

# Structural Relationships among Work Grit, Career Identity, Job Satisfaction, and Innovative Work Behavior<sup>\*</sup>

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## ■ ABSTRACT ■

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This study aimed to investigate the relationships among work grit, career identity, job satisfaction, and innovative work behavior. A total of 250 complete responses from employees in South Korea were used for data analysis using structural equation modeling. The results demonstrated that all direct relationships were positively significant. First, work grit significantly influences career identity, job satisfaction, and innovative work behavior. Second, career identity affects job satisfaction. Third, job satisfaction has been shown to affect innovative work behavior. Fourth, career identity and job satisfaction mediate the relationship between work grit and innovative work behavior. This study contributes to the understanding of how work grit influences career performance, satisfaction, and behavioral outcome. These findings suggest the need for continued attention to work grit in organizational settings.

[Keywords] Work grit, Grit at work, Employee grit, Innovative work behavior

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## I . Introduction

In today's rapidly changing and highly competitive environment, achieving strong performance outcomes requires more than just strategic organizational initiatives (Han, 2018). Grit, defined as sustained effort and perseverance toward long-term goals, has been recognized as a crucial individual trait that enhances career development and boosts organizational performance (Duckworth et al., 2007; Kim & Kim, 2022; Kim & Lee, 2024). In particular, work grit helps employees navigate challenges and maintain focus on their professional objectives (Kim & Kim, 2018; Southwick et al., 2019). As modern society increasingly values creativity and adaptability (Youn et al., 2025), it is essential for individuals not only to demonstrate persistence through work grit but also to cultivate a strong identity related to their work and engage in creative behavior (Lee, 2020).

Individuals with high levels of work grit tend to have a well-established career identity (Kim & Lee, 2024). Career identity helps individuals clearly recognize their career paths and set long-term goals (Kim et al., 2023). This allows people to identify their desired self-image more accurately, proactively shape their career trajectory, and develop their careers over the long term (Kim & Lee, 2024). A well-defined career identity subsequently leads to job satisfaction (Hu et al., 2022). A clear career identity helps individuals align their current job roles with their long-term career aspirations, creating a sense of purpose and direction in their work. When employees understand how their daily tasks contribute to their broader career goals, they are more likely to find meaning in their work, which enhances job satisfaction. Additionally, a strong career identity enables individuals to recognize opportunities for growth and development within their current roles, reinforcing their commitment to the organization and increasing their overall job satisfaction (Zhao et al., 2022).

This level of job satisfaction contributes to or promotes innovative work behavior (Mustafa et al., 2021). When individuals feel satisfied with their jobs, they experience psychological safety, which reduces their fear of generating new ideas or attempting innovative initiatives (Youn et al., 2025). Satisfied individuals also cultivate a deeper commitment to their work,

which consistently drives them to pursue superior outcomes (Hwang, 2020). This intrinsic motivation subsequently enhances their involvement in tasks that contribute to continuous improvement and innovation (Dara & Hamidah, 2022).

According to the integrated conceptual framework of positive psychological capital and workplace outcomes, an individual's psychological capacity sequentially influences attitudinal outcomes, behavioral intentions, and behavioral outcomes (Youssef-Morgan & Luthans, 2009). Job satisfaction and career identity can be viewed as examples of positive attitudinal outcomes, whereas innovative work behavior can be considered an example of a behavioral outcome. This framework suggests that individual characteristics and psychological capital can directly influence both attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. Work grit, as a psychological resource, has also been found to affect each of these outcomes individually (Dugan et al., 2018; Kim & Kim, 2022).

Previous studies have examined the effects of work grit on career development, personal satisfaction, and work behavior in a fragmented manner (Kim & Lee, 2024; Lee, 2020). Empirically validating this framework in relation to sustainable outcomes, such as innovative work behavior, may offer important theoretical and practical implications (Youssef-Morgan & Luthans, 2009). While innovative work behavior is often attributed to leadership and organizational factors, individual-level variables, particularly career-related traits, have received relatively less scholarly attention despite their meaningful influence (Yoo & Lee, 2021). Therefore, it is valuable to explore the mechanisms through which individual-level psychological traits such as work grit contribute to innovative work behavior.

