

EVALUATION OF THE LEVEL OF PERSEVERANCE IN ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

The importance of perseverance in students' development and the learning process in today's society is increasingly a subject of thinking and implementation. This is seen as a must in education if we intend to assess behaviors and not only the information students acquire. Moreover, following the idea that values are transmitted both through family and school, we understand the importance of both, as seen in the specialized literature. This study mentions the importance of perseverance in the long term in students' lives while performing their duties and also in their relationships with their peers. This is due to improve the quality of learning and performing in different fields.

Moreover, this research dealt with the value of perseverance and proposed a validated instrument. It started from the idea that perseverance value is an ingredient that is tremendously needed in accomplishing one's goals, and it is something without which, most of the time, we will not be able to develop and grow. While all people want to be successful, only a few people know that success is to be accompanied by discipline, motivation, and perseverance. The instrument's items were initially grouped into five dimensions: Perseverance in Academic Achievement, Perseverance in Peer Relationships, Perseverance in Moral Behavior, Perseverance in Health Habits, and Perseverance in Physical Fields. The proposed instrument was tested in Mihai Ionescu Highschool, Bucharest, Romania, on a sample of 192 students, eight classes from the Secondary School, from fifth to eighth grade. The research design is Quantitative. Item analysis, exploratory factorial analysis, and reliability analysis led to item selection and the final design. As a result of the analysis, some items were taken out. The final model consists of 15 items

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grouped into four dimensions: Perseverance in Academic Achievement, Perseverance in Peer Relationships, Perseverance in Moral-Spiritual Behavior, and Perseverance in Physical Health. The instrument was given the name P-PARM. Future research will help in the subsequent enrichment of the instrument.

Keywords

Perseverance, instrument validation, values education, quality of learning, Secondary school, grit

INTRODUCTION

In the context of Christian education, transmitting values is an important tool without which humanity cannot function at its capacity (Spătăreanu, 2020, pp.108-109), an instrument that can shape students not only for this life but also for the life to which God called us all. The value of perseverance is seen as that value that we need to have all our lives, from the moment we are born while growing day by day and facing difficulties in speaking, walking, and understanding the world around us. We try to persevere in all kinds of things we do in order not to remain at the same level, up to the moment we get old, when we still need to accomplish some targets, in order to slow down the immobility, both mentally and physically.

At the same time, the value of perseverance seems to be very important, and anyone knows how difficult it is to keep doing things when they deserve to be done, but even though it is not an easy job to do, especially when giving up is way much easier. Perseverance is also a magic ingredient that shows the difference between mediocrity and brilliance, between having the idea of writing a book, which is not such an easy task, and the actual result of really writing it (Habenicht, 2000). In simple words, perseverance means for someone to finish what he started (Psalm 1), to go on no matter the difficulties one meets on the way, and to find satisfaction in what one does, while accomplishing the tasks. Perseverance can also be seen as an ingredient that is tremendously needed in accomplishing the

targets we set in life, and it also represents something that gives us the power to go on.

Moreover, understanding that besides parents, who have a great influence on students concerning their school life, the teachers have an important role in teaching students to become perseverant (Spătărelu, 2021, p. 26). Nevertheless, this construct makes teachers aware of their tremendous job of building strong characters in students who will later become mature adults.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Spătărelu (2019, p. 57) mentions the central place that values in general have in education, and when focusing on the value of perseverance. Seibert (2021) specifies that teachers have in their attention the generation Z and the fact that this generation lacks experience in the field of higher critical thinking having the tendency to give up easily when facing challenges. Kostromina, Grishina, Moskvicheva and Zinovyeva (2018) speak about the decrease in importance of some values from generation to generation. On the other hand, there are the teachers who are asked to promote critical thinking and to foster perseverance through teaching strategies.

Huescar, Moreno-Murcia, Cid, Monteiro and Rodriguez (2020) mention the fact that having passion and perseverance for what one does, will help the person succeed despite challenges and adversity, being able to get to greater achievements in comparison to those that do not have these characteristics. In addition to this, they mention the effect of teacher-induced influence on grades and performance concerning their students. They also speak about mediatic effects of psychological needs of satisfaction such as motivation and grit as two factors, dependent on each other, focusing on perseverance that shapes student motivation and school success through the autonomy support transmitted by teachers.

