

## Finding Strength in Challenges: A Literature Review on the Role of Growth Mindset and Academic Stress in University Students

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**Abstract:** Students are constantly faced with various challenges and academic pressures that have the potential to cause academic stress. On the other hand, a growth mindset is based on the belief that abilities can be developed through effort, effective strategies, and perseverance. A growth mindset tends to perceive challenges as opportunities for personal growth and development, rather than as weaknesses or limitations. A growth mindset is considered a protective factor in facing academic challenges and pressures. This study aims to analyse the dynamics of the role of growth mindset and academic stress among students. The method employed is a literature review, examining relevant scientific articles related to growth mindset and academic stress. The articles were retrieved from databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, EBSCO, and Publish & Perish. From 1.550 articles that only 20 publications were relevant articles published in the last six years, from 2019 to 2025. The review found a negative relationship between growth mindset and academic stress, where students with a high growth mindset tend to experience lower levels of academic stress. A growth mindset serves as a protective factor, helping university students interpret academic pressure as a challenge that can be overcome, use adaptive coping strategies, persist more in completing academic tasks, and enhance their resilience and academic motivation. In addition, the relationship between growth mindset and academic stress is dynamic and influenced by mediator and moderator variables, such as emotion, student engagement, as well as psychological and psychological factors. Growth mindset interventions have been proven effective in reducing academic stress while supporting students' well-being. These findings underscore the importance of developing a growth mindset as a preventive strategy and intervention in higher education, enabling students to cope with increasingly complex academic demands.

**Keywords:** Academic Stress, Growth Mindset, University Students, Literature Review

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Students are constantly confronted with increasing academic demands and challenges throughout their studies progress as time (Ilhamsyah et al., 2023). The academic demands and challenges experienced such as, heavy workloads, the expectation to achieve high academic performance, exam pressure, and competition in a highly competitive academic environment (Barseli et al., 2017). One of the common phenomena encountered by students throughout their academic journey is psychological pressure, commonly known as academic stress. Academic stress is a form of psychological pressure experienced by students due to academic demands and pressures, which tend to decrease their learning motivation (Barseli et al., 2018).

Academic stress is influenced by various factors such as, heavy academic workload, lack of understanding of the material, poor time management, and other factors. If not properly managed, this stress can have negative effects therefore, interventions are needed to reduce academic stress in order to achieve academic success (Idaini, 2024). This stress can have negative impact on mental health, academic performance, academic procrastination, and burnout (Lubis et al., 2021). Overcoming and reducing academic stress requires the implementation of appropriate strategies (Gea et al., 2024). In supporting students to manage academic stress, it is important to implement preventive measures, targeted interventions, and both holistic and proactive approaches (Elora, 2024).

In dealing with academic challenges and pressures, an individual's mindset becomes one of the key factors that determines how a person interprets and responds to difficulties. In this context, the emergence of positive psychology has positioned growth mindset as an important concept that may function as a protective factor in mitigating academic stress (Dweck, 2006).

The concept of growth mindset was first introduced by psychologist Carol Dweck, who classified individual mindset into two types fixed mindset and growth mindset (Dweck, 2006). A fixed mindset is a way of thinking in which individuals believe that abilities, talents, and dispositions are static and cannot be developed

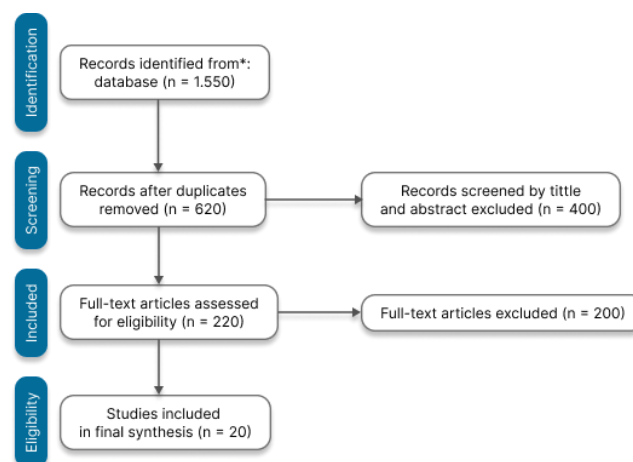
through effort. In contrast, a growth mindset is a way of thinking in which individuals believe that abilities and perseverance can be developed through effort. The main characteristics of a growth mindset include having the courage to confront challenges, persistence in overcoming difficulties, receptiveness to feedback, and a continuous desire learning (Suniah, & Mulyanti, 2025).

