

**The Effects of Age, Gender, and Experience on Grit, Anxiety, and Commitment of Kurdish EFL
Secondary School Teachers**

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Abstract

This mixed methods study examined the effects of three demographic variables, namely, grit, anxiety, and commitment, on Kurdish EFL teachers in Sulaimani Province secondary schools. To this end, using snowball purposive sampling, 73 Kurdish EFL secondary school teachers, 42 male and 31 female, aged between 22 and 50 with an experience range between 1 to 28 years, participated in the study and completed the questionnaire. Expanding the quantitative results, interviews with 10 participants were conducted to further the information and support the quantitative results. Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze the quantitative data, specifically, the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), independent sample t-test, and Pearson's correlation. A thematic analysis was conducted for the collected interview data. The quantitative findings indicated that age, gender, and experience significantly affected Kurdish EFL secondary school teachers' grit, anxiety, and commitment. Results of the qualitative data revealed that Kurdish EFL secondary school teachers consistently pursue their educational goals and show unwavering persistence in the face of challenges. They also handle their anxiety by compartmentalizing personal issues and controlling their impulses to maintain a positive teaching environment, reflecting their understanding of the importance of teaching and their interest in developing their students. Lastly, Kurdish EFL secondary school teachers exhibit high levels of commitment to both the educational community and institutional standards, even when challenges appear. The results of this study are beneficial for policymakers, English language teachers, and also EFL learners.

Keywords: anxiety, commitment, demographic variables, grit, Kurdish EFL secondary school teachers

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1. Introduction

Several psychological factors influence a teacher's performance in teaching, including grit, anxiety, and commitment (Alzoraiki et al., 2023; Bibiso et al., 2017; Novious & Yawe, 2021; Tindle et al., 2022). Among these, grit is considered the most significant factor affecting teacher performance. (Duckworth et al., 2007). Perkins-Gough and Duckworth (2013) define *grit* as "The quality that enables individuals to work hard and stick to their long-term passions and goals regardless of obstacles" (p. 14). In addition to being resilient when confronted with adversity, grit is characterized by solid bonds that sustain loyalty over an extended period (Perkins-Gough & Duckworth, 2013). According to Robertson-Kraft and Duckworth (2014), grit is a quality used to assess a teacher's efficacy and retention by combining tenacity with a willingness to chase long-term objectives regardless of setbacks.

Anxiety is another psychological factor that affects how well teachers perform. According to Aslrasouli and Vahid (2014), this characteristic is the unfavorable emotional state that teachers go through before, during, and after teaching, which negatively influences both teaching and learning processes. Numerous factors have been linked to teachers' anxiety during the teaching process (Wang & Zhang, 2012), including teachers' poor physical health, family issues, student assessments, public speaking, supervisor observations, fear of negative feedback or outcomes, sex, experience, and the type of school they work at (Aslrasouli & Vahid, 2014). According to Pirzadeh et al. (2022), the factors above that cause teacher anxiety impact the quality of teachers' work and how well they perform (Adabi & Ghafournia, 2020).

Another psychological component that has a strong correlation with teacher effectiveness is commitment (Rayo et al., 2022). A higher level of commitment results in better performance (Siri et al., 2021). As defined by Moses and colleagues (2016), teacher commitment is a teacher's intention to continue working for the organization in which they are enrolled. A teacher's commitment to his or her work and the institution they work in is the most essential

prerequisite for improving student performance, teacher effectiveness, and the overall advancement of the institution. According to Bhaker and Sharma (2020), commitment encompasses an obligation and an emotional bond with the organization and work. According to Ibrahim and Aljneibi's study (2022), a teacher's commitment increases with age, service length, and time spent at the same school but decreases with a heavy teaching load, teaching multiple subjects, and receiving taxing non-teaching responsibilities.

It is crucial to examine the effects of demographic factors (Costello et al., 2022) on teachers' grit, anxiety, and commitment, given the significance of such factors on teaching and learning. Nevertheless, a cursory literature review indicates insufficient research in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context of Kurdish. Thus, this study aims to increase our knowledge and understanding of how demographic traits affect Kurdish EFL secondary school teachers' grit, anxiety, and commitment.

