It Is Always Good to Persevere? Associations among Hope, Grit, and Cognitions that Promote Gambling

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Introduction

Hope theory suggests variability in ability and motivation to cope with goal blockages (Snyder et al., 1991). As individuals age, hope may play an increasingly important role in well-being. Coal and pathway blockages may become more severe and frequent as individuals age (Kahle, Wrobleski, & Snyder, 2007). Research has shown that older adults (age 44-85) were less hopeful than younger adults (age 18-54), and more difficulty determining how they would reach their goals (Shedly & Snyder, 2007).

Similarly, grit influences perseverance and passion in striving towards goals. In the face of adversity, challenges, and failures, grittier individuals continue to stay on track by maintaining interest and effort. Over the course of years, gritty individuals do not change their trajectory or quit when becoming disengaged or bored, instead they approach success as a marathon and use resilience and determination to their advantage to overcome obstacles (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2006).

Hope and grit are psychological constructs that are theorized as complimentary to one another for individuals (Snyder et al., 1991; Kahle, Wrobleski, & Snyder, 2005). Some empirical evidence supports these linkages. For example, hope has been associated with academic achievement, physical health, and psychological adjustment (Carey, Snyder, Cook, Rotty, & Rubin, 1997; Salvy, Dimeo, Forward, & Rotrosen, 2000). While grit has got less attention to date compared to hope, evidence that grit has been linked to grade point average, educational attainment, and conscientiousness (Duckworth et al., 2007). Although both hope and grit may help people continue to pursue meaningful worthwhile tasks and to avoid the likelihood of their eventual success, these same attitudes may underlie the continued pursuit of harmful behaviors.

Despite the expansion of public health concerns, the number of publications on hope and psychotherapy, no research has emerged in this area (Whitt & Cox, 2005). One of the reasons for this is the expansion of a new intervention over the past several decades in all age groups (Snyder, Hult, & Vinder, 1999).

Research also points out that there are serious underserved psychological consequences to gambling for some individuals. Individuals who experience serious adverse effects of gambling are more likely to continue gambling in a problem or pathological gamblers (Shih, Hult, & Vinder, 1999). According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV-TR) (1994), pathological gambling is “persistent and recurrent maladaptive gambling behavior that results in significant impairment or distress” (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). Problem gambling has been previously associated with cognitions that encourage continued gambling in the face of loss (Strickland, Shih, & Ozer, 2004), which can be similar to hope (Fulmer, et al., 2006). Thus, hope and grit may share some common characteristics with problematic gambling cognitions, and may also be associated with elevated levels of gambling. Therefore, it is imperative to examine hope and grit in pathological gambling.

The aim of this study was to examine whether hope and grit are associated with pathological gambling cognitions. Therefore, the present study was designed to examine the extent to which hope and grit may share some common characteristics with problematic gambling cognitions, and may also be associated with elevated levels of gambling.

Method

Participants

Participants were part of a larger study examining intergenerational links between community satisfaction, personality, and risk behaviors. An anonymous survey and personal interviews were mailed to a parent and a grandparent of a college student. Data from 129 parent-grandparent pairs participants aged 37 to 86 were used for the present study (Cronbach’s α = .91). Participants were part of a larger study examining intergenerational links between community satisfaction, personality, and risk behaviors. A larger, convenience sample of participants who had a child or grandchild attending college in the Midwest. The sample size for older adults was smaller than that of middle-aged adults. Thus, grit influences perseverance and passion in striving towards goals. In the face of adversity, challenges, and failures, grittier individuals continue to stay on track by maintaining interest and effort. Over the course of years, gritty individuals do not change their trajectory or quit when becoming disengaged or bored, instead they approach success as a marathon and use resilience and determination to their advantage to overcome obstacles (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2006).

Conclusions & Implications

The results of this study lend positive support to the benefits of hope and grit in promoting a positive life trajectory. Although the definition of hope and grit has some similarities with problematic gambling cognitions in terms of the emphasis on perseverance, this does not seem to lead to similar problematic behaviors. In fact, at the univariate level, hope and grit were associated with lower levels of pathological gambling, lower levels of gambling cognitions, and lower levels of pathological gambling.

Results

T-tests showed no significant differences between middle-aged and older adults in any of the variables (data not shown).

Table 1: Correlation analyses examining the relationships between hope, grit, and pathological gambling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pathological Gambling</th>
<th>Gambling Cognitions</th>
<th>Gambling Motivations</th>
<th>Gambling Attitudes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Hope</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Grit</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pathological Gambling</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Questions

1. Are hope and grit related to gambling cognitions, motivations, and behaviors?

2. Do these associations vary for middle-aged and older adults?

Acknowledgments

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