Habenicht (2000) suggests a few guidelines that parents and teachers can use while guiding children. Among these, we find the idea of gradually teaching young children how to wait for something they want, engaging the children in activities that cannot be finished immediately, and helping children learn how to deal with frustrations. The author goes on with the idea of teaching the children that success and perseverance are closely related, while also teaching the children that impatience and impulsiveness can have very really bad consequences and helping children to overcome difficult situations when a task seems overwhelming and almost impossible to be accomplished.

Moreover, McKaughan (2018) approaches the issue of religious faith from the perspective of perseverance in faith when one faces significant doubt, especially knowing that not all religions give the same importance to faith – and also knowing that perseverance can be taken into consideration while one is amidst life's challenges and uncertainties. At the same time, Baruch-Feldman and Hoerr (2017), as well as Styk and Klinkosz (2021) focus on the necessity for teenagers to work on perseverance, resilience, and self-control, striving to set and reach their targets, this being an important ability in their lives without which they could not develop totally.

Duckworth, Peterson, Mathews and Kelly (2007) say that close to the intellectual talent which is needed in order to achieve great things in all professional domains one needs perseverance and passion in what one does. Also, Duckworth (2016) speaks about the desire that people have to succeed, either they are parents or children/students, educators, sportsmen or business people mentioning that the secret to a great achievement is not talent but a special blend of passion and persistence which she calls grit.

At the same time, Baruch-Feldman and Hoerr (2017) also use the term grit, while mentioning the way students want to do well in school, sports, to make good friends and to be great

on music. It should be noticed that in all these, students as well as adults need perseverance to succeed. One study that rises interest and brings light in this field is that lead by Duckworth et al. (2007), and which states that the achievement of difficult goals entails talent as well as sustained and focused application of this talent over time – meaning that you may be talented, but if you don't use your talent, this is worthless. The term grit is used to get together all that a person needs to succeed, such as the values of self-control and tenacity, as well as the ability to have an appropriate behavior when one fails, and the power to go on. In fact, the key in perseverance is to get to a way of thinking that helps one focus on improvement and hard work such as to accomplish the goals set for each step, learning how to turn disappointments into opportunities, to manage stress, and ultimately to be the best version of yourself.

The good news is that grit is something that one learns at home first, but especially in school, and it is not given as a special gift to some at their birth, fortunately, while others do not receive it. Teachers teach this grit also, and students learn how to take advantage of it. At the same time, Li, Zhao, Lin, Chen and Wang (2018), besides the real evidence which supports the importance of perseverance for long-term goals in predicting personal success, stress the importance of one factor that causes individual differences in perseverance, this being the belief in the free will in Chinese adolescents attending high school. Thus, it is revealed the power of free will as being a crucial tool in long-term goals accomplishments.

According to Styk and Klinkosz (2021, p. 1277) perseverance is seen as “an important component of human functioning” mentioning that two meaningful agents that help people accomplish their targets are perseverance and the power of motivation for them to bring some change, for the good, in their lives. This research also says that perseverance is “a trait of behavior determined by situational (external) and

personality related (internal) factors” (Styk & Klinkosz, 2021, p.1277). As a result, Styk and Klinkosz (2021) found out that perseverance can have the same credibility as talent, bringing great results, not taking into consideration the profession, workplace, or organization. Not all the time the tasks we need to accomplish bring us satisfaction, therefore success needs to be accompanied by perseverance and the power to get rid of frustration and to the desire to give up. Thus, this value is in strong connection with intelligence and school achievements leading to professional success.

Waters (2021) presents perseverance as a solution to the rejection issue, which is present in human life, as a reality which cannot be denied, mentioning that there is no way for us to sometimes receive no answers, either at home, at school or at work, but using Bible verses to sustain the religious point of view, which is helpful in our lives, might help. Hupp (2021) sees perseverance as being not just a personal trait only, for which we need to work, but rather an opportunity for someone to help others in their way through life, in their troublesome situations, when not having any solution sometimes. This can be a way of promoting their own perseverance through leading, coaching and role modelling for financial as well as for emotional support, in order to get someone through difficult times. The author specifies that we will not always see perseverance as getting to its hoped endpoint, but without this value people will never know where they might have got. From this point of view the value of perseverance can be found in other life goals such as when trying to give up smoking or lose weight, or when seeking to become financially secure either at a young age or getting balanced in work and leisure activities when life asks you to do sacrifices in order to have more and more. Also, many other dreams can be talked here to be accomplished, from the perseverance perspective.

