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Acceptance of Disability and Psychological Well-being of Students with Mobility Disability: Mediating Role of Perseverance of Effort

Suneel Kumar[1], Saroj Verma[2], and Swaran Lata[2]

[1] *Senior Researcher, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi-221005, U.P., India.*

[2] *Professor, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi-221005, U.P., India.*

Abstract

Psychological well-being includes happiness and contentment, low distress levels, and a positive physical and mental outlook. The psychological well-being of students with disabilities is influenced by various factors, including their acceptance of disability and their ability to persevere despite challenges. This study aims to explore the relationship between the variables and the mediating role of perseverance of effort in the relationship between acceptance of disability and psychological well-being among students with mobility disabilities. A sample of 114 students with mobility disabilities was recruited from various institutions in Uttar Pradesh to assess their levels of disability acceptance, perseverance, and psychological well-being. The results indicate that acceptance of disability positively correlates with psychological well-being, and this relationship is mediated by perseverance of effort. Students who have accepted their disability are more likely to demonstrate perseverance, which enhances their psychological well-being. These findings highlight the importance of fostering both disability acceptance and perseverance to support the mental health and overall well-being of students with mobility disabilities. Interventions aimed at promoting acceptance of disability and encouraging persistence and perseverance may serve as valuable resources in promoting positive psychological outcomes for this population.

Keywords: Acceptance of disability; psychological well-being; perseverance of effort; and mobility disability

Corresponding authors.
Swaran Lata;
Suneel Kumar
Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi-221005, U.P., India,
E-mail: swaran80@gmail.com
E-mail: skumarpsyche@bhu.ac.in
(S. Lata)
(S. Kumar)

Introduction

Psychological well-being (PWB) encompasses various aspects of mental health, such as life satisfaction, self-esteem, positive affect, and the absence of negative mental states like depression or anxiety. Maintaining the psychological well-being of students with disabilities is critical for academic success, interpersonal development, and social integration (Odintsova & Kulyatskaya, 2019). Disability is an umbrella term that refers to physical, sensory, cognitive, intellectual, or emotional impairments that can profoundly impact one's whole life in every aspect (Buñuales et al., 2002). Mobility disability is a physical impairment that significantly limits or restricts an individual's ability to move freely and perform tasks that require movement, like walking, climbing stairs, or standing for extended periods, and using assistive devices such as wheelchairs, crutches, and walkers to aid their movement (Druss et al., 2000).

Acceptance of disability (AD) refers to the degree to which individuals with disabilities embrace and come to terms with their physical or mental condition, which can significantly impact their overall well-being (Jung et al., 2022). When individuals accept their disability, they become better able to adapt life changes, pursue meaningful goals, and improve their emotional and physical health (Ramlan et al., 2023). Acceptance of disability includes the processes of adapting to disability and accepting oneself as a worthy person, despite having a disability. It entails realizing the difficulty that the impairment causes, trying to get better, and learning to live with the limitations (Jung et al., 2022). People with disabilities who feel social prejudice or frustration reported lower social adjustment in their society. Thus, the acceptance of disability plays a crucial role in adapting to their disability in the social environment and can encourage positive self-image of the individuals (Kumar et al., 2024b).

Grit is an ability that encompasses perseverance and passion for long-term goals. There are two core elements: perseverance of effort and consistency of interest (Duckworth et al., 2007). Perseverance refers to an individual's ability to sustain effort and remain determined despite challenges, failures, or setbacks. Consistency of interest refers to a person's sustained focus on a particular goal or passion over extended periods without frequently changing pursuits. Perseverance of effort (PE), derived from the concept of "grit," can be defined as an individual's persistence and sustained effort toward long-term goals despite challenges and setbacks (Duckworth et al., 2007). Students' disabilities are long-term challenges; therefore, they can provide long-term potential for overcoming challenges. Students who exhibit perseverance are likely to continue striving in academic and personal pursuits, even in the face of obstacles related to their disability (Wang et al., 2021). In both young and adult participants, there exists a favorable correlation between grit and adaptive outcomes, including work satisfaction, professional achievement, and psychological growth, along with favorable results in the educational setting, fostering student success and providing positive support for the challenges in life (Hernández et al., 2020; Lam & Zhou, 2020).