This study does not merely aim to identify predictors of innovative work behavior, but rather to clarify the mechanism by which work grit leads to such behavior. By examining the sequential process through which work grit influences career identity, job satisfaction, and ultimately innovative work behavior, this study seeks to empirically validate the proposed pathway. In doing so, it contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how psychological capital operates within the workplace and offers practical insights for enhancing both individual and organizational performance.

## II. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

### 1. The Direct Effects of Work Grit

The process of demonstrating work grit significantly contributes to the formation of career identity (Kim & Lee, 2024). Career identity refers to the establishment of a firm sense of professional identity (Kim et al., 2023). Unlike vocational identity, which is often discussed in adolescence, career identity is a broader concept of interest in the fields of human resource development (HRD) and career development. It refers to an individual's established sense of self in relation to their career, formed through reflection on accumulated career experiences and professional trajectories. Individuals with well-developed career identities are more likely to make logical and systematic career decisions even when facing serious difficulties or challenges related to their careers (Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011). Individuals with high work grit continuously deliberate and attempt various approaches to accomplish their work-related goals (Kim & Kim, 2022). This ongoing effort allows them to reflect on their preferences and dislikes regarding their work and to consider how to develop their careers. The formation of career identity is primarily achieved through extensive exploration, and individuals' sustained efforts toward work-related goals can be understood as a form of vocational exploration (Martin et al., 2024). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that individuals with higher work grit are more likely to develop a stronger sense of career identity. Kim and Lee (2024) empirically demonstrated the impact of work grit on career identity in a study involving Korean employees across various occupations.

Additionally, grit has consistently been identified as a variable that influences various forms of satisfaction such as job and life satisfaction (Ramos-Vera et al., 2023). Job satisfaction is highly dependent on intrinsic motivation, which is strengthened by the non-cognitive trait of grit in pursuit of goals (Dugan et al., 2018; Yoon et al., 2025). Individuals with high grit do not perceive work as a mere task. Instead, they positively view the challenges of goal attainment, which subsequently enhances their job satisfaction. Dugan et al. (2018) conducted a study on

147 salespeople in the United States, revealing that those with higher levels of grit exhibited greater job satisfaction compared to their peers. Jeong et al. (2021) demonstrated the influence of grit on job satisfaction in a study of 269 Korean employees. Cho and Kim (2022) examined 186 nurses in South Korea and confirmed the positive impact of grit on job satisfaction.

Lastly, work grit has been shown to influence innovative work behavior in various prior studies (Kim & Shin, 2018). Individuals who work with grit strive to achieve their goals through various means, often leading to the generation of innovative ideas (Youn et al., 2025). Furthermore, when these individuals deem it necessary to achieve their work- or career-related goals, they actively work towards realizing these ideas. Consequently, individuals with high grit levels are more likely to exhibit innovative work behavior. Youn et al. (2025) used a sample of 430 Korean employees to investigate the positive effect of work grit on innovative work behavior. In addition, Kim and Shin (2018) demonstrated the impact of work grit on innovative work behavior in a study of 371 employees across various industries in Korea. Kang (2020) also confirmed the influence of grit on innovative work behavior in a study of 205 employees from four-star and higher hotels in Korea.

Taken together, these findings suggest that work grit can influence individuals' career identity, as well as their positive emotional responses related to work, such as job satisfaction. Moreover, even when considered solely in relation to innovative work behavior, grit toward one's job can be expected to encourage proactive and creative actions in the workplace. Based on the above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Work grit is positively related to career identity.

Hypothesis 2: Work grit is positively related to job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3: Work grit is positively related to innovative work behavior.

## 2. The Direct Effects of Career Identity

Career identity influences various career-related outcomes (Kim et al., 2023; Kim & Lee, 2024). In addition, it has been studied in relation to organizational variables, such as job

involvement, job satisfaction, and turnover intention (Hu et al., 2022). However, its direct relationship with broader performance outcomes, such as innovative work behavior or organizational citizenship behavior, has not been clearly established. In particular, individuals with a strong career identity have a clearer understanding of their career paths and goals, leading to higher job satisfaction compared to others (Zhao et al., 2022). People with a career identity believe that their work holds significant social value, which fosters a positive attitude (Martin et al., 2024).

