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THE EXAMINATION OF GRIT IN SOUTHERN BAPTIST LEAD PASTORS IN ALABAMA

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by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to understand the attribute of grit in current Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) lead pastors in Alabama. Having first been coined as a separate attribute in 2007, there was much still to learn about grit and its qualities. This study attempted to research the impact of grit in Christian ministry. Grit was coined by Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly (2007) and is defined as the perseverance and passion for long term goals and the attainment of those goals. In this mixed-method study, grit was examined in lead pastors of SBC churches in Alabama with an in position tenure of eight years or more. Data was collected first by utilizing the Grit-S Survey from A. Duckworth (2016). Thereafter, qualitative data was collected in the form of video conference and phone interviews detailing past experiences of the research subjects. Finally, a correlation was attempted between the research subjects and a close subordinate for each member, utilizing the same research instruments. The data suggests grit to be a key attribute for goal achievement in ministry leadership. Results of the 90 lead pastors studied highlight that grit is highly possessed by those in ministry leadership with average grit scores of 3.86 on a 5.0 scale. Grit was also suggested to be learned throughout life and that one of the most significant factors in grit development was having a calling from God on one's life.

Keywords: Grit, Christian Leadership, Pastoral Leadership, Biblical Personality

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife, son, and daughter. Without the tremendous amount of support received from each of you, this project would not have been as attainable. Your constant encouragement, prayers, and praise gave me the fuel needed to cross the finish line. I am forever grateful to each of you and for what you have done for me on this wonderful journey!

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List of Abbreviations

Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)

CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN

Introduction

Grit is a key personal attribute necessary for long term sustained success in the professional realm and for the achievement of goals (A. L. Duckworth, Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., Kelly, D. R. , 2007). Christian ministry leadership, in the position of a lead pastor, can be seen as a professional realm for many principles and theories regarding organizational leadership and business leadership. The purpose of this study was to examine the levels of grit present in Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) lead pastors leading a specific congregation for eight years or more in Alabama. Additionally, this study attempted to identify key contributing factors towards the development of grit in the respective leadership experiences of these individuals.

Background to the Problem

Changes in Ministry

Religious affiliation has gone from being an expected aspect of reality and life to being a modern-day enigma (Suh & Russell, 2015). The fourth century provided one of the biggest growth periods for the church as a whole (Anthony & Benson, 2003). In this era, Christianity became the most dominant religion in Europe and Western Asia, paving the way for further expansion of Christianity and its influence (Anthony & Benson, 2003). The Catholic Church, in this period, became the epicenter for nearly all aspects relating to the Christian Church such as defining theology and providing explanation and guidance on any issues concerning the doctrinal stance and interpretation of the Bible. (Anthony & Benson, 2003; Carson, 2008; Estep, Anthony, & Allison, 2008).

The Catholic Church remained the primary institutional proprietor of this authoritarian and expert role until the Protestant Reformation between 1500 A.D. and 1600 A.D. (Anthony &

Benson, 2003). In this time, the church split over arguments of doctrine, interpretations, authority, and direction for congregations (Anthony & Benson, 2003). Since this period, church splits and denominational formations have become more normal rather than the exception (Suh & Russell, 2015).

Church growth, denominational preferences, and theological stances in Europe, Africa, Australia, Asia, and South America have all undergone significant changes throughout history, and while the religious timeline may not be as long, the church in North America has had similar alterations. Since the introduction of Christianity into North America through European settlers, church denominations and theological stances have slowly progressed to a more consumer-driven enterprise (Haskell, Burgoyne, & Flatt, 2016). In the late nineteenth century, the rise of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) began to take place in southern states from North and South Carolina to Texas (Stricklin, 2015). Two primary theological stances, Calvinism and Arminianism, were present in the SBC during this time, causing a significant rift and conflict between congregations (Stricklin, 2015). Pressing through this difficult time and arduous conflict presented a need for a strong, gritty leader.

In the early twentieth century, another doctrinal revolution mounted in North America known as the Azusa Street Revival (Anderson, 2006). As a result of these events, the Pentecostal revolution began to roll through America and Canada, creating a movement that would be met with great eagerness and equally great opposition (Anderson, 2006; R. Clark, 2016; Bill Johnson, 2013; King, 2008).

The growth and expansion of the SBC denomination continued steadily throughout the 20th Century where, according to Stricklin (2015), “[n]one worked harder than Southern Baptist (p. 12). Additionally, Stricklin (2015) noted that members of the SBC “devoted their religious

energies to the institutional goals of the churches and focused especially on evangelization of the populace” (p. 12). As the growth continued, denominational control, again, began to be challenged as is typical with parent organizations (Haskell et al., 2016). A primary result was the growth in the establishment of non-denominational churches that subscribe to a charismatic theological stance due to the influence of the Azusa Street Revival (Haskell et al., 2016; Suh & Russell, 2015). The desire and allusion of attending a non-denominational church has increased in modern-day churchgoers steadily in the 21st Century, and with the growing resurgence of charismatic beliefs. The charismatic non-denominational church sect of Christianity has grown, creating not only a doctrinal issue for SBC lead pastors to address, but also an organizational issue (Brodeur & Liebscher, 2012; G. K. Clark, 2000; Haskell et al., 2016; Bill Johnson, 2013; Sexton, 2011). In this movement, the growth of SBC churches, which hold differing theological viewpoints on several aspects of Christianity than these charismatic churches, has continued to thrive, leaving a question as to the nature of the leadership within these congregations. Opposition and challenges are present issues those in leadership must face, and according to Kearns (2015), “during times of turbulence and conflict, grit helps leaders to persevere and remain strong” (p. 112).

Role of Lead Pastor

The lead pastor is an integral and essential part of the local church body (Nichols, 2007). Being one of the offices in the five-fold ministry found in Ephesians 4:11, this position has significant importance in the institutional Christian organization, and must be of high influence for the Kingdom of God (Foppen, Paas, & Saane, 2018). Those in these positions are to operate as the organizational leader for the congregation, and to educate, train, and guide the lay members for other Christian related activities (Acts 20:28). The role of the lead pastor has a

significance that is much greater than the desires and passions of the individual. As mentioned by Nichols (2007), “the Bible provides many stories where God has sent human leaders with a specific vision to do bold things for Him” (p. 24).

Clearly, the responsibility of the lead pastor is one of great significance as God calls them to accomplish a heavenly purpose and that supersedes the earthly one. Other passages found in Scripture mention that the lead pastor should be the holder of authority in the local congregation (Hebrews 13:7), have a responsibility to act justly due to a higher standard (James 3:1), and should reflect the character of God (Titus 1:5-9). While these responsibilities can be applied to others in ministry roles or leadership roles, the essential tenants are first applicable to those in the lead pastor position.

Issues Facing SBC Lead Pastors

A growing trend amongst Protestant, evangelical churches is to break away from the mother church or parent denomination and become independent (Suh & Russell, 2015). In their research, Suh and Russell (2015) found that Americans are becoming less eager to be religiously identified with a specific denomination. Their study revealed that people who are members of a protestant Christian faith are 20 percent more likely to switch denominations; their respective religious activity or beliefs were seldom affected. This move to get out from under the umbrella of the parent organization is often driven by a push for independence and change (Suh & Russell, 2015). This scenario can cause an immense amount of pressure on the lead pastor to decide in favor of change or to stay the course. If the secondary leadership, such as a lay leader, deacon, or associate pastor, within the church disagrees with the lead pastor’s decision, situations of adversity, trial, persecution, doubt, or uncertainty may arise. Additionally, in a study of over 13,000 SBC churches, Trawick and Lile (2007) related the culture of the SBC denomination as

being a firm, giving the organization a corporate nature creating a hierarchical ladder that one must figure out how to climb if the goal is to become a lead pastor.

All of this is significant as there are unique pressures placed on those entering the ministry within the SBC denomination. Often, pastors start out as associates or youth ministers and must sit and wait until either a job above them opens within the church or another church provides a pastoral vacancy (Trawick & Lile, 2007). In this waiting, while typically making a far less salary, one may feel the urge to move on, or to start an independent church, especially if that person is well liked amongst the congregation (Suh & Russell, 2015). This presents a situation that one must press through and endure to reach the position of lead pastor.

Grit

Grit is defined as the ability to maintain focus on activities over long periods of time despite challenges, setbacks, and adversity (A. Duckworth, 2016). Similar to perseverance and resiliency, grit goes further as it tackles aspects like boredom and passion, opposition and time. Perseverance and resiliency mainly deal with the adversity aspect of life events that may happen. Grit deals with all aspects to the accomplishment of goals (Davidson, 2014).

Perseverance

Perseverance is a term similar to grit. As Kearns (2015) stated “prior to the introduction of the concept of grit, perseverance is the term that most closely matches the concept of grit” (p. 8). While perseverance may be defined as the determined application of effort over the course of time, it is not a mirror image of grit (Merriam-Webster Inc., 2019). In his journal article, Kalra (2017) discussed how perseverance was an essential personality trait that allowed him to overcome the lack of pedigree on his quest to becoming a cardiologist. The medical field is a

tough one to break into and to be successful in. Jansen (2017) demonstrated how perseverance is directly related to the success of one in a challenging, somewhat hostile career.

Resiliency

Resiliency is also a character trait that is often paired with grit, or more likely, used as a synonym for grit (A. Duckworth, 2016). One of the simplest definitions of resiliency is the ability to bounce back (Merriam-Webster Inc., 2019). A potentially deeper explanation comes from a recent study conducted by Isaacs (2018) where he ultimately defined resiliency as “coping with adversity and learning from it, and [that] research teaches us resilience can be learned” (p. 219). He also mentioned that resilience is the ordinary human adaptive response to tragedy and persecution (Isaacs, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

The SBC lead pastor faces many challenges to his ministry today (Smidt, 2016). Mostly those challenges come from sources outside the church, however, there are many inside the church that work hard to expose or refute the teachings and ministries of those in Christian leadership (Stricklin, 2015). The leaders without a denominational umbrella, face an increased level of criticism, and do so without a larger, parent organization, providing support or shelter. With these aspects being understood, it is essential that these leaders have a strong sense of resiliency and grit to press forward. This research focused on the level of grit attained by lead pastors in the SBC resulting from their lived experiences.

Nearly all of the research available over the past decade concerning grit has been accomplished in the field of education, specifically, education in the Western United States, primarily California. Duckworth (2016) accomplished the foundational work on grit by first coining the attribute in 2007. She later expanded her research in 2009, developing a shorter

survey to measure grit levels, and again in 2016 where she expanded the concept of boredom and setback in relation to grit. Kearns (2015) developed one of the first studies on grit in high level educational leadership. Her study of California superintendents found that of those in the position for longer than three years, high levels of grit were apparent and seen both from the individual's perspective, and from the subordinate's perspective towards leadership. Kearns (2015) was able to conclude that grit was a key factor in determining positional success, personal accomplishment, and professional accomplishment.

Additional studies in education have been conducted by Hubbard (2018) who studied grit in relation to longevity and Lawson Riddle (2018) who examined the relationship between grit levels and the attainment of self-efficacy in teachers. These studies have shown that grit is a character trait that is getting ever increasing attention for those in leadership studies (Carr, 2016). Grit has a significant role in leadership training, development, and execution. The goal of this research was to find the relation to a biblical worldview and ministry operations.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to explore the levels of grit in senior pastors that are affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention in Alabama. This study also examined the perceived level of grit in lead pastors from the perception of their subordinates. Qualitative data was gathered concerning the attributes these pastors described as major contributors to their grittiness. Grit was generally defined as the relentless pursuit of long-term goals despite setbacks, plateaus, or boredom and the ability to achieve those goal (Duckworth et. al., 2007). Guiding this study was the Theory of Grit as presented by Duckworth (2016).

Research Questions

RQ1. What do Alabama SBC lead pastors perceive as their level of grit as indicated on the Duckworth 8-Item Grit Scale?

RQ2. What do lead pastor's subordinates perceive as the lead pastor's level of grit as indicated on the Duckworth 8-Item Grit Scale?

RQ3. Is there a significant difference between self-reported and subordinate-reported perceived levels of grit?

RQ4. What are the leadership and personal attributes that lead pastors perceive contribute to their respective grit levels?

Assumptions and Delimitations

Research Assumptions

This study was conducted with the assumption that the grit attribute as presented and defined by A. L. Duckworth, Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., Kelly, D. R. (2007) will have a direct correlation with success and longevity in ministry. Additionally, it was assumed that the results of similar studies conducted in education leadership will have mirrored results in a ministry leadership context. More specifically:

1. The response received by participants during the research reflected their personal experience and not of the population.
2. It was presumed that the participants have a Christian worldview through which they live their lives and work in ministry.
3. It was presumed the participants were truthful about the description of their experiences in grit development.
4. It was presumed the interview protocol and interview instrument was appropriate for gathering reliable data.

5. It was presumed the participants are interested in participating in the study because it has the potential to help them and future clergymen.

Delimitations of the Research Design

1. To limit the scope of this study to a manageable level, the focus area was limited to the State of Alabama.
2. To further limit the scope of this study, the pastors examined here were part of the Southern Baptist Convention.
3. Only lead pastors who have been in the position for a minimum of eight years were studied.
4. Other aspects of leadership as it related to job performance or ministry was not examined.

Definition of Terms

1. *Biblical Worldview*: Life approach that utilizes the Bible to understand, define, explain, and operate in all areas and aspects of life.
2. *Calling from God*: A divine purpose, direction, and responsibility one is given to live out that supersedes any and all human desires.
3. *Grit*: The relentless pursuit of long-term goals despite setbacks, plateaus, or boredom and the ability to achieve those goal (A. Duckworth, 2016).
4. *Leadership*: The task of teaching God's Word with clarity in its original context and in a way that is relevant to those whose hearts are open to hear (Bredfeldt, 2006, p. 14).
5. *Lead Pastor*: The primary leader of a local church, and is normally the one who leads and supervises the other pastoral or administrative staff, while also working closely with the elders or deacons in overseeing the ministries of the church (Sin, 2013).
6. *Ministry Leadership*: A staff position within a given ministry or church such as pastor, elder, teacher, evangelist, etc.
7. *Standard*: Professional expectations for those in ministry leadership, considering conduct and behavior when viewed through a biblical worldview.
8. *Subordinate*: An individual that works under the lead pastor.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was the addition to the current research accomplished on grit. This study closed a gap on current understandings of grit and leadership by tying the information to a biblical worldview and a Christian ministry setting. Given that nearly all current research on grit is on organizational leadership and, mainly, in education settings, having the information correlated to a Christian ministry setting further increased the rounded view of grit.

Additionally, this study increased the understanding of the significance of this attribute for those in a ministry setting. Often, leadership, in a ministry context, is talked about and discussed in soft terms. Those leadership attributes often claimed to be desired for a ministry leader are those in respect to servant leadership (Roberts, 2008). This study showed that grit, a rougher and more hardening attribute, is necessary for success and longevity in ministry leadership. By highlighting the importance and impact of grit on ministry leadership, current and prospective Christian leaders can be educated and guided into the development of this attribute so they may be better equipped for the vast challenges of ministry leadership.

Summary of the Design

To accomplish this study, this researcher employed a mixed-methods designed research methodology. The social phenomenon believed to exist here was the need for high levels of grit to have success in an often threatening, challenging, and even hostile ministry career. To answer the questions posed by this researcher, interviews and surveys were conducted with SBC lead pastors in Alabama. According to the Alabama State Board of Missions, currently, 3,248 churches belong to the SBC in Alabama (Mickey, 2020). Of those churches, 1,201 had a lead pastor that has served longer than eight years, the average tenure of SBC lead pastors in Alabama. This pool of 1,201 was the research population for this study. Quantitative data was

collected from the lead pastors and their close subordinates through the use of a Grit-S survey as developed by Duckworth (2009). The data collected was analyzed using two separate means tests to answer RQ1 and RQ2. A *t*-test was conducted to examine a correlation between the two means tests to answer RQ3. Finally, interviews were conducted on the 10 respondents that scored highest on the Grit-S survey. Their responses were recorded and coded for trends and other data points utilizing NVivo to determine the importance of grit in the leadership development for lead pastors.

