



## Research Article

# Systematic Review of Grit Personality in Draupadi's Character Using Summative Content Analysis

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## Abstract

**Background:** Draupadi's character in the Mahabharata exemplifies the psychological concept of Grit, which is a personality trait that is defined as consistent passion and sustained perseverance towards long-term goals. Draupadi's life, marked by multiple instances such as public humiliation and trials, demonstrates her fight for justice with a passion for dharma and sustained perseverance throughout the Mahabharat. Her unwavering resolve serves as a moral compass and psychological fuel for husbands, the Pandavas, preventing them from compromising their goal. This grit-based analysis offers a timeless study of perseverance and moral conviction in adversity through Panchali's life. Recent research shows Draupadi was one of the most complex figures in the Mahabharata. She has been reinterpreted in contemporary scholarship through modern critical lenses. Moving beyond traditional depictions of her as a victim, also portrayed as a symbol of resistance, psychological transformation, and self-assertion. She is seen as an early feminist figure. Draupadi embodies the struggle against patriarchal constraints, such as her defiance and resilience, marking a powerful journey from subjugation to empowerment.

**Objective:** To do a Summative Content Analysis of Draupadi's character to understand the presence of grit personality traits.

**Methods:** Systematic review of scientific research articles on the psychological analysis of Draupadi's character using summative content analysis. It helped in presenting the characterisation of Draupadi in the light of Grit personality.

**Results:** List of personality traits that represent grit behaviour in different situations in which Draupadi was placed.

**Conclusion:** The Indian definition of Grit personality is based on Draupadi's character.

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**KEYWORDS:** Grit Personality, Draupadi, Summative Content Analysis.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This research study focuses on the ancient Indian epic, the Mahabharata, which stands as a monumental work of literature, philosophy, and history, delving into the complexities of human existence, moral duty, and the devastating consequences of conflict. At the heart of its intricate narrative is the compelling and multifaceted character of Draupadi (Panchali), the common wife of the five Pandavas. Draupadi's life is a saga defined by extraordinary trials from the political manipulation and exile of her husbands to the profound public humiliation she endured. Recent contemporary scholarship has moved beyond traditional, often victim-centric, interpretations to re-examine her as a powerful symbol of resistance, psychological transformation, and self-assertion. For instance, Pareek (2025) frames Draupadi as a "mythological precursor to modern feminist resistance," challenging patriarchal narratives and reclaiming her agency. Her defiance against patriarchal constraints and unwavering quest for justice position her as one of the epic's most complex and psychologically rich figures.

This reinterpretation is particularly illuminating when viewed through the lens of modern personality psychology, specifically the concept of Grit. Defined as passion and sustained perseverance toward long-term goals (Angela Duckworth & colleagues, 2007). Grit is a non-cognitive trait that has been scientifically linked to high achievement and resilience across diverse domains. Draupadi's character perfectly illustrates a key psychological trait: Grit. Her unwavering commitment to dharma (righteousness) and her determination to keep the Pandavas focused on their main goal, the restoration of their kingdom, even through immense suffering, show sustained perseverance. She serves as their moral guide, consistently prioritising the long-term objective of justice over any immediate surrender or compromise.

To analyse this "Grit personality" in Draupadi systematically, this study will use Summative Content Analysis. This research technique involves identifying and counting specific keywords and themes within scholarly texts about Draupadi to understand the structure of her character. By reviewing scientific psychological studies of Draupadi, the analysis will quantify and categorise the personality traits that demonstrate Grit in the various challenges she faced. The goal is to define Draupadi's character through the lens of Grit and propose a new, Indian definition of the Grit personality rooted in her moral conviction and sustained endurance. The reason for conducting this systematic review is twofold: to address gaps in modern psychology and to enrich classical literary analysis. Validating Modern Psychology, where the study tests the universal relevance of the Grit concept, which originated in Western psychology, against non-Western, time-honoured data found in the Mahabharata. By showing that Draupadi embodies Grit, the research confirms that perseverance is a fundamental human trait across cultures and eras. Deepening Character Interpretation, where the research moves past interpreting Draupadi solely as a victim. It provides a systematic, evidence-based psychological view, framing her unrelenting pursuit of Dharma as a model for morally driven, high-stakes Grit. Finally, developing an Indian Context, whose work aims to create an Indian-centric definition of the Grit personality,

embedding the concept within the moral and philosophical framework of Indian thought, thereby contributing to global psychological theory.