At the same time, Bandoni, Bastari and Suharyo (2021) reveal the importance of the need we have for being successful,

while carrying out quality research assignments, and mention that the success is to be accompanied by discipline, motivation and perseverance, all these traits being taught in family and in school. Spătărelu (2021, p. 26) observes the influence of family background on students' school activity, mentioning that the family influences to a great extent the students' results. In this context it is shown that teachers should work as a team with the students' parents if we are to speak about efficiency and meaningful results. The two important factors, family and school should always stay together in trying to help the students go for success. While stating that even while researching one can face a lot of obstacles, the problem of how to get to success, how to find the solution to succeed – receives an answer which is the perseverance doubled by grit and motivation, on a long run.

METHODOLOGY

The construction and validation of an instrument to measure the level of responsibility of middle school students was the main goal of this research. As a first step in this endeavor, several tools compiled by researchers with experience in this field were selected and studied. Different authors (Bandura, 2004; Baruch & Hoerr, 2017; Elliot, et al., 2020; Farrington et al., 2012; Habenicht, 2000; Huescar et al., 2020; Keown & Bourke, 2020; Kool et al., 2018; Laursen, 2015; Ohtani, et al., 2020; Seibert, 2021; Shechtman et al., 2013; Styk & Klinkosz, 2020; Tang et al., 2021), enriched the study with the information provided. Following the analysis of the dimensions proposed by these authors, the decision was made for the structure of the own instrument which was created as a tool for this research. The final structure includes some modified items of the previously cited authors, changes made in order to have better and clearer results on the population we chose, but also dimensions and items that were added following the

study of the specialized literature mentioned in the introduction, as well as some items which were created especially for this study, more specifically, the dimension named Perseverance in Moral-Spiritual Behavior.

The initial instrument was made up of 25 items, grouped into five dimensions: perseverance at school, in relationships, in the moral domain, with regard to health and in the physical domain. The items were arranged in a different order than the one in which they were initially organized, in order to avoid intuiting the assessed domain. The instrument was subject to expert review, both to verify the relevance of the items and to assess their clarity. After coding the answers, the resulting database was statistically analyzed using the SPSS program, in three steps, item analysis, factor analysis and reliability.

Practicability, purpose of the study and population

The study research was meant to emphasize the importance of the value of perseverance in teenagers' lives, either when it is learnt at home or at school. It is also important to notice that not all teachers or schools give a great importance on this matter, reason for which there are not so many researches in this field. Also, unfortunately, not many parents try to give the same importance to teaching this value to their children.

The instrument was applied to a group of 192 students, aged between 10 and 16, at *Mihai Ionescu High School* in Bucharest. It was aimed to ensure the minimum number of five subjects for each item. During completion, students were assisted by the instrument developer to ensure that all understood the meaning of the items. The instrument was developed in English and used in that language. For each item of the instrument there were answer options given.

RESULTS

In the preliminary analysis of the P-PARM Instrument through the correlations between the variables it is observed that there are numerous sets of correlations above 0.30. Adding the fact that no correlations above 0.80 were identified, it can be said that multicollinearity and singularity are ruled out. Furthermore, the results show that the variables are suitable for factorization, as the Barlett Test shows $\chi^2 (276) = 1716$, $p < 0.001$. So, the correlation matrix differs significantly from the identity matrix. The KMO index is 0.836, showing that factor analysis can be used. For the 25 initial items, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.852, a value that allowed the continuation of the analysis and improvement of the instrument through other types of analysis. During the factor analysis, several problems were identified for which the best solution was sought. First, several items had minimal meaning in the overall context, and one of the dimensions was not represented by enough items. After repeating the analyzes with different sets and dimensions, it was decided to join two dimensions and withdraw non-significant items. Thus, the dimension of Perseverance in preserving health was joined to the dimension of Perseverance in the field of physical development, being considered two very close domains. The new instrument lost 9 items and remained with 15. For the new instrument variant, the entire analysis was redone, in all its stages. Regarding the second matrix, there are enough correlation sets above 0.30 and below 0.80, thus multicollinearity and singularity are avoided (Table 1).