Each of the research participants took a Grit-S Survey (Duckworth, 2016), utilized to determine grit levels in educational leaders in a study done by Kearns (2015), to identify their current level of grit. Additionally, one of their associate pastors/elders was requested to take the same survey, rating the lead pastor to examine accuracy. After the grit analysis had been taken, the baseline level of grit was determined for each subject. Once this information was understood, video conference or phone interviews were conducted with 10 research subjects asking for answers to a set list of questions that mirror the research conducted by Kearns (2015). These questions dealt with issues of difficulty the subjects have faced, goal setting abilities, determination levels, leadership development training, leadership challenges, ministry journeys, and amount of time they have been members of the SBC.

The answers from these interviews helped answer the questions of importance of incorporating grit into leadership development for independent pastors. Additionally, this data indicated the likely sources of grit and its importance for leadership in these ministry settings. Finally, the correlation between job satisfaction, job longevity and grit levels were answered/determined.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Theological Section

According to Sin (2013), a lead pastor is “the primary leader of a local church, and is normally the one who leads and supervises the other pastoral or administrative staff, while also working closely with the elders or deacons in overseeing the ministries of the church” (p. 15). The origins of the office have strong biblical foundations found first in the Hebrew culture and identified in Old Testament passages. By beginning with the Hebrew culture and Old Testament, the term priest is the most the closely related term to the modern-day pastor (Homolka & Schöttler, 2013). It was not until after the Resurrection of Jesus Christ that other titles, such as pastor, were commonly used (Homolka & Schöttler, 2013).

Old Testament

The first mention of priest in the Bible is found in the Genesis 14:18, which states “Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High.” Here, there is a clear identity of allegiance for Melchizedek, and an important action with the offering of bread and wine. Jesus Christ is later identified in the book of Hebrews, as being the high priest in the line of Melchizedek (Heb 5:6-10). The order of Melchizedek being the first instance of a priest is highly significant as only Christ is ascribed to that priestly lineage, and the roles Melchizedek and Abraham demonstrate through their encounter has deep-rooted spiritual significance (Chirilă, Pașca-Tușa, & Onețiu, 2017).

While the order of Melchizedek is mentioned in Genesis and Psalms, the primary focus on this priestly line is contained in the New Testament; however, there are Old Testament references. For the tradition of the office as seen today in protestant circles, the significance of ‘office-specific identity’ is found after the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt (Homolka &

Schöttler, 2013). Although there is mention of other priests being in existence, whether tied to the God Almighty, or some pagan god, there seems to be a point where God intended to put guidelines and barriers for the office of priest in Exodus 19:22-24. This was the first direction where God mentioned that priests are to be ‘consecrated.’ To be consecrated is to be set apart, sanctified, and clean with an intentional focus on the relationship one has with God by dedicating oneself to Him (Buchanan (2015).

The next wave of instructions came after the formal ordination of Aaron’s line in the tribe of Levi for priesthood (Deffinbaugh, 1998). As priests were already in existence, this announcement by God in Exodus chapters 28 and 29 established a certain significance on the office (Deffinbaugh, 1998). Not only did God identify that only a certain group would operate under this office, but they were to physically appear differently with specially made garments and ornaments to symbolize their spiritual status (Deffinbaugh, 1998). Beyond the method of how they adorned themselves, God clearly instructed that priests were to be the conduits for which communication, care for the sanctuary, prayer, forgiveness, and atonement flowed through for the Israelites (Numbers 18:1-19). Through this important role, the spiritual care and cleansing of the Israelites would happen. While this role would continue through the history of the Jewish people largely unchanged, the role of Rabbi would become a more accurate parallel to what is seen in modern-day Christianity’s pastor (Homolka & Schöttler, 2013).

New Testament

Within the New Testament Scriptures, a transition to what is known as the pastor role today is seen. While Jesus Christ walked the earth, the role of the high priest was, for the most part, unchanged from the time of Moses. The aspect that emerged into a more formal role was that of the rabbi (Homolka & Schöttler, 2013). Homolka and Schöttler (2013) describe a rabbi

stating, “a rabbi is often called a holy man, the word ‘holy’ suggesting devotion to God, to Torah, and to performing good deeds” (p. 1). The devotion to God is a consistent theme from early Hebraic priests and the instructions formally given to Moses by God. This consecration, devotion, and intentionality is a theme that continues to be shown through Scripture.

The passages of Hebrews 7, that mention the relationship of Melchizedek and Jesus Christ, are to show the passing of a need for an earthly high priest (Chirilă et al., 2017). When speaking on Hebrews 7:1-25, Mbamalu (2015), offered the following:

The first ten verses of chapter 7 of Hebrews discuss the priesthood of Melchizedek and how it is superior to the Levitical priesthood, for it preceded it. The rest of the chapter informs how Jesus' high priesthood follows the pattern of Melchizedek's priesthood and not the Levitical priesthood. Jesus' priesthood surpasses the Levitical priesthood on many accounts. One is the failure of the law, on which Levitical priesthood stands for it could not bring about perfection in the worshippers (v.18). In addition, Jesus' priesthood was founded on an oath, a surer basis than the Levitical priesthood. Jesus' priesthood surpasses the Levitical priesthood because it is permanent. Death does not terminate his priesthood since he lives on forever (v.24). On the permanence of his priesthood lies his ability to save completely (save to the end).

From this information, it is shown that the role of the priest began to be altered. The need for the position to be a focal point for atonement no longer existed, thereby placing a significant shift in the structure of responsibilities on what would come to be known as clergy (Mbamalu, 2015).

This change in direction did not, however, mean a change in significance. The Pauline Epistles gives a fair amount of emphasis on the importance and significance of the

elder/pastor/preacher role (Homolka & Schöttler, 2013). Just as with role of priest in the Old Testament, in Hebrew culture, the role of pastor/elder has an enormous responsibility. The office, according to Homolka and Schöttler (2013) when dissecting 1 Thessalonians, should not be merely viewed as an office but as a position of authority. In other words, those operating in this capacity do not do so on their own accord, but insist, just as the Apostle Paul, they operate under the blessing of Jesus Christ (Homolka & Schöttler, 2013). With this understood, one can see that the position of pastor, specifically lead pastor, has a relational importance to Jesus Christ as a position of authority, and holds valuable leadership needs for the church. With this responsibility and importance, goal setting, achievement, endurance, and perseverance are all key and all are components of grit (Duckworth, 2016).

Early Church

The early church period is considered the time from 30 AD to 325 AD (Anthony & Benson, 2003). Within this period, the church's leadership roles began to get sharply defined (Homolka & Schöttler, 2013). During the Apostolic Age (30-100), the main influential church leadership roles were held by the Apostles, and those appointed by them (Homolka & Schöttler, 2013). This critical phase of the church's development required its leaders to be strong, of deep-rooted faith and conviction, and to understand being filled with the Spirit. Persecution and opposition were key themes in this stage of the church, and it is shown that these early church leaders not only discarded fear of persecution but found joy and elation at the encountering of that persecution (Acts 5:41).

Once the First Council of Nicaea (325 AD) happened, guidance and parameters for those holding various positions such as bishop and priest were formalized (Homolka & Schöttler, 2013). By the end of the fourth century, the "Apostolic Constitutions were compiled, making use

of early third century Apostolic Tradition. Here in book VIII, it is found to have all regulations on the offices in the church” (Homolka & Schöttler, 2013, p. 43). By way of the Roman Catholic Church, this formalized standard for qualifications, selection, and responsibilities continued for centuries with little change (Homolka & Schöttler, 2013).

Reformation

The reformation period, which divided much of the church as it existed in the sixteenth century, also provided some enormous opportunities for growth and revision (Carson, 2008). One of those significant revisions was the imagery for what was considered to be an ideal pastor. While the spiritual nature of the position was largely unchanged for centuries, the ideal ‘man’ moved from a full time dedicated celibate, to a married, family-oriented leader (Homolka & Schöttler, 2013). Additionally, through the Protestant Reformation came the foundation for denominational formations, many of which are in existence today (Anthony & Benson, 2003; Carson, 2008). This transition provided motivation and opportunity for these denominations to implement stylistic individuality, and to create tradition and self-governance, to include pastoral selection (Homolka & Schöttler, 2013).

Modern Day

From the sixteenth century, most requirements and guidelines for what qualifies one to be a pastor, the responsibilities of that role, and the scope of leadership it assumes can appear to be mirrored across nearly all denominations (Homolka & Schöttler, 2013). The major change in this capacity came about from the eighteenth century, where the “religious-ethical pluralism increased the frequency of more ‘one-way’ communication from the pastoral office to the congregation” (Homolka & Schöttler, 2013, p. 169). This places the pastoral role in a more

celebrity type status and propagates the ‘sage on a stage’ model that only enhances the desire for great orators and charismatic qualities in an entertainment-driven age (Chester & Timmis, 2008).

Leadership Styles

Though there are certainly a wide-ranging amount of denominations and sects within the evangelical, protestant faith leadership. The pinnacle earthly role can easily translate from one congregational set up to another (Smidt, 2016). This is because biblical leadership principles do not change as one moves from one doctrinal stance to another (Smidt, 2016). Within the scope of the Scriptures, a few prominent leadership styles emerge: servant leadership and shepherd leadership.

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is a style that is known far and wide, and is one that is gaining momentum in many circles both in and out of Christian specific ties (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008). The foremost idea of servant leadership from a biblical worldview, primarily shown with Jesus and the washing of the disciple’s feet, is that Christ showed his love by serving others and through his actions and words, Christians are given an example to follow (John 13:1-17). Servant leadership often has a negative connotation as it can appear as demonstration of weakness, or lack of dignity (Roberts, 2008). This notion is a false perception as Howell (2003), mentions “with servant leadership, dependent obedience, humble submission, reverent worship, and wholehearted commitment to will and purposes of another are qualities that, far from destroying human dignity, bring about its restoration” (p. 11).

Shepherd Leadership

Another key biblical leadership model, and not exclusive from servant leadership, is that of the shepherd motif found in Scripture. Jesus referred to his actions as that of a shepherd in

John 10:9 when He said, “I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out and find pasture.” Additionally, 1 Peter 2:25 mentioned that Christians are like “lost sheep” that are returning to Christ, who is the “Shepherd...of their souls.” Additional points of interest and instruction for pastoral leaders to model the shepherd model is found in 1 Peter 5:2-4, John 21:15-17, Acts 20:28-29, Numbers 27:17, and Jeremiah 3:15.

Personality Traits

Just as with the leadership styles, several personality traits are found in the Scriptures and are essential for the pastor to embody. What is known as the ‘fruits of the Spirit’ is one of the more prominent lists of traits known in ministry circles. As listed in Galatians 5:22-23, they are “love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” These traits are what one may consider to be soft, rather than the tough and rough idea of hard-fought leadership. With this being said, one must wonder if there is a tougher side of Christian leadership. Renown theologian C.S. Lewis certainly thought so when he wrote that “Christianity is a fighting religion” (Lewis, 2001). Obviously, a fight is not won without some sort of hardness in personality; after all, Jesus had zeal for the Lord’s house and showed a more aggressive side in John 2:13-17.

Grit

As shown above, there are many different personality traits that find themselves useful for the leaders in all aspects of work, family, and faith. The focus here is on one of the tougher, more aggressive traits, grit. To begin with, several key Bible verses will be discussed to lay the biblical foundation for the need, and nature of grit. The first is that Christians are told to “...consider it pure joy when facing trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may become

mature, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4). Along the same lines, those that proclaim faith in Jesus Christ and profess to be Christians are told in Romans 5:3-4 “And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.” Another pile on to this discussion is Hebrews 12:1 “let us run the race marked before us with perseverance,” and 2 Thessalonians 1:4 which states “...we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the trials and persecution you are enduring.”

These passages are not an exhaustive list of the Scriptures that point to perseverance or discuss the trait in a godly nature, and because of that one can determine that perseverance is, and has always been, a trait that is admired and a trait that should be desired amongst Christians. As Kearns (2015) stated when discussing the relationship between Christian ideals and the trait of perseverance that “perseverance is not a new concept but was discussed in several letters in the New Testament of the Bible, written nearly 2,000 years ago,” and that “clearly perseverance is nothing new and has been an encouraged character trait for many generations” (p. 50).

While perseverance may be defined as the determined application of effort over the course of time it is not a mirror image of grit (Merriam-Webster Inc., 2019). Grit goes well beyond the concept of perseverance, however from a theological component, with just looking at words, perseverance is the closest personal attribute discussed in Scripture. Many prominent theologians and world renown pastors speak on the concept. Popular author and theologian Lewis in his book *Mere Christianity*, stated that, "God knows our situation; He will not judge us as if we had no difficulties to overcome. What matters is the sincerity and perseverance of our will to overcome them" (p. 99).

Facing continuous opposition in the spiritual realm is another very real and important factor that should be considered by Christian leader. Vallotton (2012) has written and spoken

extensively on the various forms of spiritual warfare and how Christians are to do battle. He talks about the need existing for Christian leaders to possess and tap into God-given abilities to press through some of the darkest times they may face in efforts to reveal the truth of Christ and to allow Jesus to raise the believer up in the face of all opposition (Vallotton, 2012). Additionally, in a book titled *God's Generals* written about some of the greatest people of faith to include Billy Graham, Jonathan Edwards, and Dwight Moody, Liardon (2008) mentioned that:

...each revivalist overcame his own dark night of the soul—a personal wilderness experience during which he seemed to wander without direction, meaning, and sometimes even hope. Each questioned his faith, and sometimes his salvation. But through prayer, motivated by a deep hunger for truth, each found the assurance so desperately desired. Once these heroes of the faith revived their own hearts in this way, they made sparks that ignited a blaze to set nations on fire for generations to come (p. 20).

Clearly grit was an essential attribute each of these ‘heroes’ possessed. The result of their grit was great progress for the Kingdom of God.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

Several theoretical aspects needed to be covered to grasp a better handle on the scope and need for this study. Having a solid understanding of these aspects established a conceptual framework for issues that independent lead pastors face; need for interpersonal relationship skills, strong leadership skills, and grit.

Major Issues Facing Lead Pastors

Lead pastors hold an interesting role given their spotlight, those in the position are “among the social and political elite of America in that they are, by defemination, in the business of opinion leadership” (Guth, 1997, p. 17). This magnifying glass over-exaggerates any behavior that is exposed to the outside realm of public opinion (Smidt, 2016). Few stories hit the presses harder than that of a prominent, evangelical pastor getting caught, exposed, or even alleged of some sort of misconduct and inappropriate behavior that conflicts with legal or biblical values (Foppen et al., 2018; Mattera, 2019; Shupe, Stacey, & Darnell, 2000; Smidt, 2016). During the normal day-to-day execution of their duties, pastors must be strong, compassionate, understanding, firm, gentle, sharp, wise, and graceful, all the while avoiding the trap of sin and deceit (Nichols, 2007; Ruffner & Huizing, 2016; Smidt, 2016).

Doctrinal Stance

An issue that every pastor must take into consideration is the stance on certain doctrinal divisions that face the church at large (Mattera, 2019; Smidt, 2016). A small list of those issues may be homosexual marriage, divorce acceptance, women in leadership, pre-, mid-, or post-tribulation, free will versus God’s sovereignty, baptism requirements, predestination, and the operation of the gifts of the Spirit (Mattera, 2019; Poirier, 2006; Schaller, 1982; Shupe et al., 2000; Swetland, 2005; Vreeland, 2007). Having a position on each of these issues is crucial as those question will have to be addressed to those in the congregation as well as from outsiders (Nichols, 2007; Poirier, 2006). Some stances are in the ways of popular societal norms, and others severely contradict the momentum of Western Culture today, thereby, choosing to stand firm on a doctrinal stance based on Scripture in the face of societal norms takes courage,

strength, as well as mental and spiritual fortitude (Foppen et al., 2018; Mattera, 2019; Smidt, 2016).

Spiritual Attacks

Because of the high esteem of the position they hold, lead pastors are prime targets for spiritual disruption (Shupe et al., 2000). The Bible mentions that the “enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). In this action, the devil often looks for individuals, that if they were to ‘fall’ there would be a significantly negative impact on the image of the church and Christianity (Vallotton, 2012). As pastors begin increasing in popularity, influence, and status, the enemy will launch stronger attacks against them seeking a way to “kill, steal, or destroy” (John 10:10), any aspect of their reputation so as to taint the work Jesus has done through them (Liardon, 2008; Vallotton, 2012). Because of this reality, pastors, their spouses, and their families must be deep-rooted in their faith and possess the necessary attributes to withstand storms, trials, and intense pressure (Mattera, 2019; Smidt, 2016; Swetland, 2005). The need for strong attributes presents a strong argument for lead pastors needing high levels of grit.