Individuals with a growth mindset to more effectively navigate and overcome various obstacles and challenges (Hochanadel, A., & Finamore, 2015). Those with a growth mindset perceive challenges as valuable opportunities for growth (Muhammad & Fathimah, 2022). Individuals with a growth mindset tend to maintain a positive perspective on their efforts, demonstrate the ability to overcome difficulties in problem solving, and exhibit greater self-motivation in challenging situations (Jach et al., 2018). Individuals with a growth mindset consistently make efforts and demonstrate perseverance in confronting challenges and demands (Sembiring, 2017).

Students with a growth mindset are generally more capable of adapting to academic challenges, as they perceive failure as part of the learning and growth process, rather than as a sign of inability (Yeager, D.S., & Dweck, 2012). Students with a growth mindset approach challenges by continually learning and exerting greater effort, which in turn can enhance their academic performance (Seaton, 2018). A growth mindset has the potential to serve as a protective factor against academic stress, as students with a growth mindset are more likely to develop adaptive coping strategies and persist, likely to give up when facing of academic difficulties and challenges (Nieuwenhuis et al., 2023). Students with a growth mindset can enhance their sense of control in overcoming academic difficulties and are better able to manage learning related problems (Schmidt et al., 2017). A growth mindset is believed to be an essential foundation for overcoming learning difficulties and enhancing learning motivation (Suniah & Mulyanti, 2025).

Based on this background, this study aims to analyse the dynamics of the role of growth mindset and academic stress. A literature review approach enables researchers to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of existing empirical evidence sourced from various databases. This study is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of educational psychology and positive psychology, while also providing practical recommendations for the development of psychological interventions within university environments.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS



Picture 1. Literature Review Methode

This study employed a literature review method. In the identification stage, articles were searched in several databases, such as Google Scholar, Scopus, EBSCO, and Publish and Perish, using several keywords, including “growth mindset” AND “academic stress”. “Positive mindset” AND “student stress”, and “coping strategies” AND “academic pressure”. The keyword search was structured using AND/OR operators to broaden and narrow the search results. All these keywords were designed to filter articles that are relevant to the research topic. The search focused on articles published in the last 10 years to ensure the actuality of the findings and their relevant to the current educational context.

The article selection process was gradual and systematic to ensure that only relevant articles were analysed in this literature review. From the initial search results using keywords determined through several databases, a total of 1,550 articles were obtained. Next, an article filtering process was carried out to remove duplicate articles, resulting in a total of 620 remaining articles. Then, a selection was made based on the titles and abstracts to identify articles that were appropriate and relevant to the research topic. It was found that 400 articles were excluded because they were not relevant to the research topic. Furthermore, at the eligibility stage, articles that passed the screening process were thoroughly examined by reading the full texts to check and assess

the relevant of their content to the research topic. This resulted in 220 remaining articles that were eligible for further review. However, after further review, 200 articles were excluded because they did not meet the inclusion criteria. Several reasons, including the research was not an empirical study, the research subjects were not being university or school students, and the topic did not discuss the relationship between growth mindset and academic stress. After the review process, a total of 20 articles were selected for further analysis.

The inclusion criteria used were as follows:

- (1) Articles written in English and Indonesian language.
- (2) Published in the last 10 years.
- (3) Empirical research.
- (4) Focused on the relationship between growth mindset and academic stress among university and school students.

While the exclusion criteria used were as follows:

- (1) Non-empirical articles.
- (2) Population outside the relevant context.
- (3) Studies that were not available in full text versions.

### 3. RESULTS

The synthesis results indicate that there is a significant relationship between growth mindset and academic stress. Growth mindset plays an important role in reducing academic stress, because individuals with a growth mindset tend to have a positive view on challenges, are better able to adapt to academic pressure, and show more adaptive coping strategies. This finding is consistent with various studies showing that a growth mindset can reduce academic stress. However, several studies have also shown inconsistent results, finding no significant relationship between growth mindset and academic stress. This difference may be due to the presence of uncontrolled variables, such as differences in types of educational institutions, levels of social support, and other factors. Therefore, further in-dept research is still needed to comprehensively explain the relationship between growth mindset and academic stress, as well as to consider other factors that may affect the relationship.