This study aims to:

1. find out whether age, gender, and teaching experience have significant effects on Kurdish EFL teachers' grit, anxiety, and commitment in Sulaimani Province secondary schools.
2. find out whether there is a correlation between Kurdish EFL teachers' grit, anxiety, and commitment in Sulaimani Province secondary schools.
3. find out the perceptions of grit, anxiety, and commitment among Kurdish EFL secondary school teachers in Sulaimani Province.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Teacher Grit

Grit is defined by a propensity to persevere through difficulties and barriers, even in the existence of a progress plateau (Duckworth et al., 2007). In order to achieve long-term

objectives, grit entails the two elements of work perseverance and interest consistency (Duckworth et al., 2007; Duckworth et al., 2011; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). The first element deals with continuous concentration on tasks for an extended period, while the second shows a person's perseverance in achieving larger goals (Teimouri et al., 2022). Grit, in the literature, is regarded as a predictor of achievement in both academic and non-academic professions (Faravani, 2022; Teimouri et al., 2022); academic success (Robins, 2019), retention (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014), teacher effectiveness (Duckworth et al., 2009), learners' motivational behavior (Teimouri et al., 2021), teacher success (Faravani, 2022), and performance (Datu, 2021). These positive associations are attributable to the fact that grittier people, according to Duckworth et al. (2007), are less impacted by obstacles. They are more prone to put their skills to use, work more productively, rarely change careers, and be committed to achieving their life objectives. Grit has garnered much attention in the field of education because of its favorable relationships with academic outcomes (Fathi et al., 2021; Jibril et al., 2022; Li & Zhu, 2020). Such teacher qualities as durability, dominance, fearlessness, consistency, and confidence have been referred to as teacher grit. Teachers with grit can adjust to various teaching situations and put in effort despite fatigue or other work-related setbacks until they reach their goals (Sudina et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2023).

The influence of age, gender, and experience, on teacher grit has marginally been studied in the literature, and the results are inconsistent. Several academics have examined the connection between grit and gender, but their findings have varied. For example, Kumar and Rathee (2019) discovered that a teacher's grit level can vary based on gender. According to a 2014 study by Christensen and Knezek, women are more resilient than men. Gender differences were only confirmed by Wyszynska et al. (2017) when it came to the perseverance of efforts. Furthermore, research by Hodge et al. (2017) indicates that gender does not differ in grit, but regarding age, older individuals tend to have higher grit than their younger counterparts.

Duckworth et al. (2007) state that individuals above 30 tend to have more grit than those younger than 30. Very little research has explored the element of teaching experience. In a study by McCulloch (2021), no discernible difference was found between teachers' grit and length of experience.

2.2 Teacher Anxiety

Anxiety is an unpleasant and enduring sensation of unease, incapacity, fear, and tension that impairs one's capacity to carry out tasks (Irhamna & Fitharyani, 2023; Rachman, 2004). According to researchers (e.g., Aydın, 2021; Permatasari et al., 2019), teacher anxiety is experienced when teachers feel emotional and tense before, during, and after teaching. This feeling can negatively impact the learning and teaching processes. In other words, anxiety has an impact on teachers' mental health, which in turn affects how well they teach (Pirzadeh et al., 2022). Anxiety can produce uncomfortable environments for the teacher and cause the teacher to choose strategies that give them control over input, output, and student behavior in general which make it challenging to facilitate the process of teaching and learning in the classroom and achieve expected course objectives (Aslrasouli & Vahid, 2014).

The research on the link between teacher demographic characteristics and anxiety is not entirely conclusive. The level of anxiety that a teacher feels at any given moment varies depending on several factors, including age, gender, and experience (Aslrasouli & Vahid, 2014). Experience is viewed as a significant anxiety factor. Anxiety decreases when experience increases (Li et al., 2023). More, through his systematic literature review of anxiety, Aydın (2021) discovered that teaching experience had a significant impact on anxiety. Similarly, in the Indonesian context of teacher education, Agustiana (2014) found that insufficient teaching experience predicted anxiety among pre-service EFL teachers. However, Gannoun and Deris (2023) discovered no correlation between teaching experience and teaching anxiety in their study of 48 male and female teachers with 1 to 15 years of experience.