Budgeting

Among the many aspects of ministry leadership, a lead pastor must deal with is the appropriate handling of money (G. K. Clark, 2000; Foppen et al., 2018; Shupe et al., 2000). Often church and ministry organizations operate under the legal classification of a non-profit or 501(c)(3) ("Start Church," 2019). This status allows for latitude in how the finances are categorized and utilized in most areas and strengthens the limitations in other areas. The lead pastor must become educated in these codes ("Start Church," 2019). Unlike a typical commercial organization, or even a government-operated organization, the church is typically funded

completely from donations that others offer up without the receiving of services or goods. This means the ministry organization has not done anything to earn or claim right to the funds, but rather are now stewards of other people's generosity and religious obligation (Swetland, 2005). The handling of money can be troublesome as the funds increase, so does the temptation, and more money does not mean problems are fixed but rather "it reveals the truth about who [one is] and the choices [one] makes" (Pant, 2018). Having the strength to stand for proper financial management, and the spiritual fortitude to not break from this is another essential call for the lead pastor to be a person of grit.

Counseling

A common practice for lead pastors to perform is counseling in its various forms (Badgett, 2018; Burton, 2003; Swetland, 2005). This aspect of the job typically goes well beyond the general surface level of spiritual care as it can cover marriage issues, parenting issues, relationships, family issues, sexual trauma, and financial issues (Badgett, 2018; Burton, 2003; Laniak, 2006; Mattera, 2019; Poirier, 2006; Swetland, 2005). It is in these types of counseling sessions that a personal, emotional, and spiritual strength of a pastor may be tested (Falaye, 2013; Robertson, Smith, Ray, & Jones, 2009). The pastor is consistently perceived as the person that has everything going right, so when people come to them with their problems, the pastor is supposed to know everything and fix all of their issues (Falaye, 2013).

Unfortunately, what can often happen is the pastor may very well begin to mentally adopt some of the perspectives of the individuals seeking the counseling (Falaye, 2013; Robertson et al., 2009). Beni Johnson (2009) talked about this danger when discussing the spiritual feelings one may encounter when speaking with people that are struggling with depression, anxiety, anger, or trauma. The spiritual gift of discernment can become a heavy weight to bear if not

handled appropriately (Beni Johnson, 2009). Keeping a strong focus on one's identity in Christ and not in other people's issues is an important practice for those doing Christian counseling (Badgett, 2018; Falaye, 2013; Robertson et al., 2009; Swetland, 2005).

Time Management

Pastors possess one of those jobs whose hours are never predictable and always on call (Falaye, 2013; Homolka & Schöttler, 2013; Mattera, 2019; Smidt, 2016; Swetland, 2005). On top of the normal work day throughout the week from Monday to Friday, the pastor must expect that "people in the congregation will want to visit their home, call whenever they are in need, and expect them to drop everything when they have an emergency" (Mattera, 2019, p. 8). Hospital visitations, counseling sessions, weddings, funerals, and other special events will quickly fill a pastor's calendar leaving little room for much else (Foppen et al., 2018; Smidt, 2016). Because of this high demand on their personal time, a pastor must be diligent in creating healthy boundaries for their marriage, family, and personal health (Cloud & Townsend, 2018). Employing techniques to manage the busy schedule better and learning to say no in a loving way, is yet another thing pastors must develop; doing so will contribute to a pastor's stability overall job satisfaction (Guyton, 1988; Loyd, 2009).

Public Relations

Depending on the size and mission of the church a pastor serves, there may be a rather significant role that exists in dealing with various aspects of public relations. Pastors are the focal point for church and ministry organizations, and because of this, they are the individuals that others desire to talk to regarding various issues, desires, or offers of public interest (Smidt, 2016). Churches are often placed near high traffic areas of interest such as shopping malls, restaurants, and hotels. Those business owners will typically contact and discuss various items

with the pastoral staff of the church (Foppen et al., 2018). Additionally, government institutions and politicians may come knocking on the door of the church to establish a relationship with the pastor and staff seeking endorsements or some sort of promotional attention (Shupe et al., 2000; Smidt, 2016). For the lead pastor, keeping an attentive eye and ear to all of this activity can be difficult, all while maintaining a clean image that is biblically sound (Smidt, 2016). Because of those relationships a pastor must attend to, the pastor must be able to balance the social aspect of the job within the scope of the duties aligned to the ministry.

Inside Relations

Another key aspect of the position for lead pastors is that of internal relationships, primarily with church staff and fellow pastors. The interaction a pastor has with the ones that work alongside him can determine the success or detriment of the ministry (Nichols, 2007). In any organization, the people that fill it are the most valuable asset; they are the literal lifeblood that keeps the organization running (McGregor & Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 2006). Great leaders see this aspect and interact with others in the same way they would desire to be treated. Kilner (2015) mentioned how when people are viewed through the lens of being created in the image of God, kind, respectful, and decent interaction become a must.

The interaction with the staff of a ministry has another level of complexity as most ministry positions are filled on a volunteer basis. Leading individuals who are not being financially compensated remove a potential negotiating tool when conflict or change arises (Cloud, 2006; Collins, 2001; Poirier, 2006).

Personality Traits

The *Big Five* consist of five personality traits that serve as an umbrella people will generally be consolidated under (Costa & McCrae, 1990). These personality traits are

agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism (sometimes also termed emotional stability), extraversion, and openness to experience (Costa & McCrae, 1990; A. Duckworth, 2016; A. L. Duckworth, Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., Kelly, D. R. , 2007; Kearns, 2015; Tien, Costa, & Eaton, 1992). Each of these traits is then further broken down into subcategories that consist of sub traits which are more commonly known, such as diligence or optimism (Costa & McCrae, 1990). These sub traits are the factors that serve as the ingredients to the full make up of one's personality (Costa & McCrae, 1990).

Grit Theory

Grit has been studied for many years now; however, its prominence in leadership training and the amount of attention dedicated to this trait is rapidly increasing as it becomes better understood (A. Duckworth, 2016; Lawson Riddle, 2018; Schimschal & Lomas, 2019). From its early days of being studied, grit was merely thought of as a synonym for resiliency, perseverance, toughness, or fortitude (A. L. Duckworth, Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., Kelly, D. R. , 2007). As time has progressed the proverbial well of knowledge has grown and revealed that grit is far more complex and is unique enough to have its own category within personality traits (Schimschal & Lomas, 2019).

The possession of high levels of grit has been found to be a consistent existence in people that occupy high levels of intense leadership, especially in education (Davidson, 2014; A. Duckworth, 2016; Hubbard, 2018; Kearns, 2015; Lawson Riddle, 2018; Norkeliunas, 2015; Schimschal & Lomas, 2019). Education leadership is an environment that often is fielded by politics, aggressive behavior, and cut-throat business practices by individuals desiring to climb the corporate ladder (Hubbard, 2018). Those individuals also have a significant level of drive and determination (Hubbard, 2018; Kearns, 2015).

The work environment, political, social, and professional alike, of education leadership in the public sector is filled with challenges that require high levels of grit for positional success and longevity (Davidson, 2014; A. L. Duckworth, Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., Kelly, D. R. , 2007; Hubbard, 2018; Kearns, 2015). The position of a lead pastor is similar to that of a public sector education superintendent, which has been studied in light of grit extensively over the past decade. Both positions require high levels of leadership, forward-thinking people skills, and the ability to get things done.

Foppen et al. (2018) mention that lead pastors of independent churches need to have effective, highly influential leadership skills to promote and extend ministry work. Likewise, Pousson (1990) focused on the unique challenges and aspects that are faced with charismatic pastors. The challenges of ministry leadership, especially those in a charismatic theological doctrine, would appear to present a situation that demands high levels of grit. Hollowak (2014) talked about the opposition independent churches and their leadership they face from either a former parent church or demonization, or from the other members of the church organizational body. There appears to be a need for these lead pastors of independent churches to possess or develop high levels of grit.

Related Literature Section

For the last 12 years, the concept of grit as an attribute, and its relation to success in professional practice, has been studied by several notable experts. First getting coined in the circles of leadership discussions in 2007 by A. L. Duckworth, Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., Kelly, D. R. (2007), the study of grit has gained an increasing amount of attention as it becomes better understood. While most studies around grit have been centrally focused on leadership and the contribution of high levels of grit makes to a leader's efficacy, some studies have been

venturing out to explore the role grit may play in success of individuals in professional practices. Nearly every study has been reaching similar conclusions to that of the study done by A. L. Duckworth, Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., Kelly, D. R. (2007), finding that typically the grittier a person is, the more successful the person is when compared to like parties. Below will be shown the origins of the grit concept, instruments developed to measure a person's level of grit, recent studies conducted on the attribute in relation to leadership and professional practice, and finally, an identifiable gap in the existing literature giving need for a grit study to be conducted in a ministry context.

Grit Origins

Being the primary voice on the discussion of grit, Duckworth et al. (2007) studied the correlation of grit to positional success and compared the results to IQ and conscientiousness as a potential predictor of success. This study formally defined grit as the “perseverance and passion for long-term goals” (p. 1087). In their work, the research's population included Ivy League students with high grade point averages, two classes of cadets at the United States Military Academy at West Point, and National Spelling Bee contestants (A. L. Duckworth, Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., Kelly, D. R. , 2007). What was found was that across all of these areas, regardless of the differences in personality and status within these various organizations, successful people tended to possess high levels of grit. Their work concluded that “grit demonstrated incremental predictive validity of success measures over and beyond IQ and conscientiousness” (p. 1087). Additionally, it was noted that in the achievement of long-term or difficult goals, one needed “not only talent but the ability and apply sustained focused application of that talent over time” (A. L. Duckworth, Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., Kelly, D. R. , 2007, p. 1087).

Grit Scale Design

Desiring to find some form of a predictive measure for success, A. L. Duckworth and Quinn (2009) set out to establish an instrument to measure the attribute grit that had previously been formally established. Noting that the attribute shares many similarities to perseverance, the authors also noted that “perseverance is more often studied as an outcome than as a predictor” (A. L. Duckworth & Quinn, 2009, p. 166). Moving deeper into the definition of the attribute, these authors discovered that grit officially has two factors, they are “Consistency of Interest and Perseverance of Effort” (A. L. Duckworth & Quinn, 2009, p. 168). In addressing the same study groups as the Duckworth et al. (2007), this development showed that grit, among adults, was a predictor of education levels achieved and fewer career moves among adolescents grit was a predictor of grade point average, retention in the United States Military Academy at West Point cadets, and finally, that grit was a predictor of final round contestants in the Scripps National Spelling Bee (A. L. Duckworth & Quinn, 2009).

In their original study, A. L. Duckworth, Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., Kelly, D. R. (2007) utilized a grit measurement instrument labeled as the Grit-O scale. The Grit-O scale allowed the researchers to collect data on a 12-item inventory they could survey. This was concluded to have been an egregious amount of data to analyze for a singular personal attribute (A. L. Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). For the next study conducted in 2009, A. L. Duckworth and Quinn (2009) utilized a shorter, more concise version of the survey. The researchers labeled this as the Grit-S scale where the (S) represented the word short, as the scale was trimmed down from a 12-item inventory to an 8-item inventory (A. L. Duckworth & Quinn, 2009).

The Grit-S instrument asked research subjects to perform a self-assessment in relation to their peers about their personal attention to projects, reactions to setback, levels of interest in

projects over time, being a hard worker, attainment of goals, focus for long-term projects, finish rate for projects, and how diligent they were (A. L. Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). After conducting six studies within the research project, A. L. Duckworth and Quinn (2009) concluded that the “8-item Grit-S is both shorter and psychometrically stronger than the 12-item Grit-O” (p. 174). Ultimately, they mention they would “recommend the Grit-S as an economical measure of perseverance and passion for long-term goals” (A. L. Duckworth & Quinn, 2009, p. 174).

Grit in Leadership

Empirical research is being conducted on relationship between grit and effective leadership in a continuous state. Since the entrance of the Duckworth et al. (2007) study, numerous researchers have added to the growing pile of data and knowledge on the subject matter. As recently as mid-2019, studies have been published. Schimschal and Lomas (2019) recently looked at grit and how it positively and negatively impacts the leadership capacity of others.

Given the previous information on grit, Schimschal and Lomas (2019) noted that nearly all studies surrounding the attribute of grit were primarily focused on the achievement and attainment of long-term goals. These two wanted to focus on the impact that those who possess high levels of grit have on positive leadership (Schimschal & Lomas, 2019). It was discovered that high goal-achieving leaders had a potential to become so ultra-focused on the achievement of goals before them, they would negate the personal aspects of leadership to those around them (Schimschal & Lomas, 2019). When this happens with leadership, especially those in the pinnacle positions of an organization, morale and efficiency breakdowns exist causing strife and tempt within an organization (Levine, 2019). Great leaders hold to the concept of ‘people over process’ (Levine, 2019). The upside of the study conducted by Schimschal and Lomas (2019)

was that while high achieving leaders possess the ability to walk over their subordinates, the greater trend was the correlation between gritty leaders and those that scored high in positive leadership practices.

Narrowed Studies

As mentioned before, the introduction of grit in leadership circles has generated a significant amount of attention and research. Part of that attention belonged to Davidson (2014), who studied *The Influence of Hope and Grit on Transformational Leadership Behavior*. In this study, Davidson (2014) examined the transformation leadership behavior existent in elementary school principals. Although grit was not the only factor being assessed, the study did look at both cognitive and non-cognitive attributes. There was a positive correlation present between those elementary school principals having high levels of grit and exhibiting transformational leadership behavior (Davidson, 2014).

More specifically, elementary school administrators scored an average of 3.90 on the Grit-S scale which ranges from one to five with five being the highest possible level (Davidson, 2014). In his results, Davidson (2014) noted that “when examining items on the Grit Scale that predict transformational leadership, it was found that the items ‘I have overcome setbacks to conquer an important challenge’ and ‘I am diligent’ served as the only statistically significant positive predictors of self-reported transformational leadership behavior” (p. 68). He narrowed in on the feedback from the question concerning setbacks and concluded that for a leader that has overcome setbacks in the past, they are presently more “likely to maintain a level of hope for future goals that is necessary in order for the leader’s followers to continue exerting efforts to accomplish the organization’s goals” (Davidson, 2014, pp. 68-69). This focus on

transformational leadership behavior being correlated to high levels of grit, may have an impact on disciplines of leadership other than elementary education.

Additionally, Davidson (2014) noted that an analysis of an individual's grit level can be a predictor of positional success in high stress leadership roles. For the position of a Kansas elementary school principal, the attribute proved to be a predictor of job satisfaction and job success (Davidson, 2014). Ultimately, it was recommended that a grit analysis be implemented as part of the hiring process for education institutions that are looking for pinnacle level leaders such as principals, directors, and superintendents (Davidson, 2014).

Taking a similar approach to a study, Norkeliunas (2015) set out to study the use of grit as a predictor for female educators to promote to the position of headmaster at independent schools. In addition to grit, this study observed the impact of growth mindset on these individuals as well. Because of this, the results of her study may be slightly skewed, just as Davidson (2014) study. Within this study, Norkeliunas (2015) made a claim to the notion that females have a glass ceiling when attempting to rise through the ranks of administration in independent schools. With a primary motive of "reducing the gender gap in school administration" (Norkeliunas, 2015, p. 2), this study aimed to provide evidence that female educators should be trained up and equipped for higher levels of grit.

Norkeliunas's research uncovered that while the majority of educators in school systems that fall under the National Association of Independent Schools were female, 67 percent of the headmasters for those schools were male (Norkeliunas, 2015). While arguing that gender bias exists, the primary focus was on the need for women in education to possess high levels of grit, especially if they desired to be promoted into administrative roles (Norkeliunas, 2015). This was justified by showing the increasing length in tenure a female educator typically serves before

being placed into a high-level leadership role as compared to their male counterparts. (Norkeliunas, 2015). The findings of this study supported the notion that grit is a predictor of success in leadership. To drive home her point, Norkeliunas (2015) stated, “if we are interested in seeing more women in leadership positions, we need to encourage the qualities that will enable them to be successful. We can cultivate and nurture future female leaders by developing programs that give women tools and strategies that may help them withstand challenges and overcome workplace obstacles” (p. 58). One may easily assume that these principles can be applied to the male in need of leadership development as well.