Theoretical background

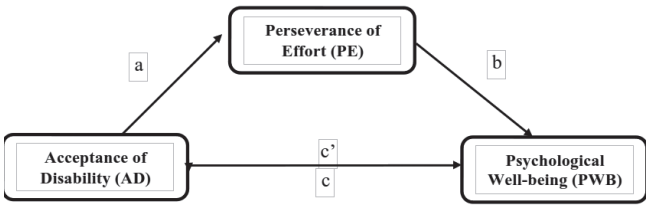
Carol Ryff's (1995) psychological well-being (PWB) model provides a multidimensional framework for understanding human flourishing and positive functioning. Rooted in the integration of perspectives from developmental psychology, existential philosophy, and clinical psychology, Ryff identified six core dimensions of well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. These dimensions emphasize the dynamic interplay between self-realization and life challenges, moving beyond hedonic measures of happiness to include eudaimonic aspects of accomplishment. Perseverance of effort, a key component of grit conceptualized by Angela Duckworth (2016), involves sustained, consistent effort individuals devote to long-term goals despite challenges, setbacks, or slow progress. Rooted in psychological theories of motivation and self-regulation, perseverance aligns with Bandura's self-efficacy theory, which emphasizes the belief in one's ability to overcome obstacles (Yiu et al., 2011). It also draws from Carol Dweck's growth mindset framework, highlighting the value of viewing abilities as improvable through effort (Wolcott et al., 2020). Perseverance integrates elements of goal-setting theory, emphasizing commitment to meaningful and challenging objectives, and the dual-process model of self-control, which underscores the ability to resist distractions or temporary temptations (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). The acceptance of disability, as conceptualized by Linkowski and Groomes (2007), revolves around understanding how individuals adjust to and integrate their disability into their self-concept. This framework emphasizes psychological adaptation as a dynamic process influenced by personal, social, and environmental factors.

The Present Study

The present study explores the intricate relationships among disability acceptance, psychological well-being, and perseverance among students with mobility disabilities. Acceptance of disability plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' mental health and overall well-being (Jung et al., 2022). However, this acceptance is not always sufficient to foster psychological well-being without the presence of internal factors like perseverance of effort. Perseverance, as a form of resilience, may act as a mediating factor that helps students with disabilities navigate challenges, maintain positive mental health, and pursue long-term goals or challenges (Wang, 2021; Duckworth et al., 2007). Figure 1 presents the hypothesized model of the study. This study aims to investigate how the perseverance of effort contributes to bridging the gap between acceptance of disability and psychological well-being among students with mobility disabilities. The research has led to the formulation of the following hypotheses:

(a) Acceptance of disability would be significantly and positively associated with perseverance of effort. (b) Perseverance of effort would be significantly and positively associated with psychological well-being. (c) Acceptance of disability would be significantly and positively associated with psychological well-being; (d) perseverance of effort would mediate the relationship between acceptance of disability and psychological well-being.

Fig. 1. Hypothesized Model: Perseverance of effort mediates the relationship between acceptance of disability and psychological well-being



Methods

Participants

The Institutional Human Ethics Committee approved the study with reference number I.Sc/EMC-XVIII/2024-25. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, were strictly followed throughout the study. The participants with mobility disabilities were selected from various institutions of Uttar Pradesh, i.e., Jagadguru Rambhadracharya Divyang State University, Chitrakoot, and Dr. Shakuntala Mishra National Rehabilitation University, Lucknow, using a purposive sampling technique. After obtaining informed consent, participants were given a set of validated questionnaires to measure acceptance of disability, psychological well-being, and perseverance of effort (grit).

The inclusion criteria included certified permanent disability of 40% or more, undergraduates, postgraduates, and researchers aged 18-30. Students with multiple disabilities, learning disability, intellectual disability, chronic neurological conditions, and any psychiatric comorbidities were excluded from the study.

Procedure

The selected scales were administered to 127 students with a mobility disability. After excluding blank, missing, and outlier data, 114 participants were deemed appropriate and complete for analysis. After collecting the data, statistical analyses were conducted to examine relationships between variables and the mediating role of perseverance of effort in the relationship between acceptance of disability and psychological well-being.

Measures

Psychological Well-Being Scale: Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale is a widely used tool designed to assess six key dimensions of well-being, i.e., self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Developed by Carol Ryff, the scale focuses on capturing a comprehensive view of well-being beyond mere happiness, emphasizing personal development, meaningful relationships, and the ability to navigate life's challenges. It evaluates how individuals perceive their own psychological functioning in these areas, providing insights into their overall sense of fulfilment and life satisfaction. The Cronbach alpha of the full scale was reported as .692.

