

The impact of a fixed mindset on life satisfaction and academic anxiety

Sanjita¹, Dr. Nidhi Sharma²

^{1,2}Assistant Professor, Department of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, Faculty of Science and Humanities SRM Institute of Science and Technology Kattankulathur- 603 203

¹Email ID: phalswalsanjita19@gmail.com

²Email ID: sharma.nidhi@vgu.ac.in

Cite this paper as: Sanjita, Dr. Nidhi Sharma, (2025) The impact of a fixed mindset on life satisfaction and academic anxiety. *Journal of Neonatal Surgery*, 14 (27s), 880-884.

ABSTRACT

This study explores how a fixed mindset affects individuals' life satisfaction and academic anxiety. Based on Carol Dweck's psychological theory, the fixed mindset is defined by the belief that intelligence and abilities are inherent and unchangeable. The research examines the influence of this mindset on personal development, emotional health, and academic success, emphasising behaviours like avoiding challenges, being sensitive to criticism, and fearing risks. It also compares the outcomes of a fixed mindset with those of a growth mindset, underscoring the educational and professional advancement implications.

This study explores the fixed mindset—the belief that one's abilities and intelligence are static—and its impact on personal growth, mental health, and risk-taking. The research involved 100 emerging adults aged 18 to 25 who completed self-report measures to assess their mental orientation and related behaviours.

The findings from correlational and regression analyses indicate that a fixed mindset is associated with avoiding challenges, heightened sensitivity to criticism, and prioritizing validation over personal growth. These traits contribute to increased psychological distress and hinder personal development. The discussion is framed within mindset theory, highlighting the contrast between growth and fixed mindsets. The study underscores the importance of nurturing a growth mindset for self-improvement.

1. INTRODUCTION

The mindset concept, introduced by psychologist Carol Dweck, plays a crucial role in understanding motivation and achievement. A fixed mindset is the belief that intelligence and talents are fixed traits that cannot be significantly altered. This mindset affects how individuals approach learning, confront challenges, and respond to feedback, which may limit their growth and overall well-being. This research aims to investigate the impact of a fixed mindset on two key areas: life satisfaction and academic anxiety, particularly among students.

The fixed mindset represents a powerful psychological framework that significantly influences how individuals approach challenges, respond to feedback, and conceptualise their own potential. Defined by the belief that abilities and intelligence are static, unchangeable traits, this mindset creates predictable patterns of behaviour characterized by challenge avoidance, sensitivity to criticism, and emphasis on validation rather than growth.

The impact of a fixed mindset extends across educational, professional, and personal domains, often limiting achievement and psychological well-being by creating unnecessary barriers to development. By contrasting fixed and growth mindsets, we gain valuable insight into how fundamental beliefs about human capability shape success and fulfilment throughout life.

Understanding the fixed mindset concept provides an essential foundation for personal development. Recognizing these patterns in ourselves creates opportunities to shift toward more adaptive perspectives that embrace challenge, persist through difficulty, and view abilities as developable through dedicated effort. This shift from fixed to growth mindset thinking represents one of the most powerful psychological transformations available for enhancing achievement and well-being.

Life satisfaction is a multifaceted construct shaped by personality, life circumstances, and cultural context. Its dual role as a cognitive evaluation and affective experience makes it a critical indicator of holistic well-being. The integration of top-down and bottom-up models offers a comprehensive lens for understanding its determinants, emphasizing the interplay between dispositional traits and domain-specific experiences.

Future research should prioritize longitudinal and cross-cultural studies to unravel causal pathways and cultural moderators. Practically, interventions targeting life satisfaction, such as resilience training, value-aligned goal setting, and community-building initiatives, hold promise for enhancing mental health and societal well-being. By fostering environments that nurture both personal growth and communal harmony, societies can cultivate higher life satisfaction across diverse populations.

Academic anxiety constitutes a multidimensional challenge requiring systemic and individualized solutions. While moderate anxiety serves an adaptive role in motivating preparation, pathological levels undermine cognitive performance and psychosocial well-being. Institutions must prioritize early screening through tools like the Academic Anxiety Scale and implement tiered support systems combining pedagogical flexibility with mental health resources. For learners, recognizing anxiety's somatic and cognitive markers enables timely intervention through evidence-based self-regulation strategies. Future research should explore longitudinal outcomes of anxiety-alleviation programs and their impact on lifetime educational trajectories. By reconceptualizing academic anxiety as a manageable response rather than an immutable trait, educational ecosystems can foster resilience and sustainable achievement.