Another study that focused on education leadership in light of grit is one that was conducted by Kearns (2015). Her study went a step further than previous ones that focused on the role of principal. In former studies, the pinnacle leadership position was examined in light of the small organization. Where Kearns (2015) decided to go was an even higher level in examining grit in the role of superintendents. As principals can be compared to being mayors of towns and cities, the superintendent is more easily compared to the governor or representative from the state. In this role there are more people to lead, and more things to manage on a grander scale.

Keeping the focus in California, Kearns (2015) utilized a sample of 50 California superintendents. To meet the requirement of her study the research subjects had to have been in position for a minimum of three years, have presented at leadership conferences, and were to be recognized by their peers as examples of high leadership (Kearns, 2015). In most grit analysis studies, the information is collected via the self-assessment Grit-S scale. With the Kearns (2015) study however, not only were the research subjects provided the assessment to take, but a close

working subordinate for each superintendent was given the assessment to take assessing the perception they had on their supervisors' level of grit (Kearns, 2015).

In her findings, Kearns (2015) discovered that the mean score for the grit analysis for the superintendents was 4.14. This is significantly higher on the one to five scale than that of the Davidson (2014) study which revealed an average of 3.90 across elementary school principals. Interestingly, the higher grit levels correspond to the higher leadership position. The role of a superintendent is far more political, stressful, time sensitive, and demanding than that of a school site administrator (Kearns, 2015). What is more is that in this study, the “score of the subordinates’ perception of their superintendents’ level of grit (4.25) was slightly higher than how the superintendents rated themselves (4.14)” (Kearns, 2015, p. 107). That strong of a similarity, statistically aids in validating the findings that grit plays a role in predicting positional success and longevity of service for California superintendents (Kearns, 2015).

In her book published after the prominent grit studies were completed, A. Duckworth (2016) highlighted some additional components of the grit concept. Drawing on her personal story of being constantly told that she was not smart, A. Duckworth (2016) explained how she ventured to her current level of academic and professional excellence. It was mentioned that what the world often sees as a driven determining factor for success is talent and the so-called genius. Arguing in contrast to this, A. Duckworth (2016) presented that success, especially high-level success in long-term situations, is not driven nor determined by talent, but rather the will to continue despite plateaus, boredom, setbacks, or complications. She explained that often the most successful is not the most talented, and that high levels of talent often correlate to lower levels of grit and of success (A. Duckworth, 2016).

This information is important for the study of leadership and the development and training of others for leadership. The most talented is not always the most successful as the determining factor is a trait (grit) that can aid an individual to push through and past the obstacles in the way (A. Duckworth, 2016). Talent and adaptive skills certainly help in generating initial success. The sustainment of that success, however, has proven to be more reliant on one's grittiness versus one's talent level.

Similar to the study that was conducted on California superintendents by Kearns (2015), Hubbard (2018) studied another view for this concept. In her study, *The Perceived Effect of Grit on Tenure Length of Superintendents in California*, Hubbard (2018) built on the leadership study conducted by Kearns (2015), and correlates it into position longevity. Just as the study performed by Kearns (2015) uncovered the high levels of grit in California superintendents, the Hubbard (2018) study did as well. Additionally, Hubbard (2018) mentioned that an extremely high turnover rate exists in the position of superintendent in California which gives reason to why Kearns (2015) chose to only study individuals that had been in position for over three years. It was found that the longer a person has held the role of superintendent in California, the higher the levels of grit were perceived to be in that individual (Hubbard, 2018). This led to the conclusion that grit was not only something that was possessed by individuals, but an adaptive trait that could be learned, honed, and grown (Hubbard, 2018).

Also, in another similar finding between the Hubbard (2018) study and the Kearns (2015) study was that those individuals who were perceived to have high levels of grit, had an experience or trial of persecution they had to overcome in their past. This again pointed to the idea that grit as an attribute can be developed over time and through experiences. The implications of this finding in both studies discussed here is that one may not possess a

significant amount of grit until trial, challenge, persecution, or setbacks arise. Also, based on the Grit-S scale, the reported levels of grit from self-assessments may be skewed if one has had little to no challenge in their past or has not a significant experience of setback to overcome.

Further research into the grit attribute was accomplished by Lawson Riddle (2018), who once again studied grit in the realm of education. Her study focused on the relationship between grit and the self-efficacy for pre-service teachers (Lawson Riddle, 2018). She desired to study grit in light of “investigating connections between motivation and resilience that might result in self-efficacious behaviors” (Lawson Riddle, 2018, p. 3). Through examining students at a Mid-Atlantic University, Lawson Riddle (2018) effectively concluded that grit levels were a strong predictor of self-efficacy as those who possessed high levels of grit were shown to exhibit the most self-efficacious behavior among the research population.

As study after study continuously revealed the same information providing validation for the original findings on grit, the discussion then turned to where grit is most needed. The realm of education has dominated the discussion and research attention on grit. Nearly all of the work that has been written and conducted concerning grit exists in the realm of education. Specifically, education in the Western United States, primarily California. Duckworth is known as one of the foremost experts in the category and her work is cited in nearly every main publication on grit. Kearns (2015) developed one of the first studies on grit in high level educational leadership. Her study on California superintendents found that of those in the position for longer than three years, high levels of grit were apparent and seen both from the individual’s perspective, and from the subordinate’s perspective towards leadership. Kearns (2015) was able to conclude that grit was a key factor in determining position success, personal accomplishment, and professional accomplishment.

Additional studies in education have been conducted by Hubbard (2018), who studied grit in relation to longevity, and Lawson Riddle (2018), who examined the relationship between grit levels and the attainment of self-efficacy in teachers. These studies have shown and continue to build on one another that grit is a character trait that is getting ever-increasing attention for those in leadership studies.

Rationale for Study and Gap in the Literature

A discussion that must be had is the attention grit deserves to have in the context of ministry leadership. Grit has a significant role in leadership training, development, and execution. The goal now was to find the relation to a biblical worldview and ministry operations. Tidsworth (2018) wrote an expository piece urging ministry leaders to begin working on developing grit. He cites the Duckworth studies and announces that grit is a much-needed attribute for ministry leaders. The issue here is that there is not data available specific to grit in a Christian ministry context. There is, however, anecdotal evidence for the desire of this topic to be researched and explored in Christian leadership circles. What is missing is one to execute a study and relate the findings. Lead pastors share a similar leadership role to that of education leaders and their need for grit may very well be the same. Studying this topic and viewing the attribute through the lens of a biblical worldview added to the literature available on grit, as well as closing a significant gap that exists.

Profile of the Current Study

In efforts to close a portion of this gap in the literature, this study served as a means of examining the grit levels in senior pastors with affiliation to the SBC within the state of Alabama. This researcher conducted a study with a sample of the leadership amongst the churches in Alabama that have membership in good standing with the SBC. Those individuals

that currently occupy the position of lead pastor, having been in the role for at a minimum of five years, were provided with the Grit-S 8-Item survey. Additionally, a tailored Grit-S survey was sent to the respective lead pastors' subordinates such as associate pastors or secretaries to examine their perceived level of grit in the lead pastor. A correlation study was intended to compare the two results. Finally, with those pastors who scored highest on the grit survey, interviews were conducted to discuss the perceived aspects of their respective leadership journeys and what they felt contributed to their current grittiness.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There has been a recent discovery of the importance of grit in high-level leadership. Since the introduction of the attribute in 2007, many studies have been conducted to highlight the importance of the trait in leadership and career success as well as being a potential predictor of long-term goal achievement. Of the studies that have been conducted, none have examined the theological roots of the attribute nor have they studied the attribute in the context of a Christian ministry leadership setting. This study utilized a mixed-methods approach to analyzing the grit levels of current SBC affiliate lead pastors in Alabama.

Research Design Synopsis

The Problem

The SBC lead pastor faces many challenges to his ministry today. Mostly those from outside the church, however, many inside the church work hard to expose or refute the teachings and ministries of those in Christian leadership. While leaders without a denominational umbrella face an increased level of criticism, and do so without a larger, parent organization providing support or shelter, being part of the larger corporate organization, such as the SBC, presents unique challenges. With these aspects being understood, these leaders must have a strong sense of resiliency and grit to press forward. This researcher was curious as to the level of grit attained by the senior pastors on their respective leadership development journeys.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to explore the levels of grit in senior pastors that are affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention in Alabama. This study also

attempted to examine the perceived level of grit in lead pastors from the perception of their subordinates. Lastly, qualitative data was gathered concerning the attributes these pastors describe as major contributors to their grittiness. Grit was generally defined as the relentless pursuit of long-term goals despite setbacks, plateaus, or boredom, and the ability to achieve those goals. Guiding this study is the *Theory of Grit* as presented by Duckworth (2016).

Research Questions

RQ1. What do Alabama SBC lead pastors perceive as their level of grit as indicated on the Duckworth 8-Item Grit Scale?

RQ2. What do lead pastor's subordinates perceive as the lead pastor's level of grit as indicated on the Duckworth 8-Item Grit Scale?

RQ3. Is there a significant difference between self-reported and subordinate-reported perceived levels of grit?

RQ4. What are the leadership and personal attributes that lead pastors of SBC churches over 1000 perceive that contribute to their respective grit levels?

Research Design and Methodology

This mixed-methods research study attempted to employ the use of correlation research design to discover the relationship that exists between the self-assessed levels of grit of SBC lead pastors in Alabama and the perceived level of grit in those pastors from the perspective of their respective church staff subordinates. Since there was intended a comparison of two groups in search of a relationship, correlation design was utilized in attempting to gather the quantitative data. Leedy and Ormrod (2016) insist that “[l]ittle can be gained by reinventing the wheel” (p. 29). When considering the concept of a study replication, this researcher saw much to gain in that process. Leedy and Ormrod (2016) acknowledged the gain that exists and its practicality through replication studies especially when one can “replicate a research project in a different setting or with a different population” (p. 29). For this researcher, the Kearns’ (2015) study was

used as a guide. In her study, Kearns (2015), examined grit in California superintendents. Through comparison, the position of lead pastor holds a significant similarity in scope, responsibility, and autonomy.

In this light, the quantitative instruments that were utilized was an 8-question Grit-S survey developed by Duckworth et al. (2007). This Grit-S survey was originally a 12-item survey that was later trimmed down to 8 items and has been validated as a reliable instrument to gather factual data to be used in statistical analysis (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). Multiple studies have undertaken the use of this instrument in the examination of grit in many different research populations. The results have remained consistent throughout various research studies and populations.

This researcher implemented the Grit-S scale into the study and was administered to the various research subjects via an online survey tool, Qualtrics. Qualtrics is a reliable source for administering surveys as it protects identity and is password protected. This survey was administered to SBC lead pastors in the State of Alabama. The survey was then modified just as in the Kearns' 2015 study to examine the perceived levels of grit in lead pastors through their subordinates. These two population samples were intended to provide answers, and two corresponding mean tests were intended to be accomplished for these surveys. Given the words from McMillan and Schumacher (2010), "there is a comparison between two values to see if they are different" (p. 299), a *t*-test was intended to be utilized to compare the two mean tests.

The total attribute score from the two groups of Grit-S surveys was intended to be calculated via separate means test. The results were intended to then be compared via the *t*-test to generate a *p* score that will display the difference between the two groups. Just as in previous studies, the hypothesized difference between the two groups was intended to be zero. The

resulting data from the mean test of the lead pastors was helped to answer this researcher's research question one, while the second mean test intended to seek to answer research question two. Finally, the correlation found in the *t*-test was intended to answer research question three in this researcher's study.

Once this information is understood, video or phone interviews were conducted with 10 research subjects asking for answers to a set list of questions. These questions dealt with issues of difficulty the subjects have faced, goal-setting abilities, determination levels, leadership development training, leadership challenges, ministry journeys, and amount of time they have been members of the SBC. The answers from these interviews helped to answer the questions as to the importance of incorporating grit into leadership development for independent pastors. Additionally, this data shed light on where and when grit became, if at all, an important attribute to attain for leadership in these ministry settings.

Population

In the United States of America, according to Pew Research, 47,456 churches belong to the SBC spread out amongst 41 associations (Fahmy, 2019). Most of the concentration is in the south to include Texas, North Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama (Fahmy, 2019). The State of Alabama has a reported number of 3,248 churches that are affiliated with the SBC. The lead pastors of these churches make up the population for this research study.

Sampling Procedures

Based on the replication nature of this study, modeling much of the work from the Kearns (2015) study, the numbers for this population were purposefully sampled to a more realistic number. Additionally, the average tenure of an SBC lead pastor in Alabama is eight years, to comply with the practices of the Kearns (2015) study, only pastors who are currently

serving more than eight years in their current role were studied. Within the 3,248 churches in Alabama belonging to the SBC, 1,147 had a lead pastor that was in their current role greater than eight years. These 1,147 made up the quantitative portion of the study. After the results of the initial surveys were analyzed, there was purposive sampling conducted to interview those respondents who have the 10 highest scores on the initial Grit-S survey.

Limits of Generalization

Several limitations to the data that was collected and presented had the potential to exist. The ease of access to the research population made the data collection cumbersome. Additionally, having little to no familiarity with the research subjects made the research surveys taken less sincere than other forms of data collection. Regarding the use of the in-person interviews, the timing of the study demanded that a quick turnaround of survey analysis was needed so that interviews were not only conducted on a reasonable timeline but were performed with an accurate understanding of each research subject's grit level.

Ethical Considerations

The use of Qualtrics allowed the research participants to have identity protection as well as extra levels of security as the site is password protected to the specific survey. Additionally, NVivo was utilized to code the interviews which is password protected. Upon completion of the research, files were destroyed. Informed consent forms were required prior to study participation with each member of the study. These informed consent forms were written in an easily understood language with clear terms so that the participants were fully aware of the parameters of the study. During the presentation of the results and findings, no personal identifiable information was used. Lastly, participants knew their participation was completely voluntary and they had the option to opt out at any time for any reason.

Instrumentation

The Grit-O scale allowed the researchers to collect data on a 12-item inventory they could survey. This was concluded to have been an egregious amount of data to analyze for a singular personal attribute (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). For the next study conducted in 2009, Duckworth and Quinn (2009) utilized a shorter, more concise version of the survey. The researchers labeled this as the Grit-S scale where the (S) represented the word short, as the scale was trimmed down from a 12-item inventory to an 8-item inventory (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). In this study, the Grit-S scale was utilized and administered to the various research subjects via an online survey tool, Qualtrics.

The same survey was sent to the lead pastors' subordinates with slight alterations of the pronouns. This practice falls in line with the study conducted by Kearns (2015) when grit levels in California superintendents were studied. As no tool has yet to be designed specifically to address the perceived level of grit in another from an outsider opinion, this practice was utilized.

Qualitative data collection works with data more in open-ended questions allowing a research subject to reflect upon personal experience and attributes thereof (Creswell, 2015; Patton, 2002). In qualitative research there are three main sources of data collection, all in the realm of fieldwork: interviews, documents, and observations. This study will utilize the practice of in-person interviews to gather qualitative data. When conducting interviews, Patton (2002) stated that the data "reveals direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge" (p. 4).

The individuals to be researched in this study were identified using criterion sampling. When doing this, Patton (2002) stated, "The logic of criterion sampling is to review and study all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance" (p. 238). Several items have been

identified below to help distinguish those that fit for the study. 1) The individual must be serving in a lead pastor / senior pastor capacity. 2) The individual must have been in the current position for a time period of five years or greater. 3) The congregation where these individuals serve must be in Alabama.

The interview method was utilized in this research study. Patton (2002) mentions that when conducting a qualitative research study, the researcher acts as the instrument. In conducting the interviews, it is important for the researcher to remain aware of all cues and forms of communication being exhibited. For this study “topics are selected in advance, but the researcher decides the sequence and wording of the questions during the interview” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 355).

Validity

The Grit-S scale, as developed by Duckworth and Quinn (2009), has been validated in numerous studies. The first of which came about in a study conducted by Duckworth and Quinn (2009). In this study, the scale was found to be consistent with the results as found in the 12-item Grit Scale and maintained the same reliability as the previous instrument. The Grit-S scale accurately measures the assessed grit attribute levels within the one taking the survey.

