuming responsibility entails self-directed deliberate activity aimed at growth and transformation. Secondly, voice: providing innovative solutions and articulating concepts or ideas to enhance work conditions. Third, problem prevention - the endeavor to avert circumstances that may lead to professional or personal issues. Fourth, personal innovation - the creation and implementation of novel ideas Parker and Collins, 2010; Setiadi & Widodo, 2024). If in good

and consistent condition, the indicators can encourage increased task performance, such as transforming organizational resources into superior products or excellent services. Moreover, it can also trigger organizational efficiency and effectiveness in achieving its goals. Therefore, it is worth proposing the first hypothesis:

H1: PWB directly impacts employees' task performance.

2.2. Grit, interpersonal skills, and PWB

PWB not only affects task performance but is also influenced by grit and interpersonal skills. There is empirical evidence to support this. Numerous researches, including Gustari and Widodo (2024), Holl et al. (2023), and Corradini and d'Ippolito (2022), demonstrated that grit significantly influences PWB. Grit is a psychological trait that underscores tenacity as a key factor in attaining success and achieving long-term, high-level objectives (Duckworth, 2016). Grit is the inclination to exert effort, demonstrate persistence, and exhibit resilience over an extended duration when confronted with challenges, difficulties, and setbacks to attain significant personal goals (Widodo & Gunawan, 2021). Chen et al. (2024) assert that grit is a non-cognitive skill characterized by persistence and enthusiasm in the pursuit of long-term objectives. Grit has gained significant popularity during the past two decades because to its impact on both organizational and individual lives. At the organizational level, grit enhances performance (Lee, 2022). At the individual level, grit significantly impacts performance (Wetzler et al., 2023; Cormier et al., 2023), organizational citizenship behavior (Farroukh et al., 2023), and professional competence (Damanik & Widodo, 2024). Grit comprises two components: consistency of interest and perseverance of effort. The consistency of interest denotes an individual's propensity to sustain dedication and concentration on accomplishing long-term objectives. Persistence of effort denotes an individual's inclination to pursue long-term objectives with sustained effort, notwithstanding the presence of many barriers and challenges (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). In optimal and steady conditions, these two indicators can function as transmitters that generate PWB, facilitating work transformation and acceleration or providing innovative solutions to complex office challenges.

In addition, several previous studies indicate that interpersonal skills with various proxies affect PWB (Gumbri et al., 2021; Yuan & Ma, 2022; Afsar et al., 2021). Messaoudi and Sakale (2024) assert that interpersonal skills are essential non-technical competencies that facilitate positive interactions and productive collaboration among people. These skills include communication style, active listening, assertiveness, and conflict resolution, which can significantly impact creativity, team dynamics, and emotional intelligence in the workplace. Febrianita and Hardjati (2019) asserted that interpersonal skills encompass verbal and nonverbal communication abilities and proficiency in fostering social interactions. Interpersonal skills are gaining prominence due to their substantial influence on performance (Suci et al., 2022), particularly in contextual performance (Gustari & Widodo, 2023). Exceptional interpersonal skills enhance engagement and collaboration with colleagues, managers, and clients, promoting professional relationships, conflict resolution, and a constructive work environment (van Rensburg & Goede, 2020). Furthermore, it is essential in the professional environment, influencing both peer interactions and the supervisor-subordinate relationship (Beenen et al., 2021), facilitating optimal job preparedness (Indrawati et al., 2023) and mitigating workplace violence (Campos Cornejo et al., 2023). Interpersonal skills can be assessed through a framework that encompasses effective listening, presenting, articulating and defending viewpoints, exchanging knowledge, negotiating with individuals

from diverse backgrounds and value systems, comprehending group dynamics, collaborating with colleagues, communicating in both written and oral forms, and demonstrating empathy and motivation (Candy et al., 1994; Birkett, 1993). When these substantial aspects are smart, they have the potential to stimulate employee PWB, which can be reflected in carrying out work transformation and acceleration or offering creative ideas to solve complex office problems. Drawing on multiple prior studies and the aforementioned arguments, the second and third hypotheses can be articulated as follows:

H₂: Grit directly affects employees' PWB.

H₃: Interpersonal skills directly influence employees' PWB.