Table 1
Correlation matrix

	it1	it3	it6	it7	it8	it9	it10	it12	it13	it14	it15	it17	it20	it22	it23
it22	,028	,511	,127	,131	,549	,230	,197	,252	,493	,323	,219	,244	,177	1,00 0	,119
it3	-,06 0	1,00 0	-,05 7	,162	,721	,206	,194	,175	,637	,222	,141	,188	,023	,511	,070
it6	,148	-,05 7	1,00 0	-,13 7	-,07 5	-,17 7	,009	-,01 8	-,03 6	-,05 4	-,07 0	-,02 6	,389	,127	-,00 1
it8	-,06 0	,721	-,07 5	,183	1,00 0	,405	,286	,201	,593	,314	,256	,169	,004	,549	,162
it9	-,00 7	,206	-,17 7	,271	,405	1,00 0	,403	,201	,141	,376	,416	,158	-,00 5	,230	,346
it7	,004	,162	-,13 7	1,00 0	,183	,271	,143	,359	,105	,222	,245	,318	,014	,131	,147
it23	,163	,070	-,00 1	,147	,162	,346	,247	,095	-,02 8	,167	,277	,011	,023	,119	1,00 0
it12	-,06 8	,175	-,01 8	,359	,201	,201	,134	1,00 0	,168	,127	,246	,346	,120	,252	,095
it13	-,08 6	,637	-,03 6	,105	,593	,141	,145	,168	1,00 0	,092	,155	,140	,064	,493	-,02 8
it14	,034	,222	-,05 4	,222	,314	,376	,503	,127	,092	1,00 0	,412	,109	,060	,323	,167
it15	,075	,141	-,07 0	,245	,256	,416	,574	,246	,155	,412	1,00 0	,252	-,01 1	,219	,277
it17	-,01 6	,188	-,02 6	,318	,169	,158	,145	,346	,140	,109	,252	1,00 0	-,07 4	,244	,011
it1	1,00 0	-,06 0	,148	,004	-,06 0	-,00 7	,074	-,06 8	-,08 6	,034	,075	-,01 6	,248	,028	,163
it20	,248	,023	,389	,014	,004	-,00 5	,009	,120	,064	,060	-,01 1	-,07 4	1,00 0	,177	,023
it10	,074	,194	,009	,143	,286	,403	1,00 0	,134	,145	,503	,574	,145	,009	,197	,247

For the final instrument, Barlett Test shows $\chi^2(105) = 778$, $p < 0.001$, thus, the correlation matrix differs significantly from the identity matrix, the variables can be factored. The

KMO index is greater than 0.050, so factor analysis can be used for this database. The obtained coefficient is 0.0776. The four components that have Eigenvalues above 1 explain 58.2% of the total variation of the items (Table 2).

Table 2
Total variance explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3,93	26,2	26,2	3,93	26,2	26,2	2,65	17,7	17,7
2	1,85	12,3	38,5	1,85	12,3	38,5	2,77	18,5	36,1
3	1,62	10,8	49,3	1,62	10,8	49,3	1,62	10,4	46,8
4	1,33	8,9	58,2	1,33	8,9	58,2	1,71	11,4	58,2
5	0,98	6,5	64,7						
6	0,84	5,6	70,3						
7	0,79	5,2	75,6						
8	0,66	4,4	79,9						
9	0,60	4,0	84,0						
10	0,57	3,8	87,8						
11	0,48	3,2	90,9						
12	0,44	3,0	93,9						
13	0,35	2,4	96,3						
14	0,33	2,2	98,5						
15	0,23	1,5	100						

Note: The cumulative for factor 1 is 26,2. The cumulative for factor 2 is 38,5. The cumulative for factor 3 is 49,3, and the cumulative for the four factors is 58,2.

In Figure 1 it can be seen that the four chosen factors are placed outside the plateau line, which is installed starting with factor 5 and 6, plateaus slightly further from factor 4 on the diagram.