Reliability

Considering the reliability of the Grit-S scale, when being designed and tested against the 12-item Grit-O scale, Duckworth and Quinn stated:

[It is] a more efficient measure of trait-level perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Confirmatory factor analyses supported a two-factor structure of the self-report version of Grit-S in which Consistency of Interest and Perseverance of Effort both loaded on grit as a second-order latent factor. Both factors showed adequate internal consistency

and were strongly intercorrelated, $r = .59$, $p < .001$ while reducing the number of questions a participant needs to respond to by four. (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009, p. 173).

Following this development, the instrument has been used in a variety of studies that have remained consistent with the nature of the intention of the instrument.

Research Procedures

Once the research population and sample were identified, the first contact was initiated by the researcher via email. An email with the link to the survey posted on Qualtrics was sent out along with informed consent forms. After those survey results were received, the data was analyzed using a means test. These results provided answers to RQ1. After lead pastor surveys were received, recruitment emails were distributed to their respective subordinates. The results of the subordinate surveys were intended to be reviewed and provide answers to RQ2. The resulting means from lead pastors and subordinates were then intended to be compared to one another with a t -test to demonstrate the difference in self-assessed grit levels and outsider perceived grit levels which intended to answer RQ3.

Once the quantitative data was received, and analysis has begun, interviews were conducted with those members of the research population that meet the criteria for grit interview analysis. These interviews were conducted via video conferencing and phone calls with recordings to accurately transcribe the interview notes. These interviews provided the answers for RQ4.

Data Analysis and Statistical Procedures

Data for this study was gathered in both quantitative and qualitative forms. The primary method for collecting quantitative data was through the use of surveys answered on the Qualtrics platform. This data was collected from both lead pastors and their close subordinates. The

collection of qualitative data was done through the use of phone calls and video conference interviews. Data in this method was only collected from 10 research subjects that respond to interview request.

Data Analysis

The results from the two surveys, Grit-S for the lead pastors and the modified Grit-S for the respective subordinates, were intended to be analyzed and compared for correlation. Both groups of surveys were intended to be calculated with a respective mean test for total score as well as individual answer scores for the attribute. These scores were intended to be displayed on separate tables to demonstrate the total scores for each question, mean grit score, and standard deviation. The answers and test run from the lead pastor surveys answer RQ1. The answers and test run from the surveys of the subordinates were intended to answer RQ2. The two means of total grit scores were then intended to be compared with a *t*-test to demonstrate what correlation, if any, existed between the two survey groups. This was intended to serve to answer RQ3. The data for answering RQ3 was intended to be displayed in a comparison table. Lastly, Qualitative data was gathered from the interviews conducted. Those transcripts were analyzed for trends and like factors that arise. This data is demonstrated on various tables to show linked factors and identifiable trends in leadership development and grit development for lead pastors.

Chapter Summary

In this mixed-methods study, the research problem of grit level assessment in SBC lead pastors of Alabama was addressed. There is a demonstrated gap in the literature regarding the study of grit in a Christian ministry context, as nearly all research accomplished on grit involves education leadership. Many comparisons of likeness are present between those in educational leadership and those in ministry leadership. By accomplishing this study, a gap in literature is

closed providing a more rounded understanding of the attribute of grit. For this study, data was collected in both quantitative form through the use of surveys and statistical analysis, and qualitative form through the use of personal phone and video conference interviews. Utilizing the Duckworth (2009) Grit-S survey and research study accomplished by Kearns (2015) as a guide, this study furthered the research published on grit.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter describes the methodology for research that was utilized to conduct this research study. The research presentation includes quantitative data collected from current lead pastors in SBC churches in Alabama using the Grit-S survey, qualitative data collected from interviews with 10 of the lead pastors, the lack of data collected from lead pastor subordinates utilizing the modified Grit-S survey, and the findings of the data. This chapter will begin with a review of the research questions that guided this study. Next, the chapter will continue with a discussion of the statistical measures utilized for this study. Finally, a presentation and analysis of the data collected in the study will be shown with specific ties the data has to each guiding research question. The data collected from the quantitative surveys address Research Questions 1 through 3 and are presented in a table with an explanatory narrative following. The qualitative data collected in the form of interviews addresses Research Question 4 and is reported in a table of the top trends with an explanatory narrative following the data which include direct quotes and summaries from lead pastors on factors that have contributed to their grittiness.

Research Questions

RQ1. What do Alabama SBC lead pastors perceive as their level of grit as indicated on the Duckworth 8-Item Grit Scale?

RQ2. What do lead pastor's subordinates perceive as the lead pastor's level of grit as indicated on the Duckworth 8-Item Grit Scale?

RQ3. Is there a significant difference between self-reported and subordinate-reported perceived levels of grit?

RQ4. What are the leadership and personal attributes that lead pastors perceive contribute to their respective grit levels?

Compilation Protocol and Measures

This study was conducted as a replication study of the Kearns (2015) study under a mixed methods design collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. The primary instrument utilized for quantitative data collection was the Duckworth 8-Item Grit Scale. This instrument consists of eight fixed-choice questions that offer the same five answer possibilities. Once the surveys were completed and grit scores calculated, 10 of the highest scored respondents were contacted for interviews. Qualitative data was then collected by the researcher in those interviews through the use of six open-ended questions.

The Grit-S survey was intended to be electronically distributed to over 1,147 lead pastors that currently lead churches in Alabama belonging to the Southern Baptist Convention. Of those 1,147 pastors, 500 did not provide contact information, 71 were undeliverable, and 36 refused participation. Of the remaining 640 lead pastors, 120 viewed the survey, 96 initiated data entry, and 90 completed the survey. These numbers are similar to but exceed those of the Kearns (2015) study where 1,082 California superintendents were surveyed with approximately 82 responding. With this rate of participation, the researcher can adequately make conclusions with a 95% confidence rate under a 10% margin of error.

Additional quantitative data was attempted to be collected from the subordinates of those lead pastors. Modified Grit-S surveys were distributed to the staff members working with the lead pastors. Of the 1,147 lead pastors' subordinates only four viewed the survey, and three completed the survey. The potential reasons for lack of response are discussed later in this chapter. Given the data collected for this portion is statistically insignificant it is not presented in this researcher's findings.

After the researcher received the survey results from the 90 lead pastors that completed the Grit-S survey, the calculation of the respective grit scores was completed. Once the scores were calculated the researcher contacted the 10 respondents with the highest grit scores that consented to interviews on the pre-survey consent form. Interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data from the grittiest lead pastors to identify the factors that contribute to their respective grittiness. The interviews were accomplished by the researcher and included the following questions:

1. Reflecting back on your professional ministry success, what personal characteristics have contributed to your grittiness?
2. Reflecting back on your professional ministry success, what leadership characteristics have contributed to your grittiness?
3. As a lead pastor, can you describe a situation where there have been professional obstacles or setbacks but you were able to overcome them?
4. As someone who rates himself or herself as diligent, what does be diligent look like to you?
5. In spite of the challenges you face as a lead pastor, what strategies do you use to keep going?
6. Is there anything else you can think of that has contributed your grittiness as a lead pastor?

The data was then transcribed and coded using NVivo 12 software to look for common themes, trends, patterns, and like responses for factors that contribute to the grit level of the lead pastors.

Demographic and Sample Data

According to Creswell (2015), a key factor in determining the population for a study is feasibility, he explains by saying “questions of access arise here, and the researcher might refer to availability of potential respondents in a population” (p. 150). Additionally, it is mentioned that a researcher may choose a sample of that population that “is based on past typical studies” (Creswell, 2015, p. 150). These factors were taken into consideration by the researcher when determining the research population and sampling conducted for this study. This study examined the grit levels of SBC lead pastors. Referencing Fahmy (2019) from Pew Research there are 47,456 churches belonging to the SBC nationwide. Within the state of Alabama there are 3,248 churches belonging to the SBC. The lead pastors of those churches make up the research population for this study. Table 1 below displays this information.

Table 1

Number of Southern Baptist Convention churches

Location	Number of churches
United States of America	47,456
Alabama	3,248

Note. From Fahmy, D. (2019). 7 Facts about Southern Baptists. *Factank*. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/07/7-facts-about-southern-baptists/>

With large numbers in the research population sampling may also produce large numbers. More data sources and increased numbers can give a researcher a more complete picture of the issue being addressed however, time, access, and monetary constraints may often restrict a researcher’s ability to adequately complete a study. In this case 3,248 was not a feasible number for this researcher to address. Therefore, purposive sampling was accomplished to attain a more realistic number for research. That purposive sampling was conducted in accordance with the Kearns (2015) study given this was a replication of that former study. In that study Kearns

(2015), researched California superintendents who qualified to participate by meeting several requirements, most prominent was the requirement to have been in position for longer than the average tenure of like positions for the state of California.

Likewise, in this study, participants must have been in their current role for longer than the average tenure for SBC lead pastors in Alabama. According the Alabama State Board of Missions, the average tenure for an SBC lead pastor in Alabama is currently eight years (Mickey, 2020). Of the 3,248 SBC lead pastors in Alabama, 1,147 have been in their current role for a minimum of eight years. Those 1,147 met all of the following criteria:

1. Must be a member of the SBC
2. Located in Alabama
3. Must be a lead pastor
4. Be in current role for a minimum of eight years

An additional population for this study was that of the subordinates for these lead pastors. For the subordinate to qualify for participation in the study they had to meet the below criteria:

1. Must be a member of the SBC
2. Located in Alabama
3. Work for or closely with the lead pastor
4. Have worked for the lead pastor for a minimum of one year

Of the 1,147 lead pastors that met the criteria for the study, 90 responded and completed the Grit-S survey. All 90 respondents were male and located in the state of Alabama. The average tenure for the respondents was 14 years with a maximum of 41 years and a minimum of eight years. 75 of the lead pastors hold a full-time paid position with their respective church, 13 are bi-vocational working another full-time job in addition to the lead pastor position, and two

are serving in part-time positions. The subordinate surveys did not collect demographic data and the results were statistically insignificant therefore they are not reported here. For the interview portion of the study, 10 lead pastors were chosen. Of those 10 the average tenure for them was also 14 years with a maximum of 26 years and a minimum of nine years. Eight of the lead pastors hold a full-time paid position with their church, two of the lead pastors interviewed are bi-vocational.

Data Analysis and Findings

Research Question One

What do Alabama SBC lead pastors perceive as their level of grit as indicated on the Duckworth 8-Item Grit Scale?

The Grit-S survey contains eight fixed-choice questions that yield an overall grit score for the participant. The overall grit score, and the scale for each measured attribute, ranges from one to five with one being on the lower end meaning not gritty and five being the upper end meaning extremely gritty. For the presentation of the data here, the mean of the overall grit scores is presented as well as the mean for each measured attribute for all respondents. In addition to the mean scores, the standard deviation of the calculated means for both the overall grit score and the individual attributes is provided. When presenting the standard deviation, the research is demonstrating the degree of variance in the individual results with zero meaning no variance and the higher the number, the greater the variance in the answers (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016).

Of the eight attributes that the Grit-S survey measures, lead pastors were shown to have the highest level of grit in that they are hard workers (4.39) with a standard deviation of 0.63. This was followed closely by the attribute of being diligent (4.34) with a slightly higher standard deviation of 0.64. These two standard deviations indicate there is similar consistency in the

answers lead pastors identified with. The attribute lead pastors identified the least with is that setbacks do not discourage them, showing a mean score of 3.16 and a standard deviation of 1.04. The second to last attribute identified with is new ideas and projects sometimes distract from previous ones, with a mean score of 3.44 and a standard deviation of 0.91. As the level of identity with attributes decrease such as the 3.16 with the setback attribute, the level of consistency in answers also decreases as shown with the standard deviation climbing from a low of .63 with being a hard worker to 1.04 in setbacks do not bother them. While lead pastors do indicate that setbacks discourage them, the standard deviation is also the highest on this attribute indicating the variance in answer is the widest on the survey. It is important to note that while these two attributes are the lowest scored, and they contribute to the grit overall score, they are still higher than 3.0 indicating that as a whole the participant group demonstrates a moderate to high level of grit.

Of the 90 lead pastors that participated in the study, the mean of their calculated overall grit score is 3.86 meaning that these lead pastors have a moderately high level of grit. Half of the measured attributes have a higher individual grit score than the overall grit score. The range for standard deviation for the individual attribute scores spans from a low of 0.63 to a maximum of 1.04. The standard deviation for the overall grit score as reported by lead pastors was significantly lower than the individual attributes at 0.49 indicating a minimal variance in answers which demonstrates a consistency in grittiness among lead pastors of SBC churches in Alabama.

Table 2 presents each of the eight measured attributes that are used to calculate grit and the overall grit score, mean, and standard deviation for each measurement from the Duckworth Grit-S survey as reported by lead pastors of SBC church in Alabama. The table also displays the

number of participants that completed the survey, responding to each of the eight questions asked.

Table 2

The Mean Score and Standard Deviation of Each of the Eight Items on the Grit-S Survey Including the Overall Grit Score as Reported by Lead Pastors

Grit attribute	N	Mean score	Standard deviation
New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones.	90	3.44	0.91
Setbacks don't discourage me.	90	3.16	1.04
I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.	90	3.74	0.91
I am a hard worker.	90	4.39	0.63
I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.	90	3.81	0.85
I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete.	90	3.87	0.86
I finish whatever I begin.	90	4.13	0.75
I am diligent.	90	4.34	0.64
Grit score	90	3.86	0.49

The overall grit score for SBC lead pastors in Alabama who participated in the study is 3.86 indicating that lead pastors have a moderately high level of grit. The individual attributes ranked from highest to lowest in terms of grit are the following:

- I am a hard worker (4.39). This attribute had the lowest standard deviation indicating the highest level of agreement amongst lead pastor responses.
- I am diligent (4.34).
- I finish whatever I begin (4.13).
- I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete (3.87).

- Based on the way the survey is interpreted this number is inverse in that lead pastors report they do NOT have an issue maintaining focus on long-term projects.
- I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one (3.81).
 - Based on the way the survey is interpreted this number is inverse in that lead pastors report they do NOT have an issue setting and keeping goals.
- I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest (3.74).
 - Based on the way the survey is interpreted this number is inverse in that lead pastors report they do NOT have an issue maintaining interest on a given project.
- New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones (3.44).
 - Based on the way the survey is interpreted this number is inverse in that lead pastors report they do NOT have an issue with distraction from current projects.
- Setbacks don't discourage me (3.16). This attribute also had the highest standard deviation indicating less consistency among the reports from lead pastors.

Each of the measured attributes on the Grit-S survey as well as the overall grit score range from one to five, with one being the lowest and indicating a low level of grit and five being the highest indicating an extremely high level of grit. Three of the eight attributes scored above 4.13 indicating a high level of grit in those areas. All attributes scored above a 3.0 with a minimum score of 3.16 demonstrating above normal levels of grit in all areas for lead pastors.

Additionally, the overall grit score for lead pastors is 3.86 with the lowest standard deviation measured at 0.49 indicating they have a moderately high level of grit with high levels of consistency among answers reported by SBC lead pastors in Alabama.

Research Question Two

What do lead pastor's subordinates perceive as the lead pastor's level of grit as indicated on the Duckworth 8-Item Grit Scale?

A modified Grit-S survey was electronically distributed to the subordinates of lead pastors in SBC churches in Alabama. The modified Grit-S survey proposed the same questions as that given to lead pastors however there was an alteration of pronouns so modified survey would report subordinates' perception of lead pastor grit levels. Of the 1,147 lead pastors, 90 completed the entire Grit-S survey. The modified Grit-S survey was then distributed to the subordinates for those 90 lead pastors. Given that only four subordinates viewed the survey and only three completed it, the results are statistically insignificant and are not mentioned here. With the lack of participation and being void of statistically significant data this research question is unable to be addressed and answered.

Research Question Three

Is there a significant difference between self-reported and subordinate-reported perceived levels of grit?

This study had attempted to gather research data from the subordinates of the lead pastors that participated in the Grit-S survey by administering a modified Grit-S survey to the subordinates. In the gathering of that data a comparison would have been made to outline what difference, if any, existed between the lead pastor and subordinate perception of grit in current SBC lead pastors in Alabama. Of the 1,147 lead pastors, 90 completed the entire Grit-S survey. The modified Grit-S survey was then distributed to the subordinates for those 90 lead pastors. Given that only four subordinates viewed the survey and only three completed it, the results are statistically insignificant and are not mentioned here. A comparison is not able to be adequately

conducted with less than a 3.4% like participation rate. With the lack of participation and being void of statistically significant data this research question is unable to be addressed and answered.