2.3. The mediation mechanism of PWB

Numerous prior research findings demonstrate the distinctive and crucial position of PWB. In addition to influencing task performance (Ying et al., 2022; Ali & Muhammad, 2021), PWB is also influenced by grit (Gustari & Widodo, 2024; Hermita et al., 2023; Holl et al., 2023) and interpersonal skills (Gumbri et al., 2021; Yuan & Ma, 2022; Afsar et al., 2021). It indicates that PWB can mediate the effect of grit and interpersonal skills on task performance. This mediation role shows that when an employee's PWB is in good condition, it can transmit grit and interpersonal skills into task performance. Nonetheless, to date, it remains challenging to locate study findings that validate this mediating role. Therefore, it is important and urgent to investigate the mechanism of the mediating role of PWB in the setting of the link of grit and interpersonal skills on employee task performance to find novelty with theoretical and practical benefits. Two relevant hypotheses are promoted for the mediating role:

H₄: Grit indirectly affects employees' task performance through PWB.

H₅: Interpersonal skills indirectly influence employees' task performance via PWB.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Participants

The sample (participants) comprised 325 people. They were employed by firms in the financial, investment, trade, and service sectors across three provinces on Java Island, specifically in Indonesia's industrial and commercial hubs: Jakarta, West Java, and Banten. The predominant gender was female (52.5%), with the majority aged 20-25 years (54.2%), possessing a high school education or equivalent (44.2%), unmarried (60.6%), having less than 5 years of work experience (56.4%), being employees (63.7%), and holding permanent employee status (51.2%).

3.2. Procedure and materials

This study employs a quantitative approach via a survey technique. A questionnaire utilising a Likert scale was administered to gather data, including five response options: strongly disagree/never (score = 1) and disagree/always (score = 5). The survey was administered online through Google Forms and disseminated over WhatsApp. The questionnaire was developed by researchers based on the theoretical dimensions or indications identified by specialists in existing literature. The indicators of grit included the consistency of interests and persistence of efforts (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Damanik & Widodo); for interpersonal skills: effective listening, presenting, discussing, defending viewpoints, knowledge transfer, negotiation with diverse individuals, understanding group dynamics, collaboration with colleagues, written and oral communication, as well as empathy and

motivation (Candy et al., 1994; Birkett, 1993); for PWB: taking initiative, voicing opinions, preventing problems, and fostering individual innovation (Parker & Collins, 2010; Setiadi & Widodo, 2024); and for task performance: converting raw materials into goods and services, enhancing organizational effectiveness, and promoting organizational efficiency (Aguinis, 2024). The grit scale comprises eight items, with a correlation coefficient (CC) between 0.526 and 0.874, and an alpha coefficient (AC) of 0.884. Interpersonal skills have fourteen attributes, demonstrating a CC between 0.514 and 0.876, with an AC of 0.936. The PWB consists of twelve items with a CC between 0.573 and 0.888, along with an AC of 0.932. Task performance encloses nine items, with a CC between 0.555 and 0.854, with an AC of 0.875. All items have a CC over .361, and all variables demonstrate an AC more than .70; hence, it is considered valid and reliable as a research instrument (Widodo, 2021).

Additionally, several academics propose that the cross-sectional survey employing the self-report questionnaire, as implemented in this study, encounters the problem of common method bias (CMB), a notable cause of measurement error (Widodo et al., 2024). The CMB measures the degree of discrepancy between the claimed connection and the actual correlation among constructs influenced by common method variance (CMV). It may exaggerate the apparent correlation in comparison to the actual correlation (Spector et al., 2019). Consequently, CMV jeopardizes the production of significant and dependable research results. Fuller et al. (2016) advocate for the implementation of procedural and statistical enhancements to regulate and mitigate common method variance (CMV). This research uses a statistical mechanism, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIP) value. According to Kock (2015), the tolerance threshold of VIP is below 3.3. In this study, the VIP results were 1,000-1,699. It indicates that there is no data bias in this study.

3.3. Data Analysis

Data collected from 325 respondents were processed and analysed using several statistical formulas to illustrate each variable's condition, the relationship between variables, the suitability of empirical data with the research concept framework, and hypothesis testing. In addition, there are also variable measurements and data bias tests. Descriptive and correlational analysis used the SPSS version 26 application, while variable measurement, data bias tests, model suitability tests, and hypothesis tests by the structural Equation Modelling based on the Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) approach were employed using the SmartPLS version 4.4.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

Descriptive and correlational analysis

Table 1 illustrates that the findings of the descriptive statistical analysis for the four research variables indicate that the standard deviation (SD) values (4.626-9.105) are less than the mean values (31.258-57.243). This indicates that the overall data is in good condition. At a significance level of $p < 0.01$, the correlation analysis results demonstrate a substantial association between the variables. The obtained correlation coefficient value is less than 0.8, indicating the absence of multicollinearity symptoms (Widodo et al., 2023).