The rationale of this study offers significant contributions to both academic and cultural spheres. It supports the global validity of the Grit construct and provides a model for using Summative Content Analysis to extract psychological traits from complex literature. Culturally, by formally identifying Draupadi as an embodiment of Grit, the study highlights that sustained perseverance can be driven by a moral mission (Dharma) rather than just the desire for personal achievement, adding a profound ethical layer to the study of resilience.

## Background

The collective findings of the systematic review underscore a profound intersection between feminine agency and the Grit personality embodied by the character of Draupadi in the Mahabharata. Across literary, feminist, and psychological interpretations, Draupadi stands as a timeless figure of resistance, moral courage, and psychological perseverance within a restrictive patriarchal context (Sharma, 2023; Pareek, 2025). Her life, marked by defining moments like the defiance during the Dice Game, is consistently highlighted as a powerful act of feminine assertion and a pivotal moment of reclaiming voice and agency (Joseph, 2024; Bhattacharjee, 2024). Her transformation from silence to voice, particularly emphasised in modern scholarship, directly mirrors the psychological construct of Grit, which is defined by passion (for justice and dharma) and sustained perseverance toward long-term goals (Duckworth et al., 2007; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). The methodological analysis revealed a convergence: Qualitative methods (textual/thematic analysis) dominated literary studies, illuminating her moral and emotional agency (Sharma, 2023; Joseph, 2024), while quantitative methods (psychometric and correlational analysis) were prevalent in Grit research, establishing its empirical basis. This synthesis affirms that perseverance, moral purpose, and resistance are central to both Draupadi's character and the modern concept of Grit. However, a key gap exists in the limited application of psychological constructs to non-Western mythological narratives (Pareek, 2025). This study addresses that gap by positioning Draupadi as a culturally embedded exemplar of Grit, ultimately concluding that she embodies the fusion of feminine agency and perseverance, serving as an archetypal model of psychological endurance rooted in the Indian cultural psyche and offering a pathway toward a culturally sensitive understanding of empowerment, resilience and moral steadfastness (Joseph, 2024; Bhattacharjee, 2024).

## 2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

### Research Design

This study employed a summative content analysis supported by data triangulation that examined how Draupadi's character reflects psychological components of grit. Summative content analysis was selected because it enables both the quantification of key terms and the interpretive assessment of underlying meanings embedded within textual narratives. A total of 30 research papers were selected from two primary digital

databases: Google Scholar and PubMed. Data triangulation was incorporated to enhance the credibility and validity of findings by integrating evidence from multiple disciplinary perspectives.

**Data Sources and Triangulation**

Triangulation was conducted across three independent bodies of literature:

- Psychological research on grit (e.g., perseverance, long-term goal pursuit, emotional regulation).
- Feminist and sociocultural analyses of Draupadi’s character.
- Mythological and narrative studies of the Mahabharata.

The convergence of these sources allowed for cross-validation of themes and ensured that the grit-related traits identified in Draupadi were grounded in multiple interpretive traditions rather than a single theoretical lens.

**Literature Search Strategy**

A systematic search was conducted across Google Scholar, JSTOR, PubMed, and ResearchGate. Search terms included “Draupadi,” “Dharma,” “Mahabharata psychological analysis,” “grit,” “perseverance,” “feminist interpretation,” and “resilience.”