A more significant amount of research supports the association between anxiety and age despite inconsistent findings. According to Aslrasouli and Vahid's (2014) research, teachers who are newer to the field may feel the most stress. These researchers claim that new instructors find it challenging to teach the material. In another study, Kumar and Deo (2011) found that junior college teachers in India demonstrated a greater degree of anxiety in specific areas compared to their senior counterparts. However, Aydın (2021) discovered that a teacher's level of anxiety increases the older they become. Despite the above findings, Liu and Wu's (2021) research discovered that teacher anxiety was not correlated with age.

There are differing conclusions regarding the relationship between gender and anxiety as well. A male teacher may have the ability to efficiently handle a difficult situation, while their female counterpart may feel a great deal anxiety (Aslrasouli & Vahid, 2014, Liu & Wu; 2021). On the other hand, Matoti and Lekhu (2016) found that pre-service male teachers were generally more nervous than their female counterparts during classroom instruction practices. In spite of the aforementioned results, Gannoun and Deris (2023) and Aydın (2021) found no relationship between teaching anxiety and gender.

2.3 Teacher Commitment

According to Heinz (2015), commitment is the disposition to engage in worthwhile endeavors instead of feeling worthless. A high teacher's level of commitment is strongly correlated with their students' academic achievement (Abul Raheem, 2009).

Thien et al. (2014) divide teacher commitment into four categories: commitment to students, commitment to teaching, commitment to school, and commitment to profession. In commitment to students, teachers show genuine empathy for each student's developmental needs by treating them as individuals rather than as cohorts of learners. Commitment to teaching is a teacher's readiness to be actively engaged in teaching work including, but not limited to, lesson planning, instruction, keeping positive rapport with students, satisfaction with

instruction, ability to improve performance in the classroom (Celep, 2000). Commitment to school makes teachers to be highly committed to the school they are enrolled in, accept the values and goals of that school, show engagement in their school activities such as festivals and events, and continue their membership in their school. The fourth type of commitment is a commitment to the profession, which is demonstrated in teachers' attempts to develop necessary teaching skills to have a successful career in the school they are registered.

Findings are partially conclusive with respect to the influence of demographic factors on commitment. On gender, Izzati et al. (2022) examined the possible association between the gender of teachers in Indonesia and their level of professional commitment. Their investigation discovered no meaningful correlations between the two variables. Fazlali (2022) discovered that female EFL instructors demonstrated more outstanding professional commitment than their male counterparts in Iran. Contrastively, Aydın et al. (2011) did a meta-analysis to examine the influence of gender on teachers' commitment. The study examined 15 master's and doctoral theses. According to their findings, male teachers had more commitment than female teachers. Other researchers found no statistically significant relationship between gender and commitment (Moses et al., 2016; Shamma, 2018). There is also variation in the results regarding other demographic variables like age and teaching experience and teacher commitment. For example, Abdul Raheem (2009) examined the degree of commitment secondary English language teachers had to their jobs in public schools and how it related to age, gender, and years of teaching experience. His sample included 39 teachers, of whom 23 were male and 16 were female. His study found no observable difference in the degree of the teachers' commitment. Also, Yucel and Bektas (2012) looked into Turkish teachers' demographic traits and organizational commitment. They concluded that age had moderating effects on commitment. Another research by Ibrahim and Aljneibi (2022) discovered that the length of teaching experience and age of Arab teachers in the UAE increased their commitment.

Other studies (e.g., Cimili-Gök & Özçetin, 2021) have also found more significant levels of commitment in teachers with higher teaching experience.

All these inconsistencies in the literature related to the association between demographic variables and teacher grit, anxiety, and commitment encouraged the researchers to conduct this study to provide more consistent results.

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. Do age, gender, and experience significantly affect the grit, anxiety, and commitment levels among Kurdish EFL teachers in Sulaimani Province secondary schools?
2. Is there a significant correlation between Kurdish EFL teachers' grit, anxiety, and commitment in Sulaimani Province secondary schools?
3. What are the perceptions of grit, anxiety, and commitment among Kurdish EFL secondary school teachers in Sulaimani Province?