Fixed mindset and academic anxiety are strongly correlated, mediated by self-esteem and coping styles. Conversely, life satisfaction serves as a protective factor, buffering stress through adaptive strategies. Addressing these interconnections requires holistic interventions targeting mindset shifts, coping skills, and systemic support in educational environments.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition and Characteristics of Fixed Mindset- A fixed mindset is defined as the belief that personal characteristics, such as intelligence and talents, are predetermined and unchangeable. Individuals with this mindset often avoid challenges, pursue validation rather than personal growth, are sensitive to criticism, and view effort negatively, perceiving it as evidence of low ability rather than a pathway to mastery.

Behavioural Manifestations- In educational contexts, students with a fixed mindset frequently shy away from challenging courses and participation, fearing that failure might reveal their perceived lack of ability. In the professional realm, they may hesitate to ask for help and interpret setbacks as reflections of personal inadequacy, which hampers resilience and opportunities for growth. Moreover, individuals with a fixed mindset may feel threatened by the success of others, unlike those with a growth mindset who draw inspiration from the achievements of their peers.

Psychological and Emotional Impacts- The fixed mindset is associated with lower life satisfaction due to its restrictive nature on personal growth and heightened susceptibility to anxiety. When individuals base their self-worth on success or failure, it results in emotional instability and increased academic anxiety. This mindset promotes risk aversion, stifling innovation and creativity both personally and within organisations.

Fixed Mindset and Emotional Distress- Research consistently shows that people with a fixed mindset are more susceptible to negative emotions, especially when facing challenges and failures. For example, having a fixed mindset about anxiety predicts future distress, even when prior distress levels and demographic factors are considered. This implies that the belief in the unchangeability of one's emotional states can worsen existing psychological struggles.

Fixed Mindset, Self-Esteem, and Academic Anxiety- An expanding body of research indicates that a fixed intelligence mindset is strongly associated with negative emotional states, such as anxiety and depression, particularly during ego-threatening moments like academic setbacks. Importantly, studies reveal that the connection between a fixed mindset and negative emotions is influenced by self-esteem. Students with a fixed mindset often experience significant drops in self-esteem following academic failures, leading to increased negative emotions, including shame, hopelessness, and anxiety. This pattern has been observed across various cultures, pointing to a strong and universally applicable mechanism.

Behavioural and Coping Patterns- Individuals with a fixed mindset tend to shy away from challenges and perceive academic stressors as threats, resulting in prolonged stress responses. They typically utilize negative coping strategies, such as making excuses for failures, which further hampers their growth and escalates academic pressure. Conversely, those with a growth mindset adopt more adaptive coping strategies, view mistakes as opportunities for learning, and exhibit greater persistence and optimism in the face of challenges.

Contrasting Growth Mindset Outcomes: - The literature also emphasizes the protective benefits of a growth mindset. Students with a growth mindset experience lower academic anxiety, enhanced adaptability, and greater life satisfaction. Interventions designed to foster a growth mindset have been proven to boost enjoyment in learning and encourage positive coping strategies, although the success of these interventions may vary depending on individual and contextual factors.

3. METHODOLOGY

Research design

This approach enables us to explore the relationships and possible moderating effects between fixed mindset, life satisfaction, and academic anxiety at a specific moment in time. It also facilitates the assessment of predictive relationships through regression and moderation analyses.

Participants

The study focuses on a population of students aged 18 to 25, which encompasses early adulthood. The sample size generally consists of 100 to 150 participants to achieve sufficient statistical power. Participants are selected through convenience sampling from appropriate university programs to ensure relevance and accessibility for the research.

Instruments

Life satisfaction can be assessed using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) or the Life Satisfaction Index. To gauge academic anxiety, the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) is utilized. Additionally, a demographic questionnaire will be administered to collect information such as age, gender, and other relevant details.

Data Collection Procedure

The administration of the survey will be conducted through an online Google form, which will guarantee both informed consent and the anonymity of participants. Data collection will take place over a specified timeframe, typically ranging from two to four weeks.