Zhao et al. (2022) found that career identity significantly influences job satisfaction in a study of 506 individuals involved in the preservation of intangible cultural heritage in China. Based on this discussion, we propose the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4: Career identity is positively related to job satisfaction.

### 3. The Direct Effects of Job Satisfaction

Employees with high job satisfaction are more likely to engage in voluntary behaviors that contribute to organizational performance. These behaviors include the creation, sharing, and dissemination of knowledge among organizational members as well as proactive work efforts and other creative and innovative actions. Specifically, job satisfaction motivates concrete behaviors related to idea generation, promotion, and implementation (Mustafa et al., 2021).

In small- and medium-sized organizations, where resources are limited, employees with high job satisfaction are more committed to innovative work behavior to help their organizations achieve competitive advantages. Despite challenging conditions, satisfied employees work diligently towards innovative work behavior to support their organization's development (Mustafa et al., 2021). Dara and Hamidah (2022) conducted a study with 760 instructors in Indonesia, showing that job satisfaction influences innovative work behavior, with job satisfaction having a greater impact than job autonomy. Mustafa et al. (2021) also confirmed that job satisfaction influences innovative work behavior in a study of 125 employees from small- and medium-sized enterprises in Switzerland.

Although more active behavioral constructs, such as employee engagement and knowledge sharing, have received significant attention in the field of HRD (Yoo & Lee, 2021), job satisfaction remains a critical factor that should not be overlooked, as it serves as a fundamental motivational source that triggers action (Hwang, 2020). A meta-analysis on innovative work behavior has demonstrated that job satisfaction is a variable with a large effect size for predicting such behavior (Yoo & Lee, 2021). Therefore, job satisfaction should not be dismissed as merely passive but instead considered a psychologically meaningful state that bridges innovative work behavior (Judge et al., 2001). Based on this discussion, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: Job satisfaction is positively related to innovative work behavior.

#### **4. The Indirect Effects of Career Identity and Job Satisfaction**

According to Youssef-Morgan and Luthans' integrated conceptual framework (2009), non-cognitive traits, as a form of psychological capital, lead to behavioral outcomes through attitudinal outcomes. Cho and Kim (2022) identified the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between grit and job performance among 186 Korean nurses. While this prior research is not entirely aligned with the current study's focus on the mediating effect of job satisfaction on the relationship between work grit and innovative work behavior, it provides a useful reference by highlighting the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between psychological strengths and outcomes. Youn et al. (2025) empirically examined the effect of work grit on innovative work behavior through job satisfaction. Based on this discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 6: Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between work grit and innovative work behavior.

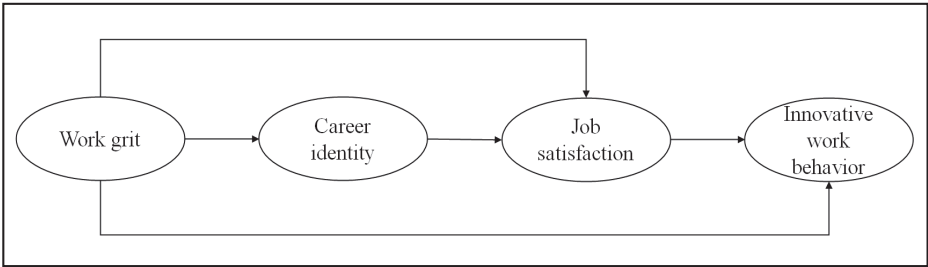
In addition, this study explored multiple mediating effects. Following Youssef-Morgan and Luthans' integrated conceptual framework (2009), this study examines how positive attitudes, such as career identity and job satisfaction, influence the impact of psychological traits on

innovative work behavior, which is a behavioral outcome. Individuals with a strong sense of career identity are likely to derive meaning and direction from their work, which in turn enhances job satisfaction prior to innovative work behavior (Hu et al., 2022). Considering this evidence, we propose the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 7: Career identity and job satisfaction mediate the relationship between work grit and innovative work behavior.