Table 1. Descriptive and correlational analysis results

| Variables | Mean | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|-------------------------|--------|-------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. Grit | 31.258 | 4.626 | 1 | | |
| 2. Interpersonal skills | 57.243 | 6.662 | 0.634** | 1 | |
| 3. PWB | 45.142 | 9.105 | 0.553** | 0.641** | 1 |
| 4. Task performance | 37.415 | 5.296 | 0.586** | 0.720** | 0.605** |

** $p < 0.01$

The measurement models

The validity and reliability of the indicators were assessed using the outer model measurement test. The measurement model with indicators reflects convergent validity based on the relationship between indicator scores and construct. As displayed in Table 2, the results indicated that the loading factor value must be greater than 0.7, Cronbach Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (RA) more than 0.7, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value must be greater than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2022). Overall, the loading factor value of each indicator for all variables (grit, interpersonal skills, PWB, task performance) meets the convergent validity requirements because it is greater than 0.7 with a range of 0.708-0.923. All variables with CA and CR values > 0.7 , with a CA range of 0.804 - 0.924, CR of 0.806 - 0.925, and AVE values > 0.5 , with a range of 0.630 - 0.836. Thus, convergent validity is proven to be fulfilled by all latent variables in the estimation model (Hair et al., 2022; Widodo et al., 2024).

Table 2. Result of the measurement model

| Variables | Indicators | Factor Loading | CA | CR | AVE |
|----------------------|---|----------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Grit | 1. Consistency of interests | 0.910 | 0.804 | 0.806 | 0.836 |
| | 2. Persistence of efforts | 0.919 | | | |
| Interpersonal skills | 1. Listening effectively | 0.708 | 0.901 | 0.908 | 0.630 |
| | 2. Articulating, deliberating, and justifying perspectives | 0.854 | | | |
| | 3. Conveying and acquiring knowledge | 0.855 | | | |
| | 4. Engaging in negotiations with individuals from diverse origins and value systems | 0.816 | | | |
| | 5. Comprehending group dynamics and collaborating with teammates | 0.793 | | | |
| | 6. To convey information in both written and verbal formats | 0.774 | | | |
| | 7. To exhibit empathy and motivation | 0.743 | | | |
| PWB | 1. Taking charge | 0.881 | 0.924 | 0.925 | 0.814 |
| | 2. Voice | 0.887 | | | |
| | 3. Prevention of issues | 0.923 | | | |
| | 4. Personal innovation | 0.919 | | | |
| Task performance | 1. Converting raw materials into products and services | 0.878 | 0.877 | 0.880 | 0.803 |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|-------|--|--|--|
| | 2. Enhancing organizational effectiveness | 0.918 | | | |
| | 3. Promoting organizational efficiency | 0.893 | | | |

The goodness of fit model

The assessment of the fit model in this study was conducted utilizing three test models. The metrics are Chi-square, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and normal fit index (NFI). The NFI value criteria span from 0 to 1. If it approaches 1, it is appropriate (suitable). The Chi-square value exceeds 0.9, and SRMR is less than or equal to 0.08 (Hair et al., 2022). The fit model test yielded a Chi-square value of 444.048, beyond 0.9, an SRMR value of 0.051, below 0.08, and an NFI value of 0.881, approaching 1. It signifies a comparatively high model fit. This shows that the study's theoretical model and the empirical model based on the data are congruent.

Hypotheses testing

Table 3 encapsulates the findings of the hypothesis testing. The estimated t value surpasses the t table at $\alpha = 0.01$ (1.96), resulting in the acceptance of all hypotheses from H1 to H5 (significant). Specifically, grit has a direct impact on employees' PWB ($\gamma = 0.244$), interpersonal skills directly influence employees' PWB ($\beta = 0.489$), and PWB directly influences employees' task performance ($\beta = 0.608$). Furthermore, grit and interpersonal skills exert an indirect influence on employees' task performance via PWB, with β values of 0.148 and 0.297, respectively.