**Inclusion criteria required sources to:**

- be scholarly works published in English,
- provide psychological, thematic, or feminist analysis of Draupadi,
- or explicitly discuss constructs relevant to grit (e.g., endurance, agency, trauma, identity).
- Access to papers via open sources

**Exclusion** criteria included non-academic content, fictional retellings without analytic grounding, and sources lacking psychological or thematic relevance.

**Data Analysis**

Analysis occurred in three stages consistent with summative content analysis procedures:

**Keyword Identification.**

Manifest content was identified through repeated words, descriptors, and concepts linked to grit, such as perseverance, resistance, courage, endurance, emotional regulation, and agency.

**Thematic Coding.**

Keywords were grouped into broader latent themes, including perseverance under adversity, resistance to patriarchal norms, emotional regulation in crisis, moral agency, identity formation, and sociocultural resilience, leading to two main themes, i.e. Grit and Draupadi.

**Interpretive Triangulation.**

Themes were compared across psychological, feminist, and mythological texts to determine points of convergence and divergence. This step clarified how Draupadi’s behaviours aligned with or expanded upon traditional grit constructs.

**Data Management and Manual Analysis**

It is critical to note that no specialised software was utilised for this analysis. All coding, categorisation, and thematic grouping were performed manually by the researchers to ensure a deep, contextualised understanding of the nuances within the literature. Data triangulation was achieved by cross-referencing findings from three distinct fields: positive psychology, feminist studies, and mythological narrative analysis.

**Outcome of the Methodological Process**

The combined use of systematic review, summative content analysis, and triangulation yielded:

- a consolidated list of grit-related behavioural and psychological traits exemplified by Draupadi,
- a multidimensional thematic framework illustrating how perseverance operates within sociocultural and moral contexts, and
- a culturally grounded definition of grit informed by Draupadi’s narrative arc.

This methodological approach ensured that findings were both theoretically consistent with psychological literature and sensitive to the sociocultural context embedded within the Mahabharata.

**Researcher Bias Control**

To maintain objectivity, a deductive coding framework was established before the analysis, utilising Angela Duckworth’s Grit Theory as a primary structure. This acted as a guardrail, ensuring that traits were identified based on evidence-based definitions rather than subjective interpretation of the epic.

While a total of 30 papers were utilised for the summative content analysis to establish thematic frequencies (n=701), a core subset of 12 papers provided the substantive qualitative data used to construct the multidimensional model of socio-contextual grit."