*Table 1: Results of Literature Review*

No.	Author and Year	Title	Research Method	Result
1.	Supriyadi et al., 2023	The Influence of Growth Mindset on Student academic Stress	Quantitative	Growth mindset plays an important role in reducing academic stress among university students. This indicates that students with a high growth mindset experience lower level of academic stress. Growth mindset can be an effective strategy for reducing academic stress. Individuals with a growth mindset think more positively and optimistically in facing problems so that they can reduce academic stress.
2.	Khilma & Utami, 2024	Growth Mindset and Academic Stress among High School Students in Yogyakarta	Quantitative	There is a significant positive relationship between growth mindset and academic stress among high school students. This indicates that a high growth mindset is correlated with low academic stress. Growth mindset plays an important role in managing academic stress.
3.	Mosanya, 2020	Buffering Academic Stress during the COVID-19 Pandemic related Social Isolation: Grit and Growth Mindset as Protective Factors against the Impact of Loneliness	Quantitative	Growth mindset is negatively correlated with academic stress, acting as a protective factor to help reduce academic stress. Growth mindset helps students see challenges as opportunities to growth, thus reducing stress.
4.	Meyer & Stutts, 2024	The Effect of Mindset Interventions on Stress and Academic Motivation in College Students	Quantitative	There is a significant relationship that growth mindset can reduce academic stress and increase academic motivation. Growth mindset perceives challenges as opportunities for growth leading to lower academic pressure.
5.	Kim, 2020	A Structural	Quantitative	Growth mindset as a protective factor in reducing

No.	Author and Year	Title	Research Method	Result
		Relationship among Growth Mindset, Academic Grit, and Academic Burnout as Perceived by Korean High School Students		academic stress. This indicates that managing a growth mindset can reduce academic stress among students by promoting persistence and academic resilience.
6.	Calo et al., 2024	Grit, Resilience and Growth-Mindset Interventions in Health Professional Students: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis	A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis	Growth mindset interventions have been shown to reduce academic stress among university students.
7.	Syukra & Pratama, 2023	Contribution of Growth Mindset and Academic Stress to Student Academic Procrastination	Quantitative	There is a significant contribution between growth mindset and academic stress simultaneously to academic procrastination among university students.
8.	Shalini, 2021	A Study on Academic Stress and Growth Mindset among Graduate and Post Graduate Students of Social Work – An Indo African Study	Quantitative	Students experience a lot of pressure and lectures need to play an active role in helping students develop a growth mindset, so that they remain persistent and resilient in facing academic stress.
9.	Zhang, 2022	What Characterises an Effective Mindset Intervention in Enhancing Students' Learning? A Systematic Literature Review	Systematic Review	Growth mindset interventions can reduce academic stress.
10.	Tormon et al., 2023	Predicting Academic Performance in First-Year Engineering Students: The Role of Stress, Resiliency, Student Engagement, and Growth Mindset	Quantitative	Growth mindset influences the dynamics of academic stress, where higher student engagement increases stress, indicating that managing a growth mindset can help mitigate the negative effects of academic pressure on performance.
11.	Laily & Fauzan 2023	Making Growth Mindset as Solution for the Achievement Gap in Education in Indonesia	Qualitative	The results of this study indicate that individuals with a growth mindset believe they can improve through their efforts and dedication. This can help reduce the academic achievement gap in Indonesia.
12.	Saepudin, 2024	Systematic Literature Review (SLR): The Importance of Growth Mindset Equipment Which is Less Implemented Among Student	Systematic Literature Review	Growth mindset has a very important role in helping university students face academic challenges and navigate life in an era full of uncertainty, such as the VUCA era.
13.	Nazari & Far, 2019	The Relationship between Teaching Skills, Academic Emotion, Academic Stress and Mindset in University Student Academic Achievement Prediction: A PLS-SEM Approach	Quantitative	Growth mindset has a significant influence in moderating the relationship between academic stress and negative emotions on university students' academic achievement. Students with a growth mindset can manage academic pressure and demonstrate higher academic resilience than students with a fixed mindset. In addition, lectures teaching skills and positive emotions also contribute significantly to academic achievement, but their impact is significant among students who have a growth mindset. Conversely, students with a fixed mindset, academic stress has a negative impact on learning achievement.
14.	Aulia et al., 2025	The Role of Growth Mindset and Academic Stress on	Quantitative	Growth mindset and academic stress jointly have an impact on university students subjective well-being.