III. Methods

This study aimed to investigate the structural relationships among work grit, career identity, job satisfaction, and innovative work behavior in Korean organizations. To test the research hypotheses, a research model based on previous studies was proposed (Figure 1) and analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM).



[Figure 1] Research model

1. Sample and procedure

The data for this study were collected by a research company that provided a service for collecting information and data in Korea in August 2023. The relationships among work grit, career identity, job satisfaction, and innovative work behavior explored in this study are not



concepts limited to specific occupations or job levels, but are considered universally relevant to all employees. Therefore, this study was designed as an initial exploratory investigation targeting a broad sample of employees across various industries and positions in order to examine these structural relationships. The participants were full-time employees working in Korean organizations. Following the data collection procedure, 250 cases were used for further analysis. Self-reported questionnaires were used in this study and the survey was conducted using an online survey system with a convenient sampling approach. Of the 250 participants, 63.6% were male and 36.4% were female. The age groups of the respondents were evenly distributed (under 30 years: 23.6%; 30–39 years: 25.2%; 40–49 years: 23.2%; over 50 years: 28%).

The most common positions of respondents were staff (32%), followed by assistant managers (22.8%), managers (21.2%), assistant directors (12.4%), directors (5.6%), and executives (6.0%). Approximately 63.2% of the respondents had worked in their current organization for less than 15 years (less than 1 year: 4%; 1–4 years: 20.4%; 5–9 years: 20.4%; 10–14 years: 18.4%; 15–20 years: 11.2%; and over 20 years: 25.6%).

〈Table 1〉 Characteristics of the sample

Category	Sub category	Frequency	Ratio	Category	Sub category	Frequency	Ratio
Gender	Male	159	63,6	Years in Organization	Less than 1 year	10	4,0
	Female	91	36,4		1–4 years	51	20,4
Age Group	Under 30 years	59	23,6		5–9 years	51	20,4
	30–39 years	63	25,2		10–14 years	46	18,4
	40–49 years	58	23,2		15–20 years	28	11,2
	Over 50 years	70	28,0		Over 20 years	64	25,6
Position	Staff	80	32,0				
	Assistant Manager	57	22,8				
	Manager	53	21,2				
	Assistant Director	31	12,4				
	Director	14	5,6				
	Executive	15	6,0				

## 2. Measurements

Information on the measurement tools used for each variable is provided below: To assess the reliability of each scale, both Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , which assumes equal factor loadings (tau-equivalence), and McDonald's  $\omega$ , which allows for varying factor loadings across items, were used (Hayes & Coutts, 2020).

Work grit was assessed using the Work Grit Scale developed and validated by Kim and Kim (2022) in the Korean organizational context. This scale was based on the original Grit Scale developed by Duckworth et al. (2007). The scale consists of three sub-factors: consistency of effort, active learning, and positive thinking. Sample items include "I tend to maintain long-term interest in work-related topics," "I believe I can overcome challenging tasks through learning," and "I view difficulties experienced during work as valuable learning opportunities." The 20-item used a seven-point Likert scale, and the internal consistency in this study was .876 (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) and .885 (McDonald's  $\omega$ ).

This study used a career identity scale consisting of six items rated on a five-point Likert scale (Lee, 2011; Verbruggen & Sels, 2008). Cronbach's alpha was .858 as same as McDonald's  $\omega$  in this study. Sample items include "I have a clear understanding of what is valuable in my career and life," and "I am well aware of what gives me energy and motivation in my life."

Job satisfaction was measured using the scale developed by Park (2005), which was based on the job satisfaction and growth satisfaction items originally proposed by Hackman and Oldham (1975). The scale consists of six items rated on a five-point Likert scale, and the reported reliability in Park's study was .86. Sample items include "Overall, I am satisfied with my job," and "I am satisfied with the extent to which I can think and act independently in my work." Cronbach's  $\alpha$  in this study was .633, and McDonald's  $\omega$  was .798. However, in the confirmatory factor analysis, one item (JS2) was deleted because the standardized path coefficient of JS2, the reverse item, had a negative value. After removing the JS2, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  in this study was .895, and McDonald's  $\omega$  was .896.

Innovative work behavior was measured using the nine items developed by Janssen (2000).