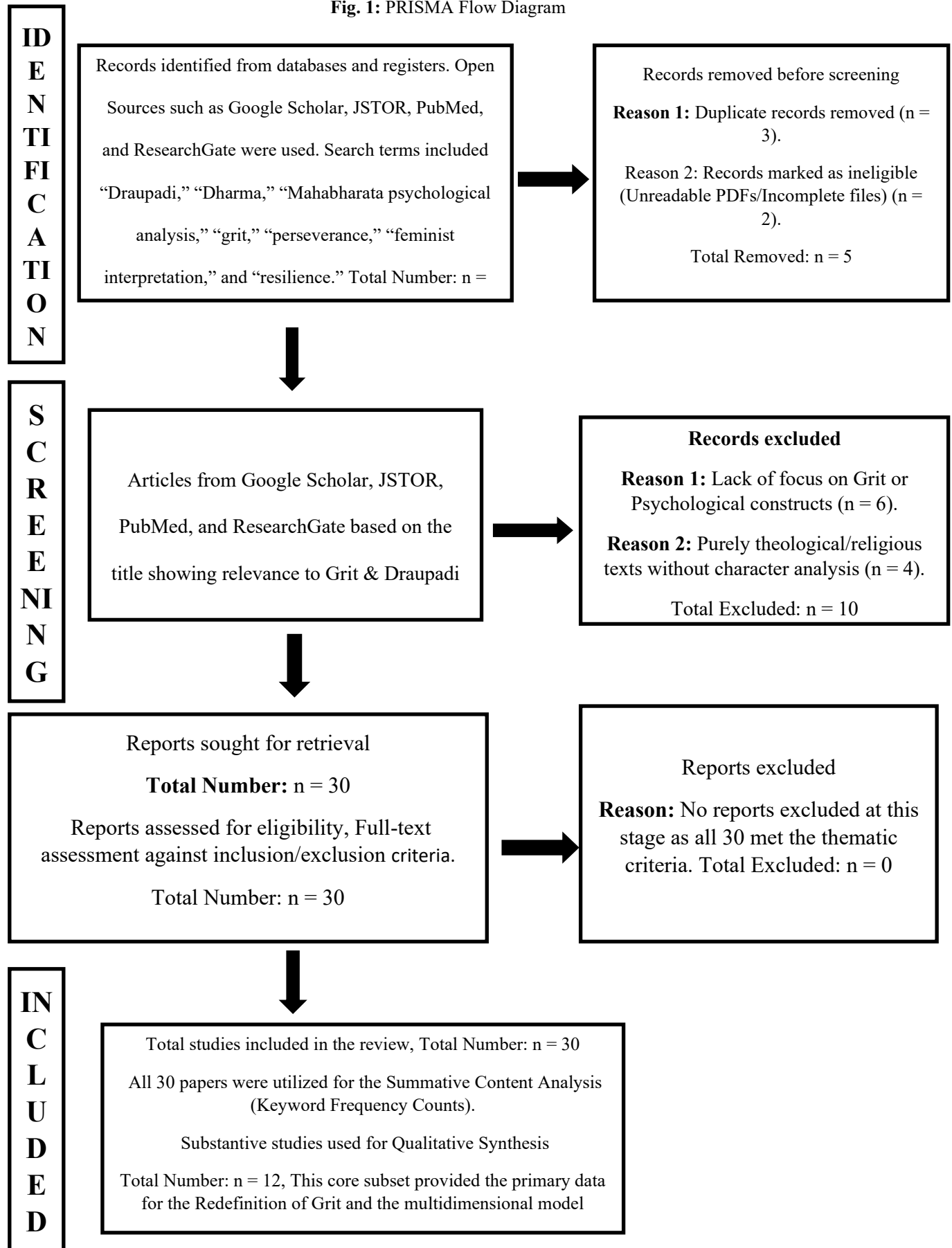
**Table 1:** Substantive Contributors to the Multi-Dimensional Grit Synthesis

Thematic Cluster	Primary Substantive Contributors	Core Theoretical Contribution
1. Socio-Contextual Expression	García-Arroyo (2017); Roy (2024); Srivastava & Gupta (2023); Bhajiwala (2025)	Defined Grit as an act of Resistance and Empowerment rather than just passive endurance.
2. Moral Agency & Response	Agarwal (2017); Nenwani (2024); Patel (2023); Tantray & Vat (2016)	Linked perseverance to Dharma (Moral Conviction) and analysed the impact of Trauma.
3. Internal Grit (Trait)	Rimfeld et al. (2016); Schmidt et al. (2017); Datu (2021); Sharma (2023)	Established the psychometric baseline for Perseverance and identified Agency in discourse.