3. Method

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed methods design which blended both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. Selecting this design was because “neither quantitative nor qualitative methods are sufficient, by themselves, to capture the trends and details of a situation. When combined, quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other and allow for a more robust analysis” (Ivankova et al. (2006). The quantitative data were gathered through a multidimensional questionnaire and the qualitative data were gathered via semi-structured interviews.

3.1. Participants

This study collected participants from secondary schools in Sulaimani Province using a snowball purposive sampling technique, which retrieved 73 secondary school Kurdish EFL teachers. The participants consisted of 42 male (57.53%) and 31 female (42.46 %) teachers,

with a mean age of 30 years (range = 22-50). The mean teaching experience of the participants was 7.27 years (range = 1-28).

3.2. Materials and Instruments

3.2.1. Grit Scale

This study employed the Short Grit Scale designed by Duckworth and Quinn (2009) to tap into teachers' level of grit. This measurement consists of 8 statements that measure both components of teacher grit: interest consistency and effort perseverance. Each statement is measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not at all like me) to 5 (very much like me).

3.2.2. Anxiety Scale

The Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety Scale (FLTAS), designed by Aydın and Uştuk (2020), was employed to explore the participants' level of teaching anxiety. This scale contains 27 statements, each measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

3.2.3. Commitment Scale

The scale by Thien et al. (2014) was used to examine the participants' commitment. This scale divides teacher commitment into four parts, namely commitment to students, commitment to teaching, commitment to school, and commitment to profession. This scale contains 13 items with a 5- Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

3.2.4. Semi-structured Interview

A semi-structured interview was designed, which included seven questions adapted from previous related literature (e.g., Cannon, 2022; Ganjali et al., 2019; Gannoun et al., 2023; İpek, 2006; İskender & Savaşçı, 2023; Li et al., 2023; Ostad et al., 2019). The interview questions were translated and back-translated by two EFL teachers with translation experience, and to

ensure trustworthiness, the interview questions were piloted with two EFL teachers with similar characteristics to those of the main study participants. Two EFL university instructors evaluated the content validity of the interview questions to ensure their linguistic transparency and content relevance. Then, through a purposive sampling technique, ten participants were collected for the main interviews. Interviews continued until saturation was reached (Urquhart (2013)). The interviews lasted 10 minutes on average and were recorded for the purpose of transcription in later stages. Notably, the interviews were held in Kurdish for the respondents' comfort and ease.

3.2.5. Pilot Study

The above Grit, Anxiety, and Commitment scales were turned into an online questionnaire via Google Forms, which was also accompanied by a section featuring the three demographic variables of age, gender, and teaching experience. To test the reliability and feasibility of the three scales in the Kurdish context, an online pilot study with 26 teachers was carried out. Implementing a pilot study is crucial for the development of the overall quality and efficiency of the primary study because it provides necessary information for calculating population size and assessing all other features of the real study (In, 2017). Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. The results revealed that the scales had appropriate reliability indices. In the pilot phase, the reliability estimates for grit, anxiety, and commitment scales were .971, .992, and .973, respectively. The results rendered the three scales reliable. Notably, the questionnaire was used for the main study with no alteration.

3.3. Procedure

In two respective phases, both quantitative and qualitative data collection and data analysis were carried out using a sequential explanatory design (Ivankova et al., 2006). In the quantitative phase, a snowball purposive sampling technique was employed to collect the respondents. Through Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp applications, the researcher

contacted the principals of a few public and private secondary schools in Sulaimani Province and asked permission to invite their EFL teachers to take part in the study. The principals agreed and forwarded the invitation message to their teachers, which included a link to the online questionnaire. The researcher also sent the link to several teachers who were previously known to him. The consenting teachers filled out the questionnaire which took about 15 minutes and was administered using Google Forms. In the qualitative phase, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews to examine the participants' perceptions of their grit, anxiety, and commitment. Through a purposive sampling technique, ten participants were collected. The interviews were conducted in the form of voice messages conducted via Facebook Messenger, each lasting about 10 minutes. After the interviews ended, transcription of the data was commenced.