For this study, the items were translated into Korean and subsequently reviewed by two language professionals to ensure their linguistic accuracy. Innovative work behavior consists of sub-factors of idea generation, idea promotion, and idea realization and is measured on a 7-point Likert scale. Sample items include: "I come up with ideas when difficult issues arise," "I gain support to implement my ideas," and "I ensure that my ideas are actually put into practice." Cronbach's  $\alpha$  in this study was .907 and McDonald's  $\omega$  was .916.

### 3. Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed using SEM. First, a preliminary analysis was conducted for common method bias (CMB), normality, reliability, and correlations. Second, the overall fit indices of the research model and potential improper solutions are evaluated. Specifically, this study estimates the research model using the robust maximum likelihood (ML) method. Given that multivariate normality could not be fully assumed, the Satorra-Bentler robust maximum likelihood estimator was employed to provide more accurate chi-square statistics and robust standard errors (Kim, 2016; Kline, 2011). Fit indices such as the comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR) ( $CFI \geq .90$ ,  $TLI \geq .90$ ,  $RMSEA \leq .08$ ,  $SRMR \leq .08$ ; Bae, 2014) were investigated along with the Satorra-Bentler (SB) scaled chi-square (Kline, 2011). Additionally, individual parameter estimates have been scrutinized to ensure that there are no improper solutions with error variances, signs, magnitudes, or statistically significant paths (Lei & Wu, 2007). Third, convergent validity (average variance extracted [AVE]  $\geq .50$ ; construct reliability [CR]  $\geq .70$ ) and discriminant validity (heterotrait-monotrait [HTMT] ratio  $\leq .85$ ) were investigated to evaluate the validity of the research variables (Hair Jr et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2015). Fourth, to test the research hypotheses, standardized estimates of the path coefficients (SPC) of the direct effects and bias-corrected (BC) bootstrap estimates of the indirect effects at a 95% confidence interval were identified.

IV. Results

1. CMB, normality, reliability, and correlation

The preliminary analysis phase identified the CMB, normality, reliability, and correlations. First, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed on the one-factor model to assess CMB (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The resulting one-factor model poorly fit the data (SB  $\chi^2(779) = 3052.597, p < .001$ ; CFI = .642; TLI = .623; RMSEA = .108; SRMR = .100), indicating that none of the common latent factors accounted for the major variance in the collected data. Therefore, it can be assumed that the CMB is not a significant issue in this study. Moreover, skewness (skewness ranged from -0.921 to 0.131) and kurtosis (kurtosis ranged from -0.794 to 1.409) of the data collected to check normality were found to be values that did not violate univariate normality. Because multivariate normality can be assumed through univariate normality (Kline, 2011), it is conceivable that multivariate normality can be assumed in this study. However, considering that perfect normality does not exist, a robust ML approach was used in this research. In addition, the work grit and innovative work behavior variables used in this study have been demonstrated to have a multidimensional factor structure in empirical studies. Therefore, in this study, an item parceling approach was used for multidimensional structural factors (Kim, 2016). Moreover, as described in Table 2, the reliability of the variables was acceptable (Urdan, 2010), and all correlations between the variables indicated that there was no multicollinearity problem (Lei & Wu, 2007).

〈Table 2〉 Descriptive statistics, reliabilities, and correlations among research variables

Variables	M	SD	$\alpha$	$\omega$	1	2	3	4
Work grit <sup>b</sup>	5.108	0.836	.876	.885	1			
Career identity <sup>a</sup>	3.659	0.569	.858	.858	.676***	1		
Job satisfaction <sup>a</sup>	3.274	0.557	.895	.896	.615***	.686***	1	
Innovative work behavior <sup>b</sup>	4.698	0.960	.907	.916	.624***	.741***	.703***	1

Notes: N = 250; a = five-point Likert scale; b = seven-point Likert scale; The reliability of job satisfaction is the calculated value after the JS2 item was removed; \*\*\*p < .001