Adaptation to Disability Scale – Revised (ADS-R): The Adaptation to Disability Scale–Revised (ADS-R) is a psychological assessment tool developed by Linkowski and Groomes in 2007 to measure how well individuals with disabilities have adjusted to their condition. It is based on a multidimensional model that examines various psychological factors, including acceptance of loss, awareness of new limitations, and integration of disability into one's life identity. The scale is widely used in rehabilitation psychology to evaluate emotional and cognitive adaptation, helping to guide interventions that promote better coping mechanisms and improve overall well-being for individuals with disabilities (Alčiauskaitė & Šinkariova, 2019). The Cronbach's alpha of the whole scale was reported as 0.714.

Short Grit Scale: The Short Grit Scale (Grit-S) is an 8-item self-assessment tool designed to measure an individual's level of grit, which is defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Psychologist Angela Duckworth developed the scale, which assesses two key dimensions: consistency of interest and perseverance of effort. Scores range from 1 (not gritty) to 5 (extremely gritty), with higher scores indicating a stronger ability to maintain sustained effort and interest in achieving long-term objectives. The Cronbach alpha of the whole scale was found to be 0.80; it has two dimensions, i.e., perseverance of effort (.75) and consistency of interest (.82). The present study utilized only one dimension, namely perseverance of effort, for the analysis and did not use the total scores.

Statistical Analysis

IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 was used for data interpretation. Descriptive statistics for the participants were obtained by computing the frequency, mean (± SD), and range. The Pearson correlation coefficient was utilized to investigate relationships between the variables. Additionally, the SPSS macro PROCESS (Model 4) was used to assess how perseverance of effort influences the relationship between acceptance of disability and psychological well-being (Hayes, 2012). The present study employed only one dimension of grit, i.e., perseverance of effort, for data analysis. Using 5000 bootstrap samples, a 95% confidence interval was computed to determine the statistical significance of the estimated indirect effect.

Results

Table 1 presents demographic information about the participants. The mean and (*SD*) age was 25.12 (*SD* = 3.48). The male students with mobility disabilities were 54 (*SD* = 47.40%), and females with mobility disabilities were 60 (*SD* = 52.60%). Most of the participants were postgraduates, living in rural areas, and had disabilities in later life.

Tab. 1. Demographic Characterstics of the Sample (N=114)

Variables		*M*	*SD*	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
Age	Years	*25.12*	*3.48*		
Gender	Male			*54*	*47.40*
	Female			*60*	*52.60*
Education	Graduation			*38*	*33.30*
	Post-graduation			*52*	*45.60*
	Ph.D./Others			*24*	*21.10*

Variables		M	SD	Frequency	Percentage
Family Structure	Joint			64	56.10
	Single			50	43.90
Residence	Urban			32	28.10
	Rural			82	71.90
Cause of Disability	Polio			71	62.30
	Genetic			7	6.10
	Accident			21	18.40
	Others			15	13.20
One set of Disability	By Birth			39	34.20
	Later Life			75	65.80
Severity of Disability	Percentage	58.87	15.13		
Average Family Income	Monthly (Rupees)	14938.29			

Table 2 showed the descriptive statistics and correlation among the study variables. The mean (±SD) of acceptance of disability (Table 2) was *84.32 (SD = 10.23)*, perseverance of effort was *14.57 (SD = 4.06)*, and psychological well-being was *69.12 (SD = 10.83).* Further, the Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to examine the association between acceptance of disability, perseverance of effort, and psychological well-being. Acceptance of disability was significantly and positively associated with perseverance of effort *(r = .51, p < .01)* and psychological well-being *(r = .26, p <* .01). Perseverance of effort was significantly and positively associated with psychological well-being *(r = .33, p < .01).*

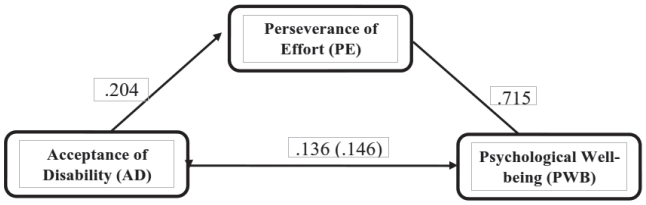
Tab. 2. s and Correlation of AD, PE, and PWB (N=114)