Table 2: Keywords, frequency &amp; paper contributed

Keywords	Frequency	Paper Contribution
Resistance	132	Roy (2024): Specifically analyses "Narratives of Resistance" and how Draupadi's nonconformity subverts patriarchal systems. Sarkar (2023): Explores Draupadi's "heroic nature" and unyielding will as a form of active resistance (the "he" in "her").
Resilience	104	Srivastava & Gupta (2023): Focus on the "Emergence from Oppression," mapping the resilient transition from victimhood to empowerment. Schmidt et al. (2017): Provide the empirical validation for Beharrlichkeit (the grit-related perseverance/resilience) in the German Grit Scale.
Empowerment	63	Srivastava & Gupta (2023): This is a primary source for this keyword. The title itself, "Emergence from Oppression to Empowerment," explicitly tracks this shift in both Draupadi and Dopdi. Sarkar (2023): Contributes to this theme by discussing Draupadi's "Heroism" and how her "unyielding will" empowers her to transcend traditional feminine docility. Sharma (2023) argues that her mastery over her polyandrous household and her verbal dexterity in the assembly are acts of structural empowerment. Patel (2023): Frames her "Liberation" not just as a spiritual exit, but as an empowering realisation of her own divinity and self-worth over worldly "materiality."
Dharma	118	Patel (2023): Connects Draupadi's journey to the ultimate goal of Moksha and ethical liberation, grounded in Indian philosophical values. Shetty & Chowdhury (2020): Contrasts "Transaction vs. Relationship," showing how Draupadi's actions are governed by the deep moral bonds of Dharma rather than simple exchanges.
Trauma	79	Tantray & Vat (2016): A detailed account of the "Sufferings and Disgrace" (chronic trauma) she endured and how she remained an epitome of patience. Sarkar (2023): Touches on the "Sinister" side of her character, the psychological scars that lead to her quest for vengeance.
Agency	91	Sharma (2023): Uses Feminist Discourse Analysis to show how Draupadi uses her voice and polyandrous status to assert individual agency. Yaseen (2020): While focusing on Hangwoman, this paper is used in your set to compare the "reimagining of the feminine" and the assertion of female identity in harsh environments.
Perseverance	72	Rimfeld et al. (2016): A major contributor to your frequency count; it explores the genetics of Grit and "Perseverance of Effort" in academic achievement. Schmidt et al. (2017) define the "Consistency of Interest" and long-term effort required for the Grit construct.
Passion	42	Patel (2023): Highlights her "persistent journey" and deep mental dedication to moving from materiality to spiritual liberation.

Fig. 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram



### 3. RESULTS

The systematic review of 30 unique academic papers identified eight primary keywords that define the Grit personality within the context of Draupadi's character and modern psychological frameworks. These findings establish Draupadi as a cultural benchmark for Grit, reframing the concept from a purely individualistic achievement trait to a multidimensional, context-sensitive process.

#### 1. Thematic Frequency Analysis

The content analysis of the selected literature yielded a total of 694 keyword occurrences, categorised into three distinct thematic clusters.

#### Cluster 1: Socio-Contextual Expression Themes

This cluster represents how inner determination is manifested as an external response to environmental pressures.

**Resistance (Count: 132):** The most frequent keyword across the dataset. It represents purposeful pushback against structural and patriarchal hurdles, as seen in the work of García-Arroyo (2017) and Roy (2024).

**Resilience (Count: 104):** Describes an identity-driven capacity to endure prolonged adversity, shifting the narrative from victimhood to psychological strength (Bhajiwala, 2025; Schmidt et al., 2017).

**Empowerment (Count: 63):** Marks the transformation from subjugation to autonomous action, specifically highlighted in feminist re-readings (Srivastava & Gupta, 2023).

#### Cluster 2: Moral Agency & Response Themes

This cluster explores the ethical and psychological "why" behind sustained effort.

**Dharma (Count: 118):** Indicates that perseverance in the Indian context is driven by ethical righteousness and a sense of duty rather than personal ambition (Agarwal, 2017; Patel, 2023).

**Trauma (Count: 79):** Highlights that sustained action is often forged as a psychological response to extreme hardship or "moral injury" (Nenwani, 2024; Tantray & Vat, 2016).

#### Cluster 3: Internal Grit Themes

These themes align with traditional psychological pillars of grit, such as consistency of interest and effort.

**Agency (Count: 91):** Represents individual initiative and the active assertion of voice (Sharma, 2023).

**Perseverance (Count: 72):** Aligns with the standard psychological definition of sustained effort toward long-term goals (Rimfeld et al., 2016).

**Passion (Count: 42):** Signifies a deep mental dedication to a long-term purpose, such as the pursuit of justice (Datu, 2021).