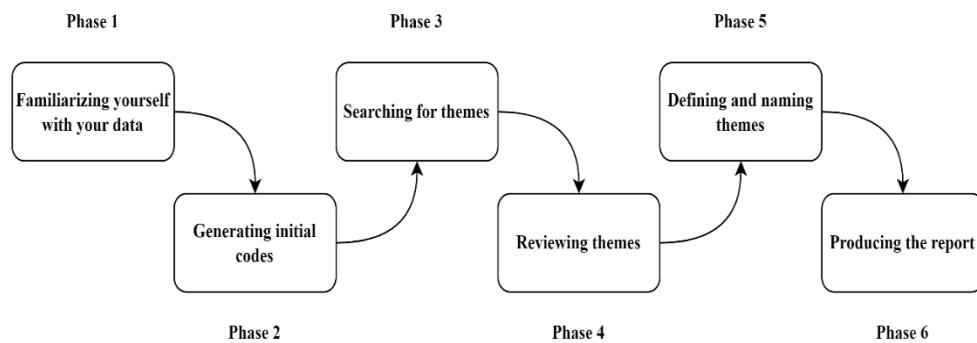
3.4. Data Analysis

Analysis for the quantitative data was undertaken by the use of descriptive statistics (Pearson's correlation) using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 26). On the other hand, thematic analysis was done to analyze the qualitative data which was based on the framework designed by Nowell et al. (2017) (See Figure 1).

After analyzing the transcripts of the interviews, the main themes regarding the teachers' perceptions of their grit, anxiety, and commitment were identified and interpreted.

Figure 1

Phases of Thematic Analysis (Based on Nowell et al., 2017)



4. Results

and Discussion

4.1. Results

4.1.2. The Quantitative Results

The first research question examined the effects of age, gender, and experience on levels of grit, anxiety, and commitment among Kurdish EFL teachers in Sulaimani Province secondary schools.

For the two variables of age and experience, between-group analyses of variance tests (ANOVAs) were conducted.

Regarding age, participants were categorized into three distinct age groups (Group 1: 20 to 29; Group 2: 30 to 39; Group 3: 40 and above), revealing statistically significant differences at the $p < .05$ level in grit ($F(2, 73) = 14, p < .000$), anxiety ($F(2, 73) = 115, p < .000$), and commitment ($F(2, 73) = 8, p < .000$) scores among the age groups. Effect sizes, measured with eta squared, were .29 for grit, .76 for anxiety, and .20 for commitment, all considered large according to Cohen's criteria. Tukey (HSD) test mean scores found that Group 3 exhibited higher levels of grit ($M=36.14, SD = 2.11$), anxiety ($M=4.32, SD = .36$), and commitment ($M=58.28, SD = 4.95$) compared to the rest of the age groups.

In the experience analyses, participants were categorized into four experience groups (Group 1: 1 to 3; Group 2: 4 to 7; Group 3: 8 to 11; Group 4: 12 and above), revealing statistically significant differences at the $p < .05$ level in grit ($F(3, 73) = 13, p < .000$), anxiety ($F(3, 73) = 21, p < .000$), and commitment ($F(3, 73) = 19, p < .000$) scores among the experience groups. Effect sizes were .37 for grit, .47 for anxiety, and .46 for commitment, all considered large. Tukey (HSD) test showed that Group 4 exhibited higher levels of grit ($M=33.76, SD = 3.21$), anxiety ($M=106.07, SD = 12.74$), and commitment ($M=53.61, SD = 6.39$) compared to the other experience groups.

To find the impact of gender on grit, anxiety, and commitment, independent sample t-tests were conducted. The grit results showed males ($M=21.41, SD=8.05$) scoring lower than females ($M=28.81, SD=5.04$), with a large effect size ($\eta^2 = .30$). Similarly, the anxiety results revealed males ($M=52.51, SD=25.65$) showing lower levels than females ($M=82.75, SD = 22.64$) with an effect size of (.36). Moreover, commitment scores exhibited males ($M=39.87, SD=13.26$) scoring lower than females ($M=47.25, SD=13.77$) with a moderate effect size of (.07).