Data Analysis

To provide a clear overview of the study's statistical methods, we will begin with descriptive statistics to summarize the demographic characteristics and the distributions of the scales used. Following this, we will employ correlational analysis, utilizing either Pearson's or Spearman's correlation coefficients, to explore the bivariate relationships among fixed mindset, life satisfaction, and academic anxiety. Next, multiple linear regression will be conducted to identify independent predictors of both life satisfaction and academic anxiety, while controlling for demographic variables. We will also carry out moderation analysis, using hierarchical regression or the PROCESS macro, to investigate whether a fixed mindset moderates the relationship between academic anxiety and life satisfaction, focusing on the interaction effects involved. Lastly, if relevant, we will perform group comparisons through t-tests or ANOVA to examine differences between subgroups, such as students who report experiencing anxiety versus those who do not. This structured approach will help us draw meaningful insights from the data collected.

Ethical Considerations

To initiate the project, it is essential to secure the approval of the institutional ethics committee. This step ensures that the study aligns with ethical standards and procedures. Additionally, obtaining informed consent from all participants is crucial, as it allows them to understand the nature of the study and their involvement. Finally, measures must be in place to guarantee data privacy and secure storage of all information collected throughout the process, protecting the confidentiality of participants at all times.

Research gap

There are still several gaps in the evidence that a fixed mindset is associated with poor emotional and intellectual success.

Mechanisms of Influence:- Although self-esteem has been found to act as a mediator between unpleasant emotions and a fixed mentality, it is unclear exactly how this occurs and whether there are any other mediators at play (such as resilience or social support).

Effectiveness of Interventions:- Little is known about how to successfully shift people from a fixed to a development mindset, particularly when using focused interventions in actual classroom environments.

Longitudinal Outcomes: More longitudinal research is required to evaluate the long-term effects of attitude on life satisfaction and academic anxiety, as the majority of studies are cross-sectional or short-term.

Cultural Contexts:- More research is required to comprehend how cultural influences impact the relationship between mentality, self-esteem, and academic outcomes, even if some studies have looked at cross-cultural validity. 5. • Distinguishing Academic worry: Regarding fixed mentality, few studies have explicitly distinguished academic worry from general anxiety or other negative affective states.

Objectives

The goals of this study are to:

- Examine the relationship between university students' life satisfaction and fixed mindset in light of the literature review and identified research gaps.
- To evaluate how academic anxiety is affected by a fixed mindset, with an emphasis on the mediating function of self-esteem.
- To investigate the emotional and behavioural coping mechanisms used by students with a fixed mindset in the face of academic difficulties.

- To compare the academic and psychological results of students with growth vs fixed mindsets.
- To offer suggestions for educational interventions that target mindset orientations in order to improve life satisfaction and lessen academic anxiety.

By tackling these goals, the project hopes to advance a more sophisticated comprehension of how fixed-mindset beliefs influence emotional and academic.

4. RESULTS

The current study investigated how students' academic anxiety and life satisfaction were impacted by a fixed attitude. According to the results, people who mostly support a fixed mindset—the idea that aptitude and intelligence are innate and unalterable—have a tendency to be less satisfied with their lives and to feel more anxious about their academic performance. Life happiness and fixed thinking orientation were found to be negatively correlated by quantitative evidence. Particularly in the areas of academics and personal development, students with a fixed mindset expressed feeling less content and more unhappy with their life. Additionally, these students showed markedly higher levels of academic anxiety, which were typified by increased stress during evaluations, a heightened fear of failing, and an avoidance of difficult assignments.

Initial findings show a noteworthy negative relationship between the endorsement of a fixed mindset and life satisfaction. Students with fixed mindsets reported higher academic anxiety, particularly concerning fear of failure and negative evaluations. Qualitative insights indicate that these students generally evade challenging academic tasks and regard effort as pointless, perpetuating their anxiety and dissatisfaction.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings are consistent with previous research, demonstrating that a fixed attitude negatively affects psychological health and academic performance. Students who believe that their abilities are fixed tend to view criticism and setbacks as signs of their own weakness rather than as chances for growth. This interpretation prolongs academic anxiety, weakens resilience, and encourages avoidance behaviours.