Research Question Four

What are the leadership and personal attributes that lead pastors perceive contribute to their respective grit levels?

Ten lead pastors were contacted for interviews for the qualitative portion of this study. Those ten lead pastors were those that scored highest on the Grit-S survey who gave consent for interviews during the pre-survey consent form. The interview was conducted by the researcher and consisted of six open-ended questions which explored what leadership and personal attributes SBC lead pastors in Alabama perceive contribute to their level of grit. The list of questions utilized was the same questions used in the Kearns (2015) study with a slight modification to change position titles from superintendent to lead pastor. The questions were field tested and validated prior to the Kearns (2015) study thus not needing to be field tested prior to use in this study.

All interviews were conducted via video conference or phone call to maintain ethical safety measures in light of a global health pandemic. Five interviews were conducted via the WebEx platform and five were conducted via phone call. All interviews were recorded by the researcher utilizing an audio recording device. Before the interviews were conducted a verbal informed consent was received from all participants. Once the verbal consent was received by the researcher, the following six questions were asked in order. After the interviews were concluded the researcher transcribed all interview recordings and then coded the transcripts via NVivo 12 software to analyze for trends, patterns, and themes relating to the research question.

1. Reflecting back on your professional ministry success, what personal characteristics have contributed to your grittiness?
2. Reflecting back on your professional ministry success, what leadership characteristics have contributed to your grittiness?
3. As a lead pastor, can you describe a situation where there have been professional obstacles or setbacks but you were able to overcome them?
4. As someone who rates himself or herself as diligent, what does be diligent look like to you?
5. In spite of the challenges you face as a lead pastor, what strategies do you use to keep going?
6. Is there anything else you can think of that has contributed your grittiness as a lead pastor?

Table 3 summarizes the major themes that arose from the results of the interviews. While many other themes were present in the data analysis process, the only themes presented here are those that were present in a minimum of 60% of the interviews. The table indicates the theme that was discovered with a corresponding short explanation. Additionally, the number of interviewees that reported the them in their interview is listed as well as the number of times the theme came up in all interviews.

Table 3

Major Themes of Personal and Leadership Attributes That Have Contributed to Lead Pastor's Level of Grit

Theme	Summary of theme	<i>N</i>	Count
God's calling	The direct and purposeful direction to move into ministry leadership	9	53
Commitment and refusal to quit	A relentless pursuit to not quit the task at hand regardless of obstacles	8	42
Personnel Issues	Staff members, deacons, and lay leaders displaying control issues to lifestyle challenges	8	21
Personal relationship with God	Intentional time and focus on developing the spiritual relationship between believer and God	8	18
Life experiences in formative years (upbringing)	While growing up expressing situations they had to overcome such as poverty and dysfunctional family life, and/or having parents who had high expectations for them	7	18
Having vision	Being able to develop and cast a direction for personal ministry and for the church organization	7	14
Shared leadership	Plurality of leadership, delegation, and division of responsibilities	6	16
Being marathon minded and patient	Having a mindset on the long-term and strategic thinking	6	15
Finding guidance from the Bible	Utilizing the Scriptures as a source of direction for handling life issues	6	13
Wisdom	Having an understanding of what is right and what is wrong	6	13
Not being afraid to fail	Willing to try new things even if it means failure at first	6	11
Building and restoring failing organizations	Being hired into a church that recently went through a split or fired staff members	6	10

While there was not a theme that was universally found in every interview the most common and certainly most pronounced theme was that of being under and responding to a calling from God. This theme emerged in nine of the 10 interviews and was mentioned no less

than 53 times. A calling from God to ministry was the most consistent theme in the interviews. When asked the first question one lead pastor did not hesitate to make it known at the onset that “I think a lot of that has to do with my call to ministry.” When speaking of facing a difficult time at a particular church another lead pastor mentioned “...the only thing that would keep me going is the fact that I knew God had called me to that place.” Additionally, another lead pastor, when speaking on facing a situation that is perceived to be insurmountable, mentions “God can do the impossible, what God commands us to do, that he's going to enable us to do.” Perhaps the strongest statement of all is found in one lead pastor’s response to question five when he states “you have to stand your ground even though you're the only one on that plot of ground. And that's just because we are convinced beyond any doubt that [the] Holy Spirit has led us to this point and this is what we're going to do.”

There were many other short statements are found that add to the emphasis needed on this theme such as:

- “I have a strong sense of calling”
- “I have never doubted my calling to ministry”
- “I am simply doing what God called me to do”
- “Just answering God’s call in small baby steps”
- “When [God] calls you He is going to work it out”

The second most common theme found in the interviews is that of commitment and the absolute refusal to quit. Regardless of the difficulty in the task at hand there was a shared relentless refusal to quit or stop short of completion among the lead pastors. This theme was mentioned often by eight of those interviewed and referenced a total of 42 times across the interviews. One lead pastor had an extreme reaction when talking on the idea of quitting when he

stated, “I just can’t stomach it.” Another lead pastor noted that others notice when one refuses to quit saying “stick with the right stuff and don’t give up, and you realize that your decisions probably have a greater impact on people around you.” Relating the theme to a spiritual walk one and the position of pastor one lead pastor mentions “the enemy is going to come after you, but you’re not going to quit.”

Several lead pastors equated the theme with the idea of not giving up. When speaking of obstacles being in the way one pastor said, “that’s where just can’t give up.” Again, another pastor noted that “I never, never want to give up on God.” And yet another lead pastor mentioned that being in ministry leadership has many challenges but one must “hang in there. You have highs and lows, but you just don’t give up and you don’t quit.” Clearly there is a strong pull amongst these lead pastors to see things through to fruition which is a key component of grit.

Two other major themes worthy of detailed discussion are the nature of rebuilding failing church ministries and early childhood influence. Of the lead pastors interviewed, 60% mention a common theme in their respective ministry journeys is they have been hired multiple times by a church after the church underwent a significantly negative event. One lead pastor mentions that the churches he has served “have either had a split before I got there or voted the pastor out ahead of me.” Another stated that one location he served had previously “been extremely challenging, they ran off their last three pastors.” This theme was mentioned only 10 times in the interviews however it often brought with many of the other themes found in Table 3. One lead pastor who revisited a former ministry location announced, “I’m having to rebuild this church again.” Having the interviews conducted with those scoring highest in grit makes this theme

noteworthy as high grit levels were found in those who took over failing church ministries and led them to thriving communities.

Not surprising, each of these times the church was accompanied by leadership and power struggles often originating in the deacon board or employed leadership staff. The theme of staff problems was found in eight of the interviews and mentioned 21 times. Given the sensitive nature of the church staff issues discussed only generalities will be mentioned here. The issues that arose from staff and deacon boards included control issues, power struggles, drug use of staff members, social media attacks, interpretation of Scripture, and personal character attacks. In leading a church through these external and internal complications one pastor mentioned “The reactions from membership is it cannot be our first focus if it is, will never be successful, are calling is from God.” This theme often had the lead pastor alluding to the theme of God’s calling on their lives.

The final theme worth discussing in detail is that of childhood influence and upbringing. Seven of the lead pastors mention 18 times that life experiences in their formative years had a significant contribution to their development of grit. One of the most prominent aspects of this theme was the influence of parental figures. A simply stated form of this was mentioned by one pastor who stated, “it was how I was raised.” Another mentioned that “you know just what I was taught early on.” Yet another lead pastor mentioned “as children we were taught to work and to work hard.” In these childhood experiences four pastors attribute their grit development to participation in sports. Three lead pastors interviewed mention experiencing a tragedy as a child, such as a death of sibling or parental divorce, as contributing to their grit formation.

Many other themes were identified through the analysis of the interview data collected. A few of those themes are having vision, being long-term and strategic minded, operating with

shared leadership, not being afraid to fail, and developing a strong personal relationship with God through quiet time and devotional practices. The frequency of mention for each of these themes is presented in Table 3. Of lesser frequency were the themes that occurred in 50% or less of the conducted interviews. A few of those themes found to contribute to grit formation were having a supporting spouse, mentor relationships, prior business ownership, and the need for scheduled rest.

Evaluation of the Research Design

Through the conducting of this mixed methods research design, this researcher has identified several strengths and weaknesses in the design that may be addressed if the study was conducted again. Additionally, given this was a replication study there is twice as much experience to draw from in the design. One of the strongest aspects of the study would be the simplicity of the survey design and ease of quantitative statistical calculations. One of the primary weaknesses in this study is the recruitment of subordinate participants.

The Grit-S survey as developed by Duckworth has been used in many research studies over the past 11 years. The short eight item assessment took participants an average of three minutes to accomplish. This short time commitment makes the survey easier to advertise and more inviting and appealing for perspective participants. Even though the survey is short, it is not void of deep, significant findings. Many important research findings can be illuminated through the use of this survey which also makes it an attractive instrument. Lastly, the instrument arises as the primary strength due to its ease of calculation. There is a simple mean score calculation used with normal and inverse answer scoring. This makes the data compilation and analysis simpler than other products.

A predominant weakness that significantly affected the findings of this study was the recruitment of subordinate participants. This study was done as a replication study to the Kearns (2015) study, however this research design produced a lack of data in responses from pastoral subordinate subjects. The lack of participation may be due to the recruitment methodology utilized by the researcher. In this design, lead pastors and subordinates were recruited separately and without knowledge to the other party. It is suggested that allowing for the lead pastor to support and endorse the study or aid in recruitment of a subordinate would generate a greater response rate that may lead to statistically significant findings for future studies. In the Kearns (2015) study, California superintendents were surveyed, and then allowed to endorse the subordinate survey. Because of this, participation rate amongst subordinates in the Kearns (2015) study was over 70%. In this study however, subordinate participation rates fell to less than 3.4%. Due to the low response rate, the researcher was unable to identify statistically significant data from pastoral subordinates to answer RQ2 and RQ3.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

Chapter Five begins with a review of the research purpose and research questions that guided the study. The chapter then discusses, in summary, then findings presented in Chapter Four. Next the chapter will examine those findings through the addressing of significant implications and possible applications for current and future ministry leaders. Finally, the chapter will provide a discussion on any limitations of the research study and suggest possibilities for further research.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this mixed methods study is to explore the levels of grit in senior pastors that are affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention in Alabama. This study will also examine the perceived level of grit in lead pastors from the perception of their subordinates. Qualitative data will be gathered concerning the attributes these pastors described as major contributors to their grittiness. Grit will be generally defined as the relentless pursuit of long-term goals despite setbacks, plateaus, or boredom and the ability to achieve those goal (Duckworth et. al., 2007). Guiding this study is the Theory of Grit as presented by Duckworth (2016).

Research Questions

RQ1. What do Alabama SBC lead pastors perceive as their level of grit as indicated on the Duckworth 8-Item Grit Scale?

RQ2. What do lead pastor's subordinates perceive as the lead pastor's level of grit as indicated on the Duckworth 8-Item Grit Scale?

RQ3. Is there a significant difference between self-reported and subordinate-reported perceived levels of grit?

RQ4. What are the leadership and personal attributes that lead pastors perceive

contribute to their respective grit levels?

Research Conclusions

This research study examined the attribute grit in current SBC lead pastors in Alabama. In total there are 47,456 churches and church plants belonging to the SBC in the United States of America. This study was limited to those lead pastors of the churches in Alabama. Of the SBC churches, there are 3,248 churches and church plants located in Alabama. The lead pastors of those churches and church plants made up the overarching population for this study. For convenience, Table 1 has been reproduced below.

Table 1

Number of Southern Baptist Convention churches

Location	Number of churches
United States of America	47,456
Alabama	3,248

Note. From Fahmy, D. (2019). 7 Facts about Southern Baptists. *Factank*. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/07/7-facts-about-southern-baptists/>

While 3,248 lead pastors make up the research population for this study, the feasibility for this researcher to study that large of a number was not practical. According to Creswell (2015), when speaking on feasibility of a research population he states, “questions of access arise here, and the researcher might refer to availability of potential respondents in a population” (p. 150). Additionally, purposive sampling was utilized to narrow the sampling process to a more realistic number. According to Patten (2002), purposive sampling is used when the researcher believes individuals are “key informants in terms of social dynamics, leadership positions, job responsibilities, and so on” (p. 19). In this practice, the researcher created a list of criteria that

mimicked those of the Kearns (2015) study, the list of requirements is displayed below. In total, 1,147 lead pastors met the requirements and were recruited for the study.

1. Must be a member of the SBC
2. Located in Alabama
3. Must be a lead pastor
4. Be in current role for a minimum of eight years

Of those 1,147 pastors, 500 did not provide contact information, 71 were undeliverable, and 36 refused participation. Of the remaining 640 lead pastors, 120 viewed the survey, 96 initiated data entry, and 90 completed the survey. With this rate of participation, the researcher can adequately make conclusions with a 95% confidence rate under a 10% margin of error.

An additional population for this study was that of the subordinates for these lead pastors.

For the subordinate to qualify for participation in the study they had to meet the below criteria:

1. Must be a member of the SBC
2. Located in Alabama
3. Work for or closely with the lead pastor
4. Have worked for the lead pastor for a minimum of one year

Of the 1,147 lead pastors' subordinates only four viewed the survey, and three completed the survey. Given the data collected for this portion is statistically insignificant it is not presented in this researcher's findings and resulted in the inability to answer Research Question Two and Research Question Three.

Research Question One

What do Alabama SBC lead pastors perceive as their level of grit as indicated on the Duckworth 8-Item Grit Scale?

Most of the lead pastors studied in this research study were found to be gritty. The mean grit score was 3.86 on a five-point scale with one being the lowest, five being the highest, and three being average. Of the 90 lead pastors surveyed, only seven scored lower than a 3.0 meaning that 83 of the respondents are grittier than the average person. The standard deviation for lead pastors' grit scores was 0.49 demonstrating a relatively high agreement rate in the answers recorded.

The instrument used to measure grit levels, the Duckworth Grit-S survey, measured eight attributes that contribute to the overall grittiness of a person. Of the eight attributes measured, three scored above a 4.0 meaning the lead pastors were extremely gritty in those areas, they include I am a hard worker (4.39 with a SD of 0.63); I am diligent (4.34 with a SD of 0.64); and I finish whatever I begin (4.13 with a SD of 0.75). These three attributes had the highest level of grit and the smallest standard deviation meaning they had the highest level of agreement. The remaining attributes all scored above a 3.0 with the lowest scored attribute being "setbacks don't discourage me" (3.16 with a SD of 1.04) meaning every attribute was grittier than average for the lead pastors.

Research Question Two

What do lead pastor's subordinates perceive as the lead pastor's level of grit as indicated on the Duckworth 8-Item Grit Scale?

A modified Grit-S survey was electronically distributed to the subordinates of lead pastors in SBC churches in Alabama. The modified Grit-S survey proposed the same questions as that given to lead pastors however there was an alteration of pronouns so modified survey would report subordinates' perception of lead pastor grit levels. Of the 1,147 lead pastors, 90 completed the entire Grit-S survey. The modified Grit-S survey was then distributed to the

subordinates for those 90 lead pastors. Given that only four subordinates viewed the survey and only three completed it, the results are statistically insignificant and are not mentioned here. With the lack of participation and being void of statistically significant data this research question is unable to be addressed and answered.

Research Question Three

Is there a significant difference between self-reported and subordinate-reported perceived levels of grit?

This study had attempted to gather research data from the subordinates of the lead pastors that participated in the Grit-S survey by administering a modified Grit-S survey to the subordinates. In the gathering of that data a comparison would have been made to outline what difference, if any, existed between the lead pastor and subordinate perception of grit in current SBC lead pastors in Alabama. Of the 1,147 lead pastors, 90 completed the entire Grit-S survey. The modified Grit-S survey was then distributed to the subordinates for those 90 lead pastors. Given that only four subordinates viewed the survey and only three completed it, the results are statistically insignificant and are not mentioned here. A comparison is not able to be adequately conducted with less than a 3.4% like participation rate. With the lack of participation and being void of statistically significant data this research question is unable to be addressed and answered.

Research Question Four

What are the leadership and personal attributes that lead pastors perceive contribute to their respective grit levels?

Interviews were conducted with 10 of the 90 lead pastor respondents. After overall grit scores were calculated from the answers in Research Question One, the top 10 lead pastor scores, who indicated consent to interviews, were contacted for the qualitative portion of this study. Upon receiving verbal consent, the researcher asked the research participants six open-ended questions which helped to answer Research Question Four. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then coded to look for major themes and like trends.