The second research question was answered through descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation (See Table 1), which attempted to determine if there was a significant correlation among the Kurdish EFL teachers' grit, anxiety, and commitment in Sulaimani Province secondary schools. It is said that "Pearson correlation measures the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two variables, ranging from -1 to 1." (Schober et al., 2018). The results demonstrated that grit exhibited strong positive correlations with commitment ($r = 0.913$) and anxiety ($r = 0.967$). Also, commitment showed a strong positive correlation with anxiety ($r = 0.838$).

Table 1*Pearson Correlations between Grit, Anxiety, and Commitment*

		Grit	Commitment	Anxiety
Grit	Pearson Correlation	1	.913**	.967**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	73	73	73
Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.913**	1	.838**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	73	73	73
Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	.967**	.838**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	73	73	73

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.1.3. The Qualitative Results

The third research question, which explored the Kurdish EFL secondary school teachers' perceptions of grit, anxiety, and commitment, was answered through a thematic analysis. Using the grounded theory method (Vollstedt & Rezat, 2019), the data was analyzed through open, axial, and selective coding the outcomes of which are presented in Table 3. Codes were identified and systematically categorized, leading to the identification of underlying themes. (See Table 2)

Table 2*Perceptions of Grit, Anxiety, and Commitment*

Theme	Frequency	Excerpt
		Grit
Perseverance and goal achievement	7	<i>"Grit is keeping trying until you achieve your goal and become successful."</i>
Self-improvement	3	<i>"I keep improving and updating myself regarding knowledge and how I behave in class."</i>
Problem-solving	4	<i>"I try to control the problem before it leads to newer problems."</i>
Teaching strategies	3	<i>"I use activities such as games, jokes, or stories."</i>

Anxiety		
Anxiety management	10	<i>"If my anxiety is caused by something or someone outside school, then I will never take it into the classroom. But if it emerges inside the classroom, then through activities, I try to control it."</i>
Proficiency issues	6	<i>"I generally feel anxious when I make mistakes and can't find the right word to say something."</i>
Commitment		
Using teaching aids	3	<i>"I do what I have to do in the class in the best way possible, and this encompasses using lesson plans, technological devices and aids."</i>
Punctuality	3	<i>"To me, commitment is to be punctual and be at school before class starts."</i>
Challenges of being committed	6	<i>"However, the challenges are that the teacher faces the pressure of extra work from the administration, and some of the teachers and students view him as an eyesore and describe him as too strict."</i>
Advantages of being committed	5	<i>"Teacher commitment builds successful teachers and helps students to succeed."</i>
Building rapport	3	<i>"I show my commitment by improving my relationships with colleagues, the school staff, and the students."</i>
Adherence to rules and regulations	2	<i>"Commitment to the institution is to follow the rules set by the organization or school you're working in."</i>

The thematic analysis of the interview responses revealed an array of perceptions for each of grit, anxiety, and commitment. Regarding grit, such themes as perseverance and goal achievement, self-improvement, problem-solving, and teaching strategies were identified. To illustrate, the Kurdish EFL teachers perceive and exhibit their grit through their persistence and goal achievement in teaching. Their determination is evident as one teacher states:

Grit is not being tired or bored of the things that happen in class. For instance, a question from a student or a student asking for the repetition of something. It also means not quitting doing what we love to do.

Further, the teachers demonstrate their grit through their continuous self-improvement and use of teaching strategies stated as follows:

I always prepare before class time and plan for what I will teach. If I feel tired or bored of teaching, I try to use new teaching methods, change how I teach, or incorporate a game or activity that my students and I enjoy."

Moreover, teachers' problem-solving skills and strategic thinking to address challenges are shown in such excerpts as *"I admit failure if it is due to negligence, and I try to find a solution to solve it. But if it was because of students; I try to talk it out and fix it."*

Another psychological aspect of the qualitative part of the study was the teacher's perceptions of their anxiety. Lack of confidence in English proficiency and making mistakes were the major anxiety-inducing causes of the participants. One teacher shares:

I generally feel anxious when I speak English because I'm afraid my partner speaks English better than me, and I make mistakes.