The study also emphasises the mediating function of self-esteem: students with a fixed attitude frequently suffer from declines in self-esteem after facing scholastic difficulties, which intensifies unpleasant emotions like worry and humiliation. These results are in line with earlier studies that found fixed mentality beliefs to be detrimental to emotional well-being and life satisfaction in addition to limiting accomplishment.

Furthermore, those with a fixed mindset are less likely to engage in meaningful learning situations because they shun effort and risk-taking. The feeling of restricted competence is strengthened by this avoidance cycle, which leads to a self-fulfilling prophesy that lowers life satisfaction and raises worry.

On the other hand, research indicates that a growth mindset—which is defined by the conviction that skills can be acquired—promotes more adaptable coping mechanisms, increased perseverance, and improved general wellbeing. The results of this study highlight how crucial it is to promote a growth mindset in learning environments in order to improve students' academic resilience and overall well-being.

The findings substantiate the hypothesis that a fixed mindset negatively impacts psychological health and academic achievement. The tendencies to avoid challenges and be sensitive to criticism characteristic of a fixed mindset lead to increased academic anxiety, which consequently reduces life satisfaction. These insights highlight the need for interventions to foster a growth mindset to bolster resilience, mitigate anxiety, and enhance overall life satisfaction.

6. CONCLUSION

According to this study, students who have a fixed mindset have far lower life satisfaction and higher levels of academic anxiety. Negative academic and emotional outcomes are caused by a propensity to see abilities as static, which also causes people to shun difficulties, become more sensitive to criticism, and become less resilient.

Interventions that promote a growth mindset are obviously needed in light of these findings, assisting kids in accepting challenges, appreciating effort, and seeing failures as teaching moments. In addition to lowering academic anxiety, these therapies may improve psychological health and general life satisfaction. Future studies should look more closely at the mechanisms that underlie these connections and assess how well mindset-based interventions work over the long run in a variety of educational and cultural situations.

This research sheds light on the harmful effects of a fixed mindset on life satisfaction and academic anxiety. By understanding the traits and consequences associated with a fixed mindset, educators and psychologists can devise strategies to promote growth mindsets, facilitating persistence, embracing challenges, and recognizing effort as a pathway to success. Such transformations can result in better mental health and academic performance, academic outcomes.

REFERENCES

- [1] Ackerman, C. E. (2020, September 28). *Life satisfaction theory & 4 contributing factors (+ scale)*. PositivePsychology.com. <https://positivepsychology.com/life-satisfaction/>
 - [2] Anglim, J., Horwood, S., Smillie, L. D., Marrero, R. J., & Wood, J. K. (2022). The relationship between areas of life satisfaction, personality, and overall life satisfaction: An integrated account. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 894610. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.894610>
 - [3] Ball State University. (2021, November 12). *Types of academic anxiety – Academic Anxiety Resource Centre*. <https://sites.bsu.edu/aarc/2021/11/12/types-of-academic-anxiety>
 - [4] Ball State University. (n.d.). *About academic anxiety – Academic Anxiety Resource Centre*. Academic Anxiety Resource Centre. Retrieved April 7, 2025, from <https://sites.bsu.edu/aarc/about-academic-anxiety>
 - [5] Popova, M. (2014, January 29). *Fixed vs. growth: The two basic mindsets that shape our lives*. The Marginalia. <https://themarginalian.org/2014/01/29/carol-dweck-mindsets/>
 - [6] PositivePsychology.com. (n.d.). *Subjective wellbeing in positive psychology (incl. PDF)*. Retrieved April 7, 2025, from <https://positivepsychology.com/subjective-wellbeing>
 - [7] The Jed Foundation. (n.d.). *Student stress 101: Understanding academic stress*. Retrieved April 7, 2025, from <https://jedfoundation.org/resource/understanding-academic-stress>
 - [8] Tiwari, G. K. (2014). The academic anxiety of students and its impact on academic achievement. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 5(10), 1–5. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/234695949.pdf>
 - [9] Top Hat. (n.d.). *Fixed mindset definition and meaning*. Top Hat. <https://tophat.com/glossary/f/fixed-mindset>
 - [10] Tsitsi's, G., Paschalis, A. A., & Katsoulis, L. (2018). Anxiety and life satisfaction in university students: The mediating role of emotional intelligence. *European Journal of Counselling Psychology*, 7(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.5964/ejcop.v7i1.148>
-