Figure 1
Scree plot

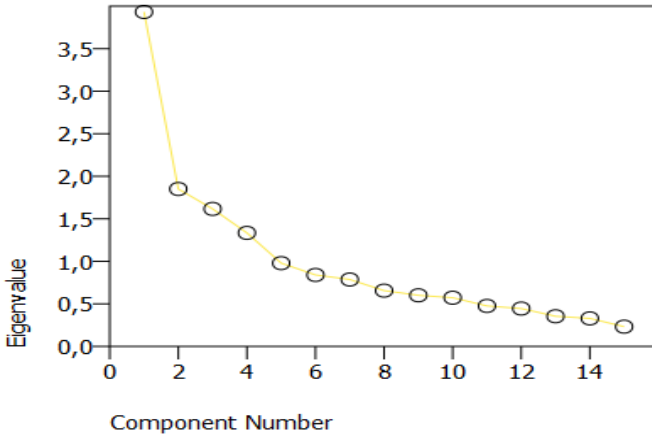


Table 3 shows the item saturation for the four factors, represented by the item-factor correlation. The first factor collected items 9, 10, 14, 15, and 23. The second factor collected items 3, 8, 13, and 22. The third factor collected items 6, 20, and 1 and the fourth factor collected items 7, 12, and 17. The highest correlation is observed with item 3. The value of 0,82 represents the correlation between item 3 and factor 2.

Table 3
Rotated component matrix

Items	Component			
	Perseverance in healthy habits	Perseverance in moral-spiritual behavior	Perseverance in academic achievement	Perseverance in peer relationships
It. 9	0,68	0,18	0,17	0,14
It. 10	0,77	0,12	0,02	0,02
It. 14	0,67	0,19	0,02	0,05

It. 15	0,73	0,07	0,02	0,24
It. 23	0,57	0,05	0,11	0,03
It. 3	0,11	0,87	0,07	0,07
It. 8	0,31	0,82	0,09	0,06
It. 13	0,01	0,83	0,04	0,08
It. 22	0,21	0,71	0,23	0,19
It. 6	0,14	0,03	0,75	0,05
It. 20	0,01	0,08	0,79	0,08
It. 1	0,22	0,14	0,54	0,11
It. 7	0,25	0,03	0,07	0,68
It. 12	0,09	0,15	0,07	0,76
It. 17	0,07	0,14	0,07	0,72

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. **Rotation Method:** Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. The significant factorial loadings are written bolded: Here are the dimensions: (1) Perseverance in Healthy Habits (PHH); (2) Perseverance in Moral-Spiritual Behavior (PMSB); (3) Perseverance in Academic Achievement (PAA); (4) Perseverance in Peer Relationships (PPR).

At the end of the analysis, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was also calculated for the new version of this instrument. The value obtained was 0.753, which allows the use of this tool. The final description of the factors by means of the key concepts contained in the affiliated items can be found in Table 4.

Table 4
Factors and keywords from items

	Perseverance in Healthy Habits	Perseverance in Moral-Spiritual Behavior	Perseverance in Academic Achievement	Perseverance in Peer Relationships
Key-words from items	9. right choices in eating habits 10. physical exercises	3. constant prayer 8. Bible time 13. going to church regularly	6. interest in learning 20. lack of concentration	7. improving learning even in difficult moments with classmates 12. contact with classmates even

	14. spending time outdoor 15. sport practicing 23. healthy habits.	22. spending time with God	1. lack of constancy in learning	when things go wrong 17. keeping going on even when disrespected by classmates.
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CONCLUSIONS

Even though students do not perceive perseverance from the point of view the adults see it, the study showed that it is an important ingredient in teenagers' lives, one that is greatly needed in accomplishing one's goals. It was also proven that without perseverance, most of the times we would probably not accomplish our goals, especially when we face obstacles, but the study also tells us that teenagers have the power to go on when led by perseverance and grit, being accompanied by their friends and encouraged by teachers or other adults around them.

Moreover, understanding that besides parents, the teachers have an important role in teaching students to become perseverant, gives the teachers a lot of reasons not to give up helping them. Taking time to notice the fields mentioned in this study, Perseverance in Academic Achievement, Perseverance in Peer Relationships, Perseverance in Moral-Spiritual Behavior, and Perseverance in Physical Health, gives strength to students and helps them become stronger, because these fields have a strong connection with everyday life.

Recommendations for further study: Future research that might require more respondents will definitely help in the subsequent development of the instrument, in order to bring more information in this field, that can strengthen some dimensions belonging to the perseverance value required for the benefit of teenagers.

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