2. Model evaluation

To evaluate the research model, the measurement model (MM) and full model (FM) were evaluated for their overall fit indices (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The Satorra-Bentler  $\chi^2$  statistic for the measurement model was statistically significant( $\chi^2(767) = 1349.698, p<.001$ ). However, other overall fit indices met the cut-off criteria (CFI = .908, TLI = .902, RMSEA = .055, SRMR = .056). Regarding improper solutions, the critical problem was not identified in the negative error variances, r range, but the sign of the JS2 item among the factor loadings of job satisfaction was negative (JS2 = -.495) in MM (Hair et al., 2014). Based on these results, the modified measurement model (MM-1), in which one observed item (JS2) was removed, was once again identified. The results of MM-1 indicated that although the statistical significance of SB  $\chi^2(\chi^2(728) = 1278.697, p<.001)$ , the other model fit indices met the cutoff criteria (CFI = .911, TLI = .905, RMSEA = .055, SRMR = .055). Subsequently, the item parceling method, which is advantageous in the model fit and estimation process, was used only for variables with a multidimensional structure. The overall fit indices of the item-parceled measurement model (MM-2) met the criteria, except for the SB chi-square value ( $\chi^2(113) = 197.178, p<.001$ ; CFI = .962, TLI = .955, RMSEA = .055, SRMR = .044), and it could be assumed that there were no problems with improper solutions. In addition, convergent and discriminant validity were assessed. With regard to convergent validity, the results in Table 3 show that the CR (CR ranged from .860 to .920 [ $> .7$ ]) and AVE (AVE ranged from .510 to .780 [ $> .5$ ]) of all variables in this study met the cut-off criteria (Hair Jr et al., 2017). Since the HTMT ratio values of all variables were found to be less than .85, it was assumed to have discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015; see Table 3). Because MM-2 was found to be valid, the overall fit indices of the full model were evaluated.

〈Table 3〉 Convergent and discriminant validity

Variables	CR	AVE	HTMT ratio		
			1	2	3
Work grit	.880	.720	-		
Career identity	.860	.510	.680	-	
Job satisfaction	.890	.630	.630	.670	-
Innovative work behavior	.910	.780	.640	.770	.710

All overall fit indices of the full model met the criteria for all other fit indices, except for the statistical significance of the SB  $\chi^2$  value of full model (Table 4). Regarding the improper solution of the full model, no related problems were identified in the error variance, r range, or signs and magnitudes of the parameters. All path coefficients were statistically significant ( $\lambda$  ranged from .243 to .688,  $p > .01$ ). In summary, it can be inferred that the full model is suitable for the collated data.

〈Table 4〉 Overall fit indices of the full model

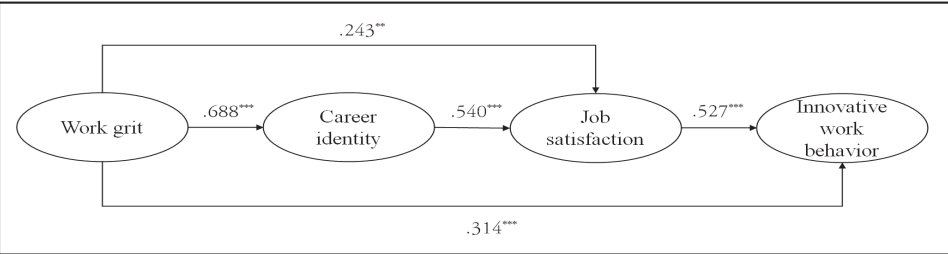
	SB $\chi^2$ (df)	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Full model (FM)	$\chi^2(114) = 216.679, p < .001$	.954	.945	.060	.057

3. Hypothesis testing

Based on the results of this study, the research hypotheses were tested. First, the SPC estimates, as illustrated in Figure 2, indicate the direct effects of the four research variables. Regarding H1, H2, and H3, the SPC estimates indicated that work grit had positive and statistically significant direct effects on career identity ( $\beta = .688, p < .001$ ), job satisfaction ( $\beta = .243, p < .01$ ), and innovative work behavior ( $\beta = .314, p < .001$ ). Therefore, H1, H2, and H3 are supported. The direct effects of career identity on job satisfaction ( $\beta = .540, p < .001$ , H4) and job satisfaction on innovative work behavior ( $\beta = .527, p < .001$ , H5) were positive and statistically significant. As a result, H4 and H5 were maintained.

