

## **Gender Differences in the Effectiveness of Growth Mindset Interventions**

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### **Identification of the subject**

My research focuses on examining the individual responses of both men and women to interventions aimed at developing a growth mindset. The purpose of growth mindset interventions is to assist individuals in cultivating the belief that their capabilities and intelligence can be shaped and improved through commitment and diligent effort. Through my research, I aim to enhance the understanding of the most effective ways to implement these interventions with a focus on women.

### **Personal motivation and rationale**

Although studies have demonstrated the positive impact of successful growth mindset interventions on enhancing academic achievements, there is an increasing curiosity about investigating potential gender differences in their effectiveness. Especially since there is an ongoing trend towards female empowerment, not generalizing common practices for men and women should be a reasonable consequence. However, I as a woman cannot confirm such a development, which is why I find it crucial to contribute to this issue through my research. Growth mindset interventions are increasingly used in companies to promote engagement and foster organizational citizenship. It is therefore vital to gain valuable insights into optimizing the implementation of these interventions, particularly within the realm of Human Resources.

### **Research question**

My central question is whether there are significant differences in the effectiveness of growth mindset interventions and if that is the case, what the implications are for applying these in a business context. The underlying hypothesis states that women do react differently to these interventions and therefore, alternative practices should be applied in order to foster the stimulation of a growth mindset.

### **Literature review**

From a methodological perspective, my research draws upon the most current literature within the field. However, the literature review distinctly reveals that the subject matter has only recently garnered significance and attention. Consequently, the available selection of studies lacks variety regarding settings and subjects. In most studies, growth mindset interventions were conducted in a school setting and therefore, mainly younger participants were exposed to experiments within this field. For example, Burnette et al. conducted a study on undergraduate college students to see if a growth mindset

intervention could be utilized to enhance students' belief in their own ability to succeed as entrepreneurs. While gender is predominantly included as a control variable in various regression analyses representing the effect of growth mindset interventions, this variable is frequently omitted in the results and discussion sections, which highlights the significance of my research. Future literature could complement my hypothesis by laying their focus on gender as a mediator.

Dweck and Legget (1988) define a growth mindset as when an individual believes that their intellectual abilities like intelligence and personal skills are adaptable and can be enhanced through exertion, education, and the application of appropriate strategies over a period of time. According to Yeager et al. (2022), growth mindset interventions are utilized to convey this malleability of individual attributes through diligence, successful approaches, and support from other individuals. Generally, mindset interventions utilize psychological theory and research to convey specific messages at crucial moments (Canning and Limeri, 2023). Behind this background, the question of how to apply these practices in a business context and adapt it so that it functions most effectively for all subjects remains.

Studies have found that given certain circumstances, growth mindset interventions are particularly effective. According to Burnette et al. (2022), these interventions work most effectively for individuals from low socioeconomic backgrounds and with racial minority status. However, differentiating between these characteristics is seen as problematic as this might amplify negative stereotypes. Therefore, different categories need to be established. Further attention should also be paid to how to implement these interventions since there is no general recommendation on that (ibid). A different study suggests that not only do students' mindsets influence their academic performance but that this is also true vice versa (Limeri et al., 2020). According to them, students who struggle more in their classes are also less likely to develop a growth mindset. Nonetheless, the effect of gender on these experiments is yet to be discussed.

Since a growth mindset can stimulate engagement or organizational citizenship, fostering this belief of possible improvement is an attractive method that companies are increasingly using in practice. Han and Stieha (2020) have found that certain interventions are particularly effective in Human Resource Development. These include but are not limited to training, coaching, and leadership development, as well as recruiting managers with a growth mindset and establishing a performance evaluation system. Training is most effective if the concepts of a growth and fixed mindset are introduced to the participants in the beginning and if not only employees but also managers leave their comfort zone. Regarding leadership development, it is not recommended to establish one single leadership style as the mindset of employees must align with the leadership style of managers (ibid). Therefore, it seems like a logical consequence that an adaption to employees' and managers' gender regarding this and other interventions is necessary, too.

## References

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### **Key terms**

**Growth mindset:** The belief that individual abilities, skills and knowledge are not naturally given but malleable. In particular, the mindset that one's capabilities can be improved.

**Growth mindset interventions:** Actions undertaken to foster a growth mindset. They are used to convey this malleability of individual attributes through dedication, diligent work, and support from other individuals.

**Organizational Citizenship:** The voluntary contributions and commitment of employees that surpass their formal job duties and contractual obligations, aiming to enhance the organization's overall performance and success.