				Range		Pearson Correlation (r)		
	Variables	M	SD	Min	Max	1	2	3
1.	AD	84.32	10.23	59	121	1		
2.	PE	14.57	4.06	4	20	.51***	1	
3.	PWB	69.12	10.83	38	93	.26**	.33***	1

**** p < .001; ** p < .01; AD, Acceptance of Disability; PE, Perseverance of Effort; PWB, Psychological Well-being; SD, Standard Deviation.*

This study used the mediation *model 4* in SPSS's PROCESS macro as, described by Hayes (2012), to investigate the indirect effect of PE on the relationship between AD and PWB among students with mobility disability (Table 3, Figure 2). The AD was positively associated with PE *(β = .204, 95% CI [.140; .268], p < 0.01, s.e. = .032)*. PE was positively associated with PWB *(β = .715, 95% CI [.169; 1.261], p < .01, s.e. = .275)*. The direct effect of AD on PWB (path c-prime) was not significant *(β = .136, 95% CI [-.080; .353], p > 0.05, s.e. = .109)*. The indirect effect of the hypothesized model was found to be significant *(β = 0.146, 95% Bootstrap C.I.: .025; .292)*. The findings of the mediation model suggest that greater acceptance of disability strengthens perseverance of effort, thereby improving psychological well-being. Further, it has been reported that *12.4%* of the variance was explained by the predictors, i.e., AD and PE *(F = 7.88, R2 = .124, p < .001),* which means that other variablealso s influence participants' psychological well-being.

Fig. 2. Standardized coefficients for the relationship between acceptance of disability and PWB as mediated by perseverance of effort



Tab. 3. Indirect effect of perseverance of effort (PE) between acceptance of disability (AD) and psychological well-being (PWB)

						Bootstrap 95% C.I.	
	Relationships	β	SE	t-test	p	LL	UL
PE							
	AD → PE	.204	.032	6.34	< .01	.140	.268
PWB							
	PE	.715	.275	2.59	< .01	.169	1.261
	AD	.136	.109	1.24	>.05	.080	.353
Indirect effect							
	AD → PE → PWB	.146	.068	-	-	.025	.292

Note: AD, Acceptance of Disability; LLCI, Lower-Level of Confidence Interval; PE, Perseverance of Effort; PWB, Psychological Well-being; SD, Standard Deviation; SE, Standard Error. ULCI, Upper-Level of Confidence Interval

Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the associations among acceptance of disability, perseverance of effort, and psychological well-being, and to investigate the mediating role of perseverance of effort in the relationship between acceptance of disability and psychological well-being among students with mobility disability. The findings revealed that AD was significantly and positively associated with PWB and PE, and PE was also significantly and positively associated with PWB. These findings suggest that accepting disability may promote resilience, self-esteem, and emotional stability. It helps diminish feelings of shame, frustration, and self-stigma, fostering a positive self-concept and promoting healthier interpersonal relationships and adaptive coping strategies such as seeking social support and setting realistic goals, which enhance mental and psychological wellness. On the other hand, perseverance of effort, often linked to grit, empowers individuals to tackle long-term challenges despite setbacks, particularly for students with mobility disability, cultivating a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Persistence can serve as a buffer against mental health challenges, e.g., anxiety, stress, and depressive symptoms, by enhancing problem-solving skills and adaptive coping mechanisms, ultimately supporting emotional stability for students with disabilities. Prior studies have reported that perseverance of effort facilitates better psychological well-being and a positive outlook on life among students (Lam & Zhou, 2020; Sun et al., 2023). Based on the

existing literature, perseverance in facing long-term challenges is associated with a positive outlook that enhances mental health, as it reflects a tendency to persist and continue making efforts despite setbacks or disability (Wang et al., 2021; Duckworth et al., 2007).