Even though Kurdish EFL secondary school teachers experience anxiety in teaching, they manage it lest it causes issues inside the classroom. A teacher contends, *"I try to relieve my anxiety and not let it affect my behavior to avoid students feeling it. I try to instill optimism and fix the problem that is causing my anxiety."*

The teachers' perceptions of commitment were rooted in how they showcased commitment to their students, the teaching profession, and the school in which they were employed. Commitment was viewed as being punctual, as in *"I'm always on time for class."*, and using modern teaching aids as in *"I use technology, worksheets, videos, and PowerPoints."* Commitment was linked to obeying rules and regulations recognized by the authority or school. One teacher says, *"I show my commitment by complying with the rules that the Ministry of Education has set."* To some teachers, commitment meant building rapport with their students as stated in such responses as *"I'm a friendly person with my students, and this has made my students do good things from me."* This implies that the teachers are not traditional and do not view themselves as authorities.

Finally, to the teacher participants, commitment was both advantageous and disadvantageous. It was seen as beneficial and claimed to lead to success, as displayed in *"Commitment makes a teacher successful in administrative, legal, and academic ways. It also makes the students*

trust their teacher, which eventually makes the teacher happy as it shows that he is carrying out his duties well.”, it is also disadvantageous as one may look bad in the eyes of others, as explained in *”a committed teacher may face negative comments from students and peers as he or she is seen as a strict teacher.”*

4.2. Discussion

This study examined the effects of demographic variables, namely age, gender, and experience, on Kurdish EFL teacher’s grit, anxiety, and commitment in Sulaimani Province secondary schools. The results yielded intriguing findings. This study revealed that the participants’ grit, anxiety, and commitment were significantly affected by their age, experience, and gender. This finding promotes previous findings (Aydın, 2021; Permatasari et al., 2019; Pirzadeh et al., 2022). More particularly, this article found that teachers who were 40 years old or older had more anxiety, were more committed, and grittier in their teaching. This is supported by earlier research (Aslrasouli & Vahid, 2014; Agustiana, 2014; Aydın, 2020; Kumar & Deo, 2011). A logical reason to support this finding is that grit develops as individuals mature (Sutter et al., 2022), and older individuals have repeatedly achieved positive outcomes through perseverance and consistency over a specified period (Duckworth, 2007).

In addition, teachers who had 12+ years of experience had more anxiety, commitment, and grit. This finding corroborates with earlier findings stating that the less experienced a teacher is, the more anxiety they encounter (Li et al., 2023), more experience increases commitment (Ibrahim & Aljneibi, 2022), and grit levels increase with higher levels of experience (Duckworth, 2016). This is because inexperienced teachers have a sense of incompetence or find preparing lessons difficult. However, this feeling does not hold them back from pursuing their objectives, and they try until they create the perfect teacher model of themselves (Li et al., 2023). Moreover, female teachers, compared to their male counterparts, showed higher grit levels, were more anxious and committed. This finding agrees with those of Christensen and Knezek (2014),

whose female participants were grittier than their male equivalents. Resonating with findings of other studies (e.g., Liu & Wu, 2021), female teachers in this study demonstrated more anxiety than male teachers due to the mistakes they made during class time or the fear of having more proficient peers or students. In this study, the teachers' gender significantly determined their commitment. Female teachers were more committed than their male counterparts which is also supported by Shoaib and Khalid (2017).

This study's findings proved strong correlations among grit, anxiety, and commitment. A strong positive correlation between grit and commitment suggests that individuals scoring high on grit are likely to exhibit a high level of commitment to their goals, reflecting persistence and a long-term goal-oriented mindset. This finding corresponds with that of Nisar et al. (2020), who found that gritty individuals put in more effort despite experiencing difficulties. Consequently, their commitment, as compared to that of less gritty individuals, is higher. Additionally, a robust positive correlation between grit and anxiety indicates that individuals with elevated grit levels may also experience heightened anxiety, as confirmed in Coleman (2019). This connection may arise from gritty individuals' ambitious goal-setting and emotional investment. In other words, gritty people persist too long as they think of succeeding at all costs; however, their anxiety increases during this course of action (Lahane & Oxx, 2022). Furthermore, a strong positive correlation between commitment and anxiety suggests that highly committed individuals are more prone to experiencing increased anxiety, potentially attributed to their intense emotional involvement and dedication to their goals. No study has reported similar or dissimilar results of this kind; therefore, this study is the first to discover this result.