The most prominent themes and patterns, mentioned in at least 60% of the interviews, relating to leadership and personal attributes that lead pastors reported as contributing to their grittiness (beginning with the most common) were a calling from God, refusal to quit, dealing with staff issues, devotion time with God, life experiences as a child, having vision, shared leadership efforts, patience and long-term focused, seeking biblical guidance, having wisdom, not being afraid to fail, and rebuilding declining churches.

Literature Discussions

Theoretical Literature Discussion

The results and findings of this study corroborated much of the aspects covered in the Chapter Two, Theoretical Literature section of this study. During the interviews conducted, many like trends were highlighted that give credibility to the theoretical themes discussed. One of the more pronounced themes was the concept of lead pastors having to deal with internal staff problems such as personnel issues and control issues. It was theorized that internal relationships were a major point of contention lead pastors would have to navigate through. During the interview process 80% of those interviewed highlighted this theme mentioning it no less than 21

times. Undoubtedly, lead pastors must deal with personnel issues and internal relations issues in the duties of their ministry.

The setbacks and challenges lead pastors reported from these issues include, church populations being divided by hot topic issues, leadership boards or staff members politicizing issues in efforts to control the lead pastor, mobilization of opinions to vote out the pastor, and staff members dealing with marital or drug addiction issues. Grit is essential for a lead pastor to have when navigating these issues especially with the proliferation of social media and the ability for false statements and opinions to spread rapidly in an uncontrolled manner. Lead pastors appear to need or develop high levels of grit to effectively lead a congregation through those times of turmoil. Additionally, lead pastors indicated that it was counterproductive to listen to personal opinions of others regarding the pastor, as one pastor noted “the reactions from membership cannot be our first focus if it is, we will never be successful, our calling is from God.” Another lead pastor noted that when doing the right thing becomes a point of contention “you've got to stick with it no matter what, no matter if your friends don't like you, no matter even if the leadership turns against you, you stay with it.”

Another theoretical suggestion that was verified through the interview process was the theme of spiritual attacks. It was theorized that lead pastors, being the pinnacle of human leadership for a local church, would be subject to strong spiritual attacks from demonic spiritual forces. In a simple manner one pastor interviewed stated, “the enemy is going to come after you.” Later that same pastor followed up by saying “but you just can't quit, God's called you to this.” Another lead pastor went into great detail about how the enemy may place obstacles in the path to keep one from fulfilling God's mandated destiny for their lives. Grit was shown to be essential in overcoming those spiritual attacks.

Maintaining a firm stance on doctrine and Scripture interpretation is another theme that was confirmed through the analysis of the interviews conducted on lead pastors. It was theorized that the doctrine a lead pastor endorses and teaches may bring opposition from both inside the congregation they lead and from outside organizations. Additionally, it was theorized that grit was needed to maintain a firm stance and not to waiver in the midst of that opposition or persecution. Each aspect of this theory was confirmed through the interviews as one lead pastor stated, “I think you have to be a person of your convictions and not be swayed.” Several mentioned that as a lead pastor one must “use the Bible as your guide,” and that “we use the Bible as the guide to lead the people and lead the church.” When that opposition came one pastor noted “I just try harder to stay grounded in God.”

Two other themes were found in the analysis of the interview transcripts that confirm theorized aspects but on a lesser frequency. Those themes were time management and public relations. When addressing the concept of time management one pastor stated, “it is about getting things done, making decisions, putting in time and effort.” Another pastor noted in his interview that there were many directions pulling at him in any given moment but that he must “focus and intentionally prioritize.” Regarding the theme of public relations, one pastor explained a situation with local agencies both civilian and government that “came against him” after decisions were made by the leadership of the church to remove a historic structure. All of this was compounded through the use of social media, generating support for the opposition against him and his ministry. He noted that grit was essential for leading through that situation.

Empirical Literature Discussion

Through the data analysis there have been several trends that can easily be traced to prior empirical literature formatively produced on grit. Three of those themes are much more

pronounced than others and will be discussed here. Those three themes are overcoming adversity, becoming too gritty to where one runs over other people, and finally, gritty leaders are often transformational leaders. Each of these themes were found in the majority of the interview transcripts.

One of the most well-known qualities of grit is the ability to persevere through trial and to be resilient after tragedy. Duckworth (2016), expanded her explanations of how grit encompasses both perseverance and resiliency in her book where she reveals multiple studies done on those who have overcome significant life tragedies. Seven of the lead pastors noted overcoming some manner of adversity in formative years while four explained situations of significant tragedy in their adult ministry careers. When discussing the trials he has endured, one participant stated, “we just persevered. We didn’t give up.” Another highlighted that one cannot identify with struggle saying, “don’t be a victim.” Finally, yet another lead pastor explained tragedy as an obstacle and stated, “and what happens when there are obstacles is you got to figure out how to tear them down and get what needs to be done right.”

Another theme found in the empirical literature review that was confirmed in the transcripts of lead pastor interviews was the idea that gritty people must be careful not to let their desire to achieve goals usurp their care and love for people. Schimschal and Lomas (2019) found that grit has a negative side to it if leaders are not careful. They found that one may be so fixated on achieving a goal they will do what is needed to achieve the goal without regard for others. This was noted by one lead pastor who stated, “whatever it takes to get the job done, you get the job done.” And again, another interviewee stated that “the desire to get things done can be so high you must be careful not to run roughshod over people.” Research finding strongly suggest that grit can get in the way of good leadership if not balanced well.

A final theme from former empirical research found in the interviews conducted under this study was that of gritty leaders being transformational leaders. Davidson (2014), found that many education leaders who rated themselves high in grit were also observed to be transformational leaders. Many of the lead pastors interviewed in this study were found to demonstrate multiple aspects of transformational leadership. The care for other people and the desire to develop those under their leadership was brought up time and time again. One pastor noted that a main technique of his to keep pressing on is to develop his people. He stated, “the main strategy that I used to keep going is, is to continue to empower people around me and broaden the leadership and engage other people. That's the secret to growing your ministry, is empowering and engaging other people.” Research shows that gritty leaders often have a passion for others to grow and succeed which equates to transformational leadership marking another similarity in theme from the empirical literature.

Relation to Prior Studies

Leedy and Ormrod (2016) insist that “[l]ittle can be gained by reinventing the wheel” (p. 29). This study was conducted as a replication study mimicking concept and design as found in the Kearns (2015) study. Leedy and Ormrod (2016) acknowledged the gain that exists and its practicality through replication studies especially when one can “replicate a research project in a different setting or with a different population” (p. 29). For this researcher, the Kearns’ (2015) study was used as a guide. In her study, Kearns (2015), examined grit in California superintendents. Through comparison, the position of lead pastor holds a significant similarity in scope, responsibility, and autonomy.

In the Kearns (2015) study, California superintendents were examined with a research population of roughly 1,000, similarly the research population in this study was narrowed to

1,147. Of the surveys distributed, Kearns (2015) received 24 qualifying and complete surveys from superintendents, this study received 90 from lead pastors. In the analysis of the data from Research Question One, which was generated through the use of the Grit-S survey, the results in Table 4 show a comparison to the responses of California superintendents and those of lead pastors of SBC churches in Alabama.

Table 4

Comparison of Superintendents (Supts.) and Lead Pastors (LP) Mean Grit Score and Standard Deviation (SD)

Attribute	Supts. <i>n</i> = 24 mean	Supts. SD	LP <i>n</i> = 90 mean	LP SD
New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones.	3.25	0.90	3.44	0.91
Setbacks don't discourage me.	3.71	1.30	3.16	1.04
I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.	3.96	0.81	3.74	0.91
I am a hard worker.	4.75	0.85	4.39	0.63
I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.	4.00	0.66	3.81	0.85
I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete.	4.21	0.59	3.87	0.86
I finish whatever I begin.	4.54	0.51	4.13	0.75
I am diligent.	4.67	0.56	4.34	0.64
Grit score	4.14	0.38	3.86	0.49

Overall, the grit of California superintendents (4.14) was slightly higher than the overall grit score of SBC lead pastors in Alabama (3.86). Both groups demonstrate a high level of grit and the strongest degree of agreement on the overall grit score with standard deviations of 0.38

for superintendents and 0.49 for lead pastors. In both studies the results show the lowest standard deviation at the overall grit score. Of interesting note is the similarity in ranking and trend for each of the eight attributes as measured from superintendents and lead pastors. The two groups rate their top six grit attributes in the same order with “I am a hard worker” coming in at the top with the lowest standard deviation among the individual attributes. Table 5 below displays the comparative ranking order of the eight individual attributes with corresponding mean scores for the respective research population.

Table 5

Ranking of Grit Attributes From Superintendents and Lead Pastors From Highest Grit Score to Lowest Grit Score

Ranking	Superintendents	Lead Pastors
1	I am a hard worker (4.74).	I am a hard worker (4.39).
2	I am diligent (4.67).	I am diligent (4.34).
3	I finish whatever I begin (4.54).	I finish whatever I begin (4.13).
4	I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete (4.21).	I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete (3.87).
5	I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one (4.0).	I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one (3.81).
6	I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest (3.96).	I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest (3.74).
7	Setbacks don't discourage me (3.71).	New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones (3.44).
8	New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones (3.25).	Setbacks don't discourage me (3.16).

Another aspect of the two studies that is worthy of comparison is the qualitative data gained from the interviews conducted. This study conducted 10 interviews from lead pastors

while the Kearns (2015) study conducted eight interviews from superintendents. In the Kearns (2015) study the top theme superintendents noted was purposeful perseverance, citing it 22 times. Similarly, this study found the same theme mentioned, though it was the second highest, it was mentioned 42 times. Continuing with like trends, the Kearns (2015) study discovered that having a vision was important with its mention 16 times in the interviews compared to this study where lead pastors mentioned it 14 times. Clearly vision is important to the development of grit for those in upper leadership positions.

Lastly, another like theme was found to exist between the superintendent interviews and lead pastors, life experience in formative years. In the Kearns (2015) study the theme was mentioned 10 times as compared to this study where it was mentioned 18 times. While these two populations have many significant differences, their scope of responsibility is similar and these studies demonstrate that grit is needed in both professions and that the development of grit is contributed from like factors.

New Contributions

This study was done as a replication of the Kearns (2015) study, as a result there are many factors that provide novel contribution to the literature collection as a whole. To begin with, grit, although being coined and studied since 2007, has never been given a formal theological foundation. This study identifies the importance of grit in the Christian life and provides biblical evidence for the existence of grit not only direction given to Christian leaders but also in the life of Jesus Christ. Often Christians are given sermons or messages on how to exhibit certain personality traits, so they more accurately reflect the nature of Jesus in their day to day lives. These messages are often focused on what may be labeled as softer personality traits such as love, kindness, gentleness, joy, peace, etc. Grit is a much rougher personality trait and

one where biblical evidence certainly exists arguing for demonstration in the Christian lifestyle. This is further suggested through the evidence gathered in this study. The 90 lead pastors surveyed had a mean grit score of 3.86 meaning they are above average to a moderately high level of grit. Additionally, the interviews conducted with 10 of the lead pastors demonstrated the absolute necessity for Christian leaders to attain and develop grit as to be better ministry leaders, especially during trying times or seasons of adversity. Further discussion on this importance is found below in the implications and applications sections.

Another novel contribution this study makes is that the research was accomplished with a research population never before studied with grit. Grit has formally been studied in business leadership, education leadership, and military leadership. Christian ministry leadership was uncharted territory for the research on the attribute. This study discovered that gritty leaders are found in Christian ministry positions. Additionally, it can be inferred that the grittier a leader is the more likely they are to remain in their current leadership role, pushing past what is considered to be the norm for positional longevity.

Lastly, the grittiness of a ministry leader may be a predictor of success in leading a church ministry through decline or church splits. As 60% of those interviewed acknowledged a common trend for their ministry journeys was being hired on at churches that either just underwent a church split or had just voted out the previous pastor. With this information known now, it can be concluded that grittiness is a desired trait amongst those going into failing ministry settings or ministry settings where power struggles and personnel issues may exist.

Unexpected Findings

There were three unexpected findings that were uncovered during this research. They were the development of grit through formative years in life, the impact of having a call from God on one's life, and the common opposition faced with personnel and staffing issues. The data supporting these unexpected findings all came from the same research instrument, the qualitative interviews. During the interviews, the 10 lead pastors that were questioned were highly consistent at mentioning these themes. Of those interviews, 70% spoke on grit development during their formative years, 80% mentioned having to overcome issues with staff members or board members, and 90% highlighted the significance of having a strong sense of God's call on their life.

This researcher was highly interested in the apparent grit present within lead pastors of the SBC in Alabama; however, another point of interest was the understanding of how and when grit was developed for those lead pastors. The interview questions were open-ended allowing for the research participants to expound on the subject matter they felt most important or pertinent to the research. When given this opportunity 70% of the interviewees emphasized the development of grit beginning in their formative years, often before the age of 10. Most often the mention of this grit development had to do with influence from important role models within the person's life such as parents, pastor, mentor, or sports coach. One lead pastor mentioned, when asked if there was anything else that had contributed to his/her grittiness, they answered "well I would have to say it all started with my parents from a young age." Later it was reported that "my parents never let me quit anything I started." Another lead pastor echoed the sentiments of this one by adding that, "My parents had a major influence on me and my grittiness I would say, especially because they showed me hard work and dedication." These along with other responses

indicate and suggest that parental influence may be instrumental in the development of grit in younger people.

Beyond the parental influence, other lead pastors made mention that ministry leaders had a significant impact on their respective grit development journeys. One pastor stated “my youth pastor really impacted me. He helped all of us in that group learn to have biblical focus and foundation in Christ.” Furthermore, a lead pastor suggested the main source of influence came from a sports coach saying, “my football coach growing up was, well tough, and he didn’t let us complain or whine. If we lost, instead of getting down, he helped us focus on how to get better and not lose next time.” This pastor also mentioned the importance learned from the coach to look at mistakes as opportunities to learn and grow versus keeping a mindset of failures. While parents are important influences, these interviews suggest the impact of other childhood role models to be quite influential in grit development as well.

Another common theme reported by those who mentioned childhood grit development was participation in sports. Of the 70% who mentioned grit development in their formative years, just over 57% mentioned the impact of participating in sports. The sport of choice for those interviewed varied from soccer, football, baseball, basketball, and endurance sports, however, while the sport may be different, each held the common theme of learning to cope with loss and struggle. The participation in sports aided in the development of grit for these lead pastors as they learned how to deal with losing, what choices to make to get better, and how to handle opposition. Duckworth (2016), dives into this concept of youth sports being impactful on grittiness as adults finding that adults who participated in youth sports scored higher on average on the Grit-S survey than those adults who did not participate in youth sports programs. The information uncovered by Dr. Duckworth concerning the impact of youth sports on grit

development in young people is further suggested in this research through the answers by these lead pastors.

An additional key aspect of grit development in formative years as mentioned by lead pastors was the participation in a family-run business. Nearly 29% of those interviewed speaking on formative years mentioned the significance of taking part in a family-owned business. In every situation mentioned the owners of the business were the participants' parents. One pastor noted, "I had to help in many different facets of the business from early on in life. I saw the highs and lows of small business management. I got to see how tough things can be, and I really think that had a strong impact on me and my grit development." Another participant spoke on similar issues saying, "my parents owned a small business, and man I saw their struggle. There were times we didn't have the means to do anything but keep the lights on." Yet another mentioned that hard work was taught by working in the family business noting that days off were not a thing. By seeing the issues faced by their parents in business ownership and by participating in the work, these lead pastors were able to learn grit attributes from observation and practice.

One of the questions this researcher had before conducting this study was whether or not a person could be born with a certain measure of grit or rather, if the attribute may be developed over time. Given the responses of the lead pastors regarding their grit development journeys, the data collected suggests that grit is a trait developed through experience and intentional effort. Helping to add an argument to the age-old question "whether leaders are born or made?" this research presents the idea that gritty leaders are cultivated through developmental journeys.

The second unexpected finding this researcher discovered was that a primary point of opposition for lead pastors came from their interpersonal dealings with other staff members or leadership boards such as a deacon or elder board. Astoundingly, 80% of the interviews made

mention of this specific issue, often it was highlighted as being the most significant issue to work through or overcome in pastoral leadership. One lead pastor made mention that the first major challenging event had to deal with a deacon board that “voted out their previous pastor.” This was a common theme amongst the interviews as 60% of those interviewed acknowledge their ministry journeys led them to take over leadership roles in churches going through a rebuilding phase.