The present study found the hypothesized mediation model to be statistically significant. The PE was significantly mediated between AD and PWB among students with mobility disability. Although disability acceptance (AD) did not have a direct impact on psychological well-being (PWB), this suggests that the current model involves full mediation, as disability acceptance did not directly influence psychological well-being. This relationship reflected that the independent variable was associated with the mediator, and the mediator was associated with the dependent variable. These findings suggest that perseverance of effort is the bridge between acceptance of disability and psychological well-being. This is because perseverance of effort and acceptance of disability are closely intertwined in the journey toward personal growth for individuals living with various disabilities, especially mobility disabilities. Together, these constructs empower individuals to adapt, succeed, and flourish by emphasizing what is possible rather than focusing on limitations, cultivating a mindset of empowerment and self-actualization for individuals with various disabilities. Prior studies have implicated that acceptance of disability was significantly associated with the self-esteem of adults with disabilities (Jung et al., 2022; Szcześniak et al., 2020). On the other hand, the acceptance of disability has also been associated with self-efficacy, hope for success, and perseverance in physical disability (Byra & Żyta, 2017). According to Boerma et al. (2020), perseverance of effort has been significantly associated with life satisfaction and well-being amongst university students. Another study also revealed that grit (perseverance of effort and consistency of interest) was positively correlated with both hedonic and eudemonic well-being (Disabato et al., 2016).

Students with mobility disability often experience challenges like accessibility issues, a lack of understanding from peers and educators, and discrimination and bullying in their lives. Therefore, there is a need for greater grit and self-acceptance in response to the demands and obstacles witnessed. It has been previously reported that grit (perseverance of effort and consistency of interest) significantly mediated the relationship between social connectedness and well-being (Han, 2021). Furthermore, perseverance of effort was found to moderate the relationship between psychological distress and life satisfaction (Boerma et al., 2020), which means that the concept of grit can facilitate many positive outcomes, i.e., academic success, mental health, self-esteem, life satisfaction, and many more (Susanti et al., 2020). It has been reported that stigma and social exclusion led to several psychosocial issues, e.g., low self-esteem, social isolation, discrimination, and ultimately suicidal ideation (Kumar et al., 2024a; 2024b). Whereas self-efficacy was positively associated with good quality of life among students with disabilities (Mishra et al., 2025). Overall, the present study found that those with greater perseverance of effort and acceptance of disability reported better psychological well-being and quality of life among people with mobility disability.

This study carries significant implications for supporting the psychological well-being of students with mobility disabilities by highlighting the crucial role of accepting their disability and the mediating influence of perseverance of effort; educational institutions and support systems should prioritize interventions that foster disability acceptance by the people of these students, as this foundational acceptance appears to bolster their psychological health directly and indirectly by strengthening their resolve to overcome challenges. Cultivating perseverance, perhaps through targeted skill-building and positive reinforcement, can further enhance psychological well-being, suggesting a dual-pronged approach in counselling, rehabilitation programs, and inclusive educational practices to empower students with mobility disabilities to thrive academically and emotionally.

Conclusion

The study highlights the significant impact of perseverance in effort as a mediating factor between the acceptance of disability and the psychological well-being of students with mobility disabilities. Acceptance of one's disability fosters a positive self-image and emotional stability, while persistence in effort further enhances this by promoting resilience and goal achievement despite challenges. Perseverance has been found as a bridge that reinforces self-acceptance and facilitates better coping strategies, thereby improving psychological well-being. The findings underscore the importance of nurturing perseverance in educational settings to support the holistic development of students with disabilities, advocating for policies and interventions that prioritize persistence as a key to their academic success and well-being.

Limitations and Further Studies

This study provides valuable insights, but it acknowledges several limitations. First, the study focused exclusively on students with mobility disabilities from institutions in Uttar Pradesh, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other types of disabilities or geographical regions. The small sample size, though informative, may not be sufficiently representative to capture the diverse experiences of students with disabilities across different cultural or socioeconomic contexts. Future research should employ qualitative methods to provide a more profound understanding of the factors influencing the psychological well-being of individuals with various disabilities. The present study was of a orrelational, suggesting the need for further investigation using a controlled experimental design.

Ethical Approval

This research was approved by the Human Ethics Committee, Institute of Science, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, INDIA.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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No funds were received for conducting the research or for the preparation of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interests
The authors report no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions
Suneel Kumar has prepared the whole manuscript, made the rationale, and analysed the data. Saroj Verma has supervised the work and checked it. Swaran Lata has helped to prepare the manuscript. All authors have checked the manuscript twice.

Supplementary material
Not applicable.

Declaration about the use of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process
We did not use AI to generate the content; it was used solely to ensure grammatical accuracy in accordance with ethical guidelines.

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