Table 3. Hypothesis testing results

| Hypothesis | γ/β | t _{value} | t _{table} ($\alpha = 0.05$) | Decision |
|---|----------------|--------------------|---|-------------|
| H ₁ : PWB directly affects employees' task performance | 0.608 | 17.079 | 1.96 | Significant |
| H ₂ : Grit directly affects employees' PWB | 0.244 | 4.192 | 1.96 | Significant |
| H ₃ : Interpersonal skills directly affect employees' PWB | 0.489 | 9.256 | 1.96 | Significant |
| H ₄ : Grit indirectly affects employees' task performance through PWB | 0.148 | 3.973 | 1.96 | Significant |
| H ₅ : Interpersonal skills indirectly affect employees' task performance through PWB | 0.297 | 7.589 | 1.96 | Significant |

** $p < 0.01$

4.2. Discussion

Generally, this study discovered that grit and interpersonal skills affect task performance via PWB. The first finding is that PWB positively affects employees' task performance. This means that PWB is an essential predisposition for an employee's task performance. The positive impact suggests that enhancing PWB can improve employee task performance. For instance, employees who take over difficult tasks with new innovations can help the organization's effectiveness and efficiency. This evidence corroborates and validates prior

research by Ying et al. (2022) and Ali and Muhammad (2021), demonstrating that PWB significantly influences performance.

This study also determined that grit has a favorable and significant impact on employee PWB. It shows that grit is a crucial antecedent for PWB. The positive effect indicates a tendency for grit improvements to stimulate increases in PWB. For example, enhancing employee orientation to achieve long-term objectives through persistent efforts despite challenges will follow taking charge reflected in self-initiated voluntary actions focused on development and transformation or innovating with new ideas to speed up the completion of complex tasks. This discovery is consistent with and reinforces prior research findings, demonstrating that grit influences PWB (Hermita et al., 2023).

The following finding indicates a strong impact of interpersonal skills on employee PWB. It demonstrates that interpersonal skills are a significant predictor of PWB. Like grit, the influence is positive, implying that developing interpersonal skills might boost employee PWB. For example, an employee with a strong awareness of group dynamics and collaboration with colleagues is more likely to give creative solutions and communicate suggestions or ideas to enhance working circumstances, as well as to prioritize problem prevention by avoiding situations that could lead to personal or professional conflicts. Similarly, employees that are empathetic and strongly encourage other employees will take leadership of self-initiated voluntary actions aimed at development and transformation, proposing creative solutions and expressing suggestions or ideas to better working circumstances. These findings are consistent with and validate prior research, such as Gumbri et al. (2021), Yuan and Ma (2022), and Afsar et al. (2021), which indicate that interpersonal skills influence PWB. Additionally, it also negates another prior study that interpersonal skills did not significantly affects PWB (Ali et al., 2018; Kueny et al., 2019).

Lastly, this research asserts the critical role of PWB in transmitting the impact of grit and interpersonal skills on employees' task performance. These findings not only corroborate prior research and reinforce the direct influence of grit and interpersonal skills on PWB, as well as the effect of PWB on task performance, but also validate the novel empirical model concerning the impact of grit and interpersonal skills on task performance mediated by PWB. These findings offer a theoretical contribution to enhancing task performance research through the lenses of grit, interpersonal skills, and PWB within the domains, emphasizing HRM and organizational behavior/psychology. Additionally, they present practical implications for corporate operations to improve employee task performance by leveraging grit, interpersonal skills, and PWB. Consequently, the results of this research warrant thorough and critical discussion prior to its adoption, adaptation, or modification by researchers and practitioners to enhance their future endeavors.

5. Conclusion

Task performance is crucial to employee performance, competitive advantage, and organizational performance, especially when facing increasingly massive competition and uncertainty in the future. Therefore, this study focuses on employee task performance based on the perspectives of grit and interpersonal skills through PWB. The findings revealed that grit, interpersonal skills, and PWB influence employees' task performance; grit and interpersonal skills affect employees' PWB, and PWB mediates the relationship between grit, interpersonal skills, and task performance. This evidence supports a novel empirical paradigm about the influence of grit and interpersonal skills on task performance via the mediation of PWB. These

findings offer a theoretical contribution to enhancing task performance research through the lens of grit, interpersonal skills, and PWB, while also presenting practical implications for organizational operations aimed at improving employee task performance by leveraging potential grit, interpersonal skills, and PWB. The findings of this research warrant thorough and critical discussion prior to their adoption, adaptation, or modification by researchers and practitioners for future use.

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