To test the indirect effects on H6 and H7, the BC bootstrapping estimates were investigated. This study examined indirect effects using 2,000 bootstrapping samples, because the BC bootstrapping approach is considered the most robust test method without requiring a normal distribution (Kim, 2016; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The indirect effects are presented in Table 5. Regarding H6, the indirect effect of job satisfaction on the relationship between work grit and innovative work behavior was found to be statistically significant, as the BC 95% confidence interval did not contain zero ( $ab = .128$ , 95% confidence interval [.031, .234]). Thus, H6 is

supported. In addition, with respect to H7, the indirect effects of career identity and job satisfaction on the relationship between work grit and innovative work behavior ( $ab = .196$ , 95% confidence interval  $[.103, .319]$ ) were found to be statistically significant, as BC 95% confidence interval excluded zero. Therefore, H7 was maintained. The detailed results are presented in Table 5. All seven hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, and H7) were supported.



\*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

[Figure 2] Full model with SPC estimates

〈Table 5〉 Results of BC bootstrapping estimates of indirect effects

Indirect paths	ab	BC 95% confidence interval	
		Lower	Upper
WG→JS→IWB	.128	.031	.234
WG→CI→JS→IWB	.196	.103	.319

Notes: ab = standardized estimate; WG = work grit; CI = career identity; JS = job satisfaction; IWB = innovative work behavior

V. Discussion

1. Conclusion

The discussion of the study results is as follows: First, work grit was found to have positive effects on career identity, job satisfaction, and innovative work behavior. Although the findings of each relationship align with previous research (Cho & Kim, 2022; Dugan et al., 2018; Kim & Shin, 2018), this study is significant in that it statistically confirmed the effects of work grit using

a different sample and theoretical framework. This study simultaneously considers career identity, job satisfaction, and innovative work behavior within a structural framework. This comprehensive analysis provides stronger theoretical and practical insights into the role of work grit in the workplace. Work grit has the strongest impact on career identity. Individuals with high work grit tend to develop a preference for specific tasks and gain deeper insight into their strengths and weaknesses as they continuously strive toward their work-related goals. This process contributes significantly to the formation of a strong career identity. Furthermore, once career identity is established, it may enhance job satisfaction and facilitate innovative work behavior through a sequential process, rather than work grit directly exerting a strong influence on job satisfaction and innovative work behavior. Although Youn et al. (2025) examined how leadership influences job satisfaction and innovative work behavior through work grit, this study highlights the significance of how work grit affects job satisfaction and innovative work behavior through career identity.

Second, the mediating effects of career identity and job satisfaction are statistically significant. This finding aligns with the direction proposed by Youssef-Morgan and Luthans (2009), who outline a process in which individual characteristics, experiences, psychological capital, and vulnerabilities influence behavioral intentions through attitudinal outcomes, ultimately leading to behavioral outcomes and in-role performance. While the direct effect of work grit on innovative work behavior is stronger than the indirect effect, this result has important practical implications. From an organizational perspective, if an employee's career identity declines, the indirect effect of work grit on innovative work behavior weakens, potentially causing a long-term decrease in innovative work behavior levels. This suggests that simply enhancing an individual's work grit is insufficient.

Third, this study provides new insights by identifying employees' work grit and career-related factors as key drivers of innovative work behavior. This study makes a notable contribution by empirically demonstrating that work grit strengthens career identity, which, in turn, enhances job satisfaction and ultimately facilitates innovative work behavior. This finding confirms that establishing one's career identity, rather than relying solely on organizational



support or psychological resources, can lead to increased job satisfaction and innovative behavior. These results suggest that supporting employees' long-term career development is not merely about promoting individual growth but can also serve as a strategic approach to boosting an organization's overall innovation capacity.