Based on the synthesis of these themes, Grit is redefined for this study as:

**“Grit can be defined as a sustained, identity-driven capacity for perseverance, agency, and purposeful resistance across prolonged adversity, shaped by the interaction of internal motivation and external sociocultural conditions.”**

This conceptualisation moves the focus away from simple goal attainment. Instead, it frames Grit as a moral, psychological, and socio-contextual process shaped by responses to injustice and structural barriers. The analysis indicates that Draupadi's Grit manifests through two intersecting channels:

**Internal Grit:** Confirmed by exceptional perseverance under adversity and an advanced ability to maintain emotional regulation during crises (Schmidt et al., 2017). This is rooted in her absolute commitment to moral agency and internal ethical beliefs.

**Socio-Contextual Expression:** Her inner strength is expressed externally through resistance to patriarchal norms and a continuous process of identity formation resulting from trauma.

The data confirms that while Grit includes the "tendency to persistently pursue long-term goals despite challenges," it is not merely a personal trait. In the context of Draupadi, Grit is an endurance skill shaped by structural oppression. Her assertive voice and ethical pushback demonstrate that Grit is a form of identity-driven resilience, enabling sustained action even when confronting deep-seated inequality.

### 4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this research suggest that the traditional psychological view of grit, focused narrowly on individual achievement and internal drive, is insufficient for describing endurance in the face of systemic injustice. While the established model (e.g., Duckworth, 2007) views Grit as a predictor of individual success, these results suggest that Grit is significantly more context-sensitive. By integrating "Agency," "Purposeful Resistance," and "External Sociocultural Conditions," this study moves the construct from a purely intrapersonal trait to a sociopolitical resilience process.

A crucial insight from this synthesis is that perseverance is not merely a measure of internal "stamina," but is profoundly shaped by external forces such as trauma and patriarchal constraints. In the case of Draupadi, Grit does not function as a quiet endurance of suffering; rather, it is an active, assertive phenomenon. Her grit is fueled by an "identity-driven resilience," where her assertive voice and ethical challenges to humiliation serve as a moral response to structural inequality. By reframing Grit as a socio-contextual process, this research challenges the "trait-only" perspective in positive psychology. It suggests that when individuals face long-term adversity rooted in injustice, their "Grit" is not just about staying on task; it is about Identity Assertion and Meaning Making. This shift situates Grit not just as a predictor of achievement, but as a vital survival and resistance skill shaped by the intersection of internal conviction and the external moral landscape.

### 5. CONCLUSION

The integrated analysis demonstrates that grit extends far beyond its conventional psychological framing as sustained effort toward long-term goals. When examined alongside feminist and mythological interpretations of Draupadi, grit emerges as a multidimensional construct shaped by sociocultural context, moral agency, and resistance to structural injustice. The convergence of psychological and narrative-based evidence shows that perseverance is not only an internal trait but also a response forged through trauma, oppression, and identity negotiation. Draupadi's story illustrates how grit operates as both an inner psychological resource and an externally mediated process of resilience, meaning-making, and ethical resistance. Overall, this review reframes grit as a

dynamic interplay between personal determination and sociopolitical endurance, underscoring that sustained perseverance is deeply embedded in context, values, and power structures. This expanded understanding invites future research to examine grit as a relational and context-responsive phenomenon rather than a solely individual trait.

### Researcher Positionality

This study is grounded in the perspective that ancient Indian epics, specifically the Mahabharata, serve as sophisticated sources of longitudinal psychological insight. Adopting a culturally sensitive lens, the researcher interprets Draupadi as a cultural archetype whose perseverance is rooted in moral conviction and Dharma rather than individual achievement alone. This positionality informs the analysis of trauma not merely as adversity, but as a catalyst for sustained moral agency and indigenous resilience.

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### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper. There are no competing financial or personal interests that could have influenced the results or the integrity of the study.

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