More, teachers consistently emphasize the critical role of grit in achieving educational goals, underscoring the need for unwavering persistence despite challenges and the acceptance of mistakes as integral to the learning process (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014). This perception is

because they have experienced, firsthand, the transformative power of overcoming obstacles and leveraging mistakes as opportunities for growth (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). Research suggests that grittier individuals tend to exhibit greater resilience, dedication, and passion, contributing to their overall success in various domains (Duckworth et al., 2007; Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014). Furthermore, teachers' adoption of anxiety management strategies, such as compartmentalizing personal issues to maintain a positive teaching environment, reflects their understanding of the importance of teaching and their interest in developing their students. Teachers recognize that maintaining a positive and focused teaching environment is conducive to effective learning and instrumental in students' overall well-being and development (Novitasari & Murtafi'ah, 2022).

Moreover, the commitment demonstrated by Kurdish EFL secondary school teachers goes beyond the classroom. It involves the creation of structured learning environments even amid external pressures, showcasing a commitment to the educational community and institutional standards. Research (e.g., Ingersoll and Strong, 2011) indicates that committed teachers contribute significantly to a positive school culture, fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for students, which extends to higher student achievement, increased job satisfaction, and improved overall school climate.

Contrastively, the findings of the present paper are not in accordance with those of Liu and Wu (2021), who investigated teaching anxiety among Chinese college English teachers in which anxiety did not correlate with age. Also, this study found that female teachers had higher commitment than male teachers which is not in line with Aydın et al.'s (2011) finding, which discovered that male teachers had more commitment than their female counterparts. Moreover, contrary to this study's finding, Matoti and Lekhu (2016) found that male teachers had more anxiety than female teachers. Lastly, this study's findings are in disagreement to those of Abdul

Raheem (2009), in which demographic variables did not show any observable relationship in degrees of teacher commitment.

5. Conclusions

To conclude, this study aimed to investigate the impact of age, gender, and commitment, on grit, anxiety, and commitment among Kurdish EFL secondary school teachers in Sulaimani Province. Triangulated data were gathered through the combination of a multidimensional questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The quantitative results revealed significant associations between demographic variables and the psychological factors under study. To be more precise, older and more experienced teachers exhibited higher levels of anxiety, commitment, and grit, indicating a positive relationship between maturity and these psychological constructs. Female teachers, compared to their male counterparts, demonstrated higher grit, anxiety, and commitment levels, emphasizing the gender dimension in these domains.

The qualitative data elucidated teachers' perceptions of grit, anxiety, and commitment. Grit emerged as a cornerstone for goal achievement, reflecting teachers' resilience and determination fostered by overcoming challenges. Anxiety management strategies underscored the importance of maintaining a positive teaching environment, separating personal challenges from professional responsibilities. Commitment encompassed structured learning environments amid external pressures and adherence to institutional rules.

This study, just like any other, has some limitations. Firstly, the cross-sectional design employed by this study limits the ability to build causal relationships among the above factors. Therefore, studies with longitudinal designs could offer deeper insights into the dynamic nature of these psychological constructs over time. Secondly, relying on self-report measures may introduce response biases, as participants might provide socially desirable answers (Ary et al., 2019). Combining self-report data with observational measures could enhance the strength of

future research. In addition, the present study concentrated on a particular cultural and linguistic context, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Replicating this study in diverse educational and cultural contexts could offer a more detailed picture of the factors at play. Also, further research look into the effects of other demographic variables such as marital status, economic status, income, and school environment on teachers' grit, anxiety, and commitment as these may also be contributive to how gritty, anxious, or committed teachers are to their profession.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude to the Kurdish EFL secondary school teachers who participated in this study.

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