The ministries mentioned in these interviews were often experiencing a recovery from some significant personnel trauma such as staff changes, pastoral firings, and social media controversies. When showing up as the new leader in these struggling ministries, the common themes described by the interviewees were feelings of angst, frustration, toxic environment, conflicting personalities, and hazardous attitudes. These lead pastors had to come into these situations and provide guidance, direction, and comfort as part of their leadership roles to aid in the recovery and restoration of these ministries. 60% of those pastors interviewed mentioned currently serving in a setting that has required those leadership actions. Prior to this study, this researcher believed the most common form of challenge for lead pastors would come from a source outside of the church. The data from these interviews strongly suggests that more commonly, significant and consistent challenges are sourced from within the church and often from other leadership staff.

A third unexpected finding uncovered in this research was the significance of a calling from God on one’s grittiness. During the interviews, 90% of the lead pastors interviewed made strong mention of God’s calling on their lives and ministries as playing the largest role in their respective grit development journeys. One pastor mentioned when speaking of going through a significant trial, “you have to have a sense of God’s calling that is so sure and so intimate that

when the stuff comes against you, you are able to look up at Him and stand; knowing that even if it is only you and Him left at the end of the day, you have done what you can.” The sentiments from this pastor certainly did not stand alone as others made similar remarks. One pastor mentioned “I would say it is my calling from God that helps my grittiness more than anything,” while another also stated, “It’s His call, God’s call that is where this ability of grit comes from that you are talking about.”

In nine of the ten interviews, pastors mentioned that overcoming strong opposition was not only sourced from that calling from God but that overcoming would have been impossible for them without it. “I never would have survived the setbacks and the struggles if not for knowing He called me to this,” one lead pastor stated after describing a significant trial his ministry had to overcome. Similarly, another pastor highlighted that “you see people get into ministry without a strong sense of calling, and you see them fall out.” This concept of a calling from God was so significant for one pastor that a mentor and former pastor counseled this individual to make sure the calling was there before pursuing ministry leadership. Having a strong and deep-rooted understanding of the calling God places on one’s life is suggested to be of critical importance from this research study. The research here implicates that many may experience a significant benefit in ministry success by pursuing an understanding of that call throughout their formal seminary education.

Implications

This study suggests multiple implications for application. These implications can be divided into three categories, theoretical, empirical, and practical. A detailed analysis of each topic is provided in the sections that follow.

Theoretical Implications

As discussed previously, this study confirmed many aspects of theories that existed prior to this study being conducted. The theory of grit as it relates to the duties and responsibilities of lead pastors has found support to be accurate and concrete. The implication here is that those who are in Christian ministry leadership roles, or those who desire to be in a Christian ministry leadership role, must understand the importance of grit as they are most likely going to face a wide variety of challenges that are originated in three forms, human, demonic, and divine. Without the development of grit within the spiritual formation process, a lead pastor may not possess the fortitude, whether mental, physical, or spiritual, to overcome the obstacles presented and push through to the goal ahead.

With this now being known, and discovering the top factor lead pastors say contribute to their grittiness is God's calling, this researcher suggests the implication for those seeking ministry positions to seek after the calling God has placed on them. During the interviews, 90% of the lead pastors mentioned emphatically that God's calling was the single most important aspect that has contributed to their grittiness. This single factor is what enabled, empowered, and encouraged these pastors to lead others through the darkest days of their ministry careers. Without a strong sense of calling, the needed grit to persevere through trial may not be present. Most pastors noted that they found that the calling God gave them was reinforced through the time they devoted and prayed in a one on one setting with God, often daily.

Therefore, this researcher suggests that formal theological education institutions implement two aspects into their programs. The first is the intentional focus of devotional time with God for students to do nothing else other than seeking the calling of the Lord. Jeremiah 29:13 states "you will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." And then

perhaps more importantly God follows this statement up with a promise in Jeremiah 29:14 when He states, “I will be found by you...” If the God of all creation promises this, his people will find it true when they employ his direction. It is concluded that the stronger sense of calling a believer has on his/her life the more they will be able to withstand and battle through in the pursuit of that calling.

The second recommendation for seminary programs is to provide educational and developmental workshops on grit. It is no secret that lead pastors must deal with many issues. Without the proper training and development, seminary programs may not be developing their students to the fullest enabling them with the greatest chance for success. While individual success is not the premier goal, the Kingdom of Heaven advances through the work of the Holy Spirit through the God’s people. Therefore, implementing grit development workshops in seminary programs will better equip students for future leadership roles and thus advancing the Kingdom of God in a more pronounced way.

Empirical Implications

While there are many ties, this research study was able to make to other empirical literature previously published, the implication in this section is limited to one major suggestion. It is not a secret that churches undergo dynamic shifts in makeup, personnel, doctrine, worship style, and population. Often, and most unfortunately, these dramatic shifts result in church splits or severe personnel power issues. When a church’s staff finds themselves in this situation and are looking for a new lead pastor to lead them out of the pit, they need to find one that has a substantial amount of grit. It is therefore recommended by this researcher to employ a grit analysis during the respective church’s hiring process. Administering the Grit-S survey to a candidate prior to interviews will allow the church’s pastor search committee to gain an

understanding of how gritty each candidate is. This information can then be used in their decision matrix for selecting a new lead pastor.

Practical Implications

This section of implications is more suited for those that do not fit into one of the two scenarios mentioned before. For those involved in ministry leadership, seeking ministry leadership and are not part of a formal theological education program, or those that desire to better develop grit as a personal attribute, this section is highly applicable. Much of the research, especially during the interviews, has unveiled the concept that grit is not just a character trait one is born with but, rather it is one developed over time. Sometimes that development is with high intentionality, and other times it comes in a more organic form.

In her study, Kearns (2015) created a grit development action plan with an easy to follow acronym, GRIT. Kearns (2015) states “The GRIT Action Plan is a strategic roadmap to success that teaches individuals how to apply the qualities of grit that superintendents attribute to their grittiness and their success” (p. 118). Given that many of the qualities highlighted in superintendents paralleled those of lead pastors in this study, the recommendation for practical implication has no reason to change. The Kearns GRIT action plan is stated below.

Goals: What do you want to accomplish? What is your vision for your future?

Re-think: What are some challenges that might come up? Flip these into opportunities.

Inspire: Whom can you inspire? How will you be a role model? In what ways can you give back to others? Make this bigger than you.

Triumphs: Acknowledge and celebrate small wins along the way. What are some milestones you anticipate? How will you celebrate? Who will you celebrate with?

Through implementing this action plan one can develop a road map for success by setting goals, identifying potential obstacles, grasping a sense of purpose greater than one's self, and rewarding small accomplishments along the way. The action plan is simple and contains an easy to follow path, one that is applicable to individuals in all walks of life and of any age range.

Applications

Beyond the previously suggested implications, there is one prominent application suggestion this researcher has been able to develop. In conducting the research interviews, it was discovered that all 10 interviewees had a strong desire to learn more about the subject matter. Additionally, each interview participant made comments suggesting the need for others in ministry leadership positions to learn about and develop grit. Each of these individuals has had many years of experience in pastoral leadership positions and was able to provide an abundance of input on the subject. What was desired was the avenue for giving back, through the process of mentoring and developing younger, more novice Christian leaders.

To accomplish this, this researcher suggests one main course of action. The establishing of a consulting group for a given region to educate Christian leaders and perspective Christian leaders on the concept and development of grit would be step one. This group would be run by an expert on grit and Christian leadership who would generate and distribute course material in the form of local and area conferences. Next, the group would seek membership from lead pastors that are well experienced and score high on the Grit-S survey. These individuals would be the mentoring team of the consulting group. Finally, advertisement and education would be accomplished to notify other ministries and their leaders of the opportunity and avenue for potential mentorship.

Often when facing difficult seasons or unknown situations, one craves the ability to reach out to someone who has been there before. This program would not only provide that resource but also it would enable the seasoned and experienced Christian leader to pour into a younger, less experienced generation imparting knowledge and wisdom. This strengthens not only the local church and leadership but the corporate Christian church as well. While localized and regional identity may be important for many forms of mentorship, the development and application of grit in Christian leadership is a topic that can be without borders. This means that while the consulting group may be small and located in a specific area, there would be no limits to the ability to mentor and impact ministry leaders across the globe.

Research Limitations

This study is not without its own set of limitations. The primary threat to validity in this study is the lack of response received from subordinates of lead pastors. Surveys were distributed to the subordinates of all lead pastor respondents yet participation rates were less than 3.4%. It is theorized by this researcher that low participation rates are a result of the mandated anonymity of subordinate surveys. In prior studies, the subordinate survey responses were utilized to validate the responses of those they worked for. In the Kearns (2015) study that happened in a near-perfect form. Unfortunately, this study was not able to enjoy the same experience due to the lead pastors not being able to endorse the survey or aid in the recruitment of subordinates.

The second limitation to validity would be the response rate of lead pastors. While sufficient data was gathered and validated across previous studies, the participation rate only allowed this study to draw conclusions with a 95% confidence rate operating with a 10% margin of error. A lower margin of error in the range of 1-2% was desired yet would have required a response rate of more than quadruple of what was experienced. Potential reasons for this are the

regional location of respondents, platform utilized for recruitment, and unfamiliarity with the topic on the part of those recruited.

Further Research

After conducting this study, this researcher has developed more questions that can be pursued with further research. As a building block approach, the below suggestions provide areas of research that will add to the knowledge within the field of grit and Christian leadership.

1. Examine grit in SBC lead pastors in regions other than the Southeast of the United States.
2. Examine the perceived grit levels of lead pastors from their subordinates.
3. Conduct a correlation study to see if a relationship exists between church size and grit levels in lead pastors.
4. Expand the research to denominations outside of the SBC to include non-denominational ministries.
5. Examine the grit levels of lead pastors who lead successful church plants.

Summary

This mixed methods study examined the attribute grit in current SBC lead pastors located in the state of Alabama. In total, 90 lead pastors completed an eight-item Grit-S survey demonstrating their mean grit score of 3.86 allowing the conclusion to be made that lead pastors have moderately high grit levels. Additionally, 10 interviews were conducted that revealed key factors contributing to the formation of grit in these lead pastors. Those factors included a strong sense of God's calling, refusal to quit, dealing with personnel issues, devotional time with God, childhood experiences, having a vision, and sharing leadership. As a result, it has been concluded that grit is an essential attribute for the Christian leader to attain and develop to become better equipped for the longevity of ministry service. Perhaps the most important finding is that with a

strong understanding one has of the calling God has put on their lives, they can withstand the most severe trials and insurmountable odds. Grit formation must be taught in Christian leadership circles as a crucial component of the spiritual formation process.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: SHORT GRIT SCALE – SURVEY FOR LEAD PASTORS

Directions for taking the Grit Scale: Here are a number of statements that may or may not apply to you. For the most accurate score, when responding, think of how you compare to most people—not just the people you know well, but most people in the world. There are no right or wrong answers, so just answer honestly!

1. New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones.

Very much like me

Mostly like me

Somewhat like me

Not much like me

Not like me at all

2. Setbacks don't discourage me.

Very much like me

Mostly like me

Somewhat like me

Not much like me

Not like me at all

3. I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.

Very much like me

Mostly like me

Somewhat like me

Not much like me

Not like me at all

4. I am a hard worker.

Very much like me

Mostly like me

Somewhat like me

Not much like me

Not like me at all

5. I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one

Very much like me

Mostly like me

Somewhat like me

Not much like me

Not like me at all

6. I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete 151

Very much like me
Mostly like me
Somewhat like me
Not much like me
Not like me at all

7. I finish whatever I begin.

Very much like me
Mostly like me
Somewhat like me
Not much like me
Not like me at all

8. I am diligent.

Very much like me
Mostly like me
Somewhat like me
Not much like me
Not like me at all

Grit Scale Citation

Duckworth, A. L., Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., & Kelly, D. R. (2007). Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 9*, 1087-1101. Retrieved from <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~duckwort/images/Grit%20JPSP.pdf>

Duckworth, A. L., & Quinn, P. D. (2009). Development and validation of the Short Grit Scale (GritS). *Journal of Personality Assessment, 91*, 166-174. Retrieved from <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~duckwort/images/Duckworth%20and%20Quinn.pdf>

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APPENDIX B: SHORT GRIT SCALE – SURVEY FOR SUBORDINATES

Directions for taking the Grit Scale: Here are a number of statements that may or may not apply to your lead pastor. For the most accurate score, when responding, think of how he or she compares to most people -- not just the people you know well, but most people in the world. There are no right or wrong answers, so just answer honestly!

1. New ideas and projects sometimes distract him/her from previous ones.

Very much like him/her

Mostly like him/her

Somewhat like him/her

Not much like him/her

Not like him/her at all

2. Setbacks don't discourage him/her.

Very much like him/her

Mostly like him/her

Somewhat like him/her

Not much like him/her

Not like him/her at all

3. He/she has been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.

Very much like him/her

Mostly like him/her

Somewhat like him/her

Not much like him/her

Not like him/her at all

4. He/she is a hard worker.

Very much like him/her

Mostly like him/her

Somewhat like him/her

Not much like him/her

Not like him/her at all

5. He/she often sets a goal but later chooses to pursue a different one.

Very much like him/her

Mostly like him/her

Somewhat like him/her

Not much like him/her

Not like him/her at all

6. He/she has difficulty maintaining his/her focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete.

Very much like him/her

Mostly like him/her
 Somewhat like him/her
 Not much like him/her
 Not like him/her at all

7. He/she finishes whatever he/she begins.
 Very much like him/her
 Mostly like him/her
 Somewhat like him/her
 Not much like him/her
 Not like him/her at all

8. He/she is diligent.
 Very much like him/her
 Mostly like him/her
 Somewhat like him/her
 Not much like him/her
 Not like him/her at all

Grit Scale Citation

This survey has changed the pronoun “I” to “He/She” in accordance with the practices from Kearns (2015), study.

Duckworth, A. L., Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., & Kelly, D. R. (2007). Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 9*, 1087-1101. Retrieved from <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~duckwort/images/Grit%20JPSP.pdf>

Duckworth, A. L., & Quinn, P. D. (2009). Development and validation of the Short Grit Scale (GritS). *Journal of Personality Assessment, 91*, 166-174. Retrieved from <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~duckwort/images/Duckworth%20and%20Quinn.pdf>

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APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR LEAD PASTORS

1. Reflecting back on your professional ministry success, what personal characteristics have contributed to your grittiness?
2. Reflecting back on your professional ministry success, what leadership characteristics have contributed to your grittiness?
3. As a lead pastor, can you describe a situation where there have been professional obstacles or setbacks but you were able to overcome them?
4. As someone who rates himself or herself as diligent, what does be diligent look like to you?
5. In spite of the challenges you face as a lead pastor, what strategies do you use to keep going?
6. Is there anything else you can think of that has contributed your grittiness as a lead pastor?

APPENDIX D: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Date

Recipient

Title

Company

Address

Dear Recipient:

As a doctoral student in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The title of my research project is The Examination of Grit in Southern Baptist Lead Pastors in Alabama and the purpose of my research is to discover how grit is an influential personal attribute for ministry leaders to attain and utilize as they navigate the unique challenges of leading God's people.

I am writing to request your permission to contact you and your staff to invite them to participate in this research study. Participants will be asked to complete the attached survey. Following the survey a select few will be asked to accomplish interviews with me regarding their scores. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please respond by email to kbhodes@liberty.edu. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Kyle B. Hodges

APPENDIX E: LIBERTY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Date: 10-21-2020

IRB #: IRB-FY20-21-5

Title: The Examination of Grit in Southern Baptist Convention Lead Pastors in Alabama

Creation Date: 7-3-2020

End Date:

Status: Approved

Principal Investigator: Kyle Hodges

Review Board: Research Ethics Office

Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Limited	Decision	Exempt - Limited IRB
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Key Study Contacts

Member	Jeffrey Davis	Role	Co-Principal Investigator	Contact	jdavis237@liberty.edu
Member	Kyle Hodges	Role	Principal Investigator	Contact	kbhodes@liberty.edu
Member	Kyle Hodges	Role	Primary Contact	Contact	kbhodes@liberty.edu