## 2. Implications for Research and Practice

The academic implications of the research results are as follows: Youssef-Morgan and Luthans' framework outlines how personal factors influence attitudinal outcomes, behavioral intentions, behavioral outcomes, and in-role performance, and how these factors impact sustainable organizational performance (Youssef-Morgan-Morgan, & Luthans, 2009). This study only partially tests this framework. Future research should investigate how work grit influences in-role and sustainable organizational performance. Second, it is essential to explore job characteristics and organizational culture as antecedents of work grit. This study focused on how work grit, as a form of psychological capital and non-cognitive trait, influences various outcomes. Since work grit is a specific concept in the workplace context (Kim & Kim, 2022), understanding it requires an ongoing exploration of its antecedents. Previous studies have identified perceived support from colleagues and goal difficulty as antecedents of work grit (Kim & Lee, 2024). Further investigation into the effects of job characteristics, such as autonomy, leadership, and feedback, on work grit is necessary (Southwick et al., 2019). These characteristics can enhance individuals' sense of control and purpose at work, thereby encouraging sustained effort and perseverance, which are the core elements of work grit. Therefore, further investigation of how job characteristics facilitate or hinder the development of work grit is warranted.

Third, this study did not specify a direct relationship between career identity and innovative work behavior. However, as research on career development advances, future empirical studies may further explore the influence of career identity on extra-role behaviors such as innovative work behavior. In this regard, it would be meaningful to compare the current model

with alternative models that include a direct path from career identity to innovative work behavior to identify a more comprehensive or better-fitting model.

The practical implications of this study are as follows. Organizations need to consider various strategies to cultivate work grit among their members (Kim & Kim, 2018). Work grit has been shown to affect career outcomes, job satisfaction, and behavioral outcomes. Given its effectiveness in multiple areas, organizations should invest in developing individuals' grit. This can be achieved through educational programs, coaching, mentoring, and learning organizations. HRD interventions should be designed to cultivate work grit in individuals, leading to improved performance and organizational outcomes. Second, HRD practitioners must implement strategies to strengthen their career identities. In this study, we examined the serial effects within the process, highlighting the need for not only enhancing work grit, which initiates this process but also investing in strategies to elevate the mediating variables. Employees with a well-established career identity are more likely to clearly define their roles and goals, which increases job satisfaction and encourages sustained and proactive innovative work behavior.

The limitations of this study are as follows. First, it focused on full-time employees in Korean organizations, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other cultural or industrial contexts. These relationships may vary across cultural settings. Moreover, although the importance and strength of the variables examined in this study may vary depending on the job type and diverse contextual factors, this study was conducted with a general sample of employees, regardless of job classification. Future studies should consider these differences. Second, although this study examined the mediating effects, it did not account for other potential mediators or moderators that could influence the relationships among the variables. For example, organizational culture or leadership style might play a significant role in shaping the impact of work grit on job satisfaction and innovative work behavior. Third, this study was conducted using a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to examine how relationships among variables evolve over time. Future research should consider longitudinal approaches to explore the potential time-lagged effects or feedback loops that may emerge over time.

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## 국문초록

## 업무그릿, 경력정체성, 직무만족, 혁신적업무행동의 구조적 관계

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본 연구의 목적은 업무그릿, 경력정체성, 직무만족, 혁신적업무행동 간의 관계를 분석하는 것이다. 이를 위해 국내 근로자를 대상으로 설문을 실시하였으며, 총 250명의 응답 데이터를 구조방정식 모형을 활용하여 분석하였다. 연구결과, 모든 직접경로가 통계적으로 유의한 정(+)의 영향을 미치는 것으로 나타났다. 첫째, 업무그릿은 경력정체성, 직무만족, 혁신적업무행동에 유의한 영향을 미쳤다. 둘째, 경력정체성은 직무만족에 긍정적인 영향을 주는 것으로 나타났다. 셋째, 직무만족은 혁신적업무행동을 촉진하는 것으로 확인되었다. 넷째, 경력정체성과 직무만족은 업무그릿과 혁신적업무행동 간의 관계를 매개하는 역할을 하는 것으로 나타났다. 본 연구는 업무그릿이 근로자의 경력성과, 개인의 만족, 역할외성과에 미치는 영향을 규명함으로써 조직 내 업무그릿의 중요성을 확인하였다. 연구결과를 바탕으로 조직에서 업무그릿뿐 아니라 경력정체성과 직무만족을 지원하는 전략적 접근이 필요하다는 시사점을 제시하였다.

[주제어] 업무그릿, 일터그릿, 근로자그릿, 혁신업무행동