No.	Author and Year	Title	Research Method	Result
		Subjective Well-Being among College Students		
15.	Reskido, 2023	Resilience and Growth Mindset as Solution to increase Maturity Student Careers in the VUCA Era	Literature Review	Students experience physical and mental health problems, such as stress, anxiety, fear, and worry. One of the causes is because of demands. Therefore, students need to have a growth mindset and resilience to be able to face various challenges in the VUCA era.
16.	Jiang et al. ,2023	Growth Mindset: An Umbrella for Protecting Socially Stressed Adolescents Life Satisfaction	Quantitative	Growth mindset not only helps academic performance but also serves as protective factor against stress, emotional problems, and life satisfaction.
17.	Zhao et al., 2021	Growth Mindset and College Students Learning Engagement during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A serial Mediation Model	Quantitative	Growth mindset is negatively correlated with academic stress, indicating that individuals with a growth mindset tend to experience lower levels of academic stress. Growth mindset also positively influenced learning engagement highlighting its role in reducing academic stress during the pandemic.
18.	Nieuwenhuis et al. ,2023	Growth Mindset and School Burnout Symptoms in Young Adolescents: The Role of Vagal Activity as Potential Mediator	Quantitative	Growth mindset is associated with symptoms of school burnout in early adolescent, indicating that it can serve as protective factor against academic stress, enhancing resilience and adaptive self-regulation strategies in coping with academic pressure.
19.	Adelina et al., 2021	<i>Systematic Literature Review on Mindset and the Benefits in Living New Normal Life</i>	Literature Review	Growth mindset plays an important role in determining how individuals appraise and respond to stress, especially in high presure situations such a the COVID-19 pandemic. Individuals with a growth mindset tend to perceive stress as a challenge that can foster growth, use active and adaptive coping strategies, and experience more positive psychological impacts, such as positive emotions and higher life satisfaction. Conversely, individuals with a fixed mindset are more vulnerable to stress, exhibit negative emotions, and are more likely to use avoidant coping strategies, which negatively affect their mental health and well-being.
20.	Brecko, 2024	Mindset and Academic Performance	Literature Review	Growth mindset positively affects academic performance, indicating that students with a growth mindset can better manage academic stress. With a growth mindset, they are more willing to accept challenges and persevere through difficulties than those with a fixed mindset.

### 3.1 The Relationship between Growth Mindset and Academic Stress

Based on this literature review, it was found that growth mindset has a negative relationship with academic stress among university students, meaning that students who have a growth mindset tend to experience lower levels of academic stress. This indicates that a growth mindset an important role in reducing academic stress (Zhao et al., 2021; Zhang, 2022; Supriyadi et al., 2023; Calo et al., 2024; Khilma & Utami, 2024; Meyer & Stutts, 2024). This is consistent with the research of Supriyadi et al. (2023) and Khilma & Utami (2024) which show that students with a high growth mindset are more able to think positively, optimistically, and see difficulties as challenges that can be overcome, resulting in lower levels of academic stress. Research by Zhang (2022) also states that interventions aimed at enhancing a growth mindset can make a significant contribution to reducing academic stress. Thus, the relationship between a growth mindset and academic stress is negative, where the higher the growth mindset, the lower the academic stress.

### **3.2 Growth Mindset as a Protective Factor Against Academic Stress**

Several studies have shown that a growth mindset as a protective factor that helps university students cope with academic stress. Individuals with a growth mindset tend to view challenges as opportunities to learn and grow, making them better able to manage academic stress. Research by Mosanya (2020) and Meyer & Stutts (2024) states that with a growth mindset thinking students remain motivated despite facing difficulties, which in turn can reduce academic stress. In addition, research by Mosanya (2020) and Zhao et al. (2021) state that a growth mindset as a protective factor that helps students cope with academic stress. Research by Kim (2020) and Calo et al. (2024) states that a growth mindset is closely related to grit and resilience, which contribute to students ability to cope with academic stress. In addition, research by Reskido (2023) states that a growth mindset as a protective factor for students in dealing with academic stress. Thus, a growth mindset as a protective factor that can help reduce academic stress and strengthen students' mental resilience in stressful situations.

### **3.3 Dynamics of the Relationship between Growth Mindset and Academic Stress**

The relationship between a growth mindset and academic stress is dynamic because it can be influenced by various conditions and contexts faced by students. Several studies indicate that although a growth mindset plays an important role in reducing academic stress there are certain situations that can increase pressure, such as high levels of academic engagement. Research by Tormon et al. (2023) found that the higher students' engagement in academic activities, the greater their potential for academic stress, however a growth mindset helps mitigate the negative impact of academic stress. Research by Adelina et al. (2021) states that individuals with a growth mindset tend to perceive stress as a challenge that stimulates growth rather not as a threat, making them more capable of using adaptive coping strategies.

### **3.4 The Role of Moderator and Mediator Variables in the Relationship between Growth Mindset and Academic Stress**

The relationship between growth mindset and academic stress is not linear, instead it is influenced by various moderator and mediator variables that affect the strength and direction of this relationship. Several previous studies have found that students emotions play an important role as a mediator, where a growth mindset helps suppress the influence of negative emotions on academic stress, so that students are better able to cope with academic stress (Nazari, N., & Far, 2019). In addition, student engagement is also an important variable, as revealed by Tormon et al. (2023) which shows that high academic engagement can increase academic stress, however its negative impact can be minimized with a growth mindset. Research by Nieuwenhuis et al. (2023) found psychological variables, such as self-regulation ability mediate the relationship between growth mindset and symptoms of academic burnout, which are closely related to academic stress. These findings indicate that growth mindset and academic stress are complex, as they are influenced by psychological and behavioral factors that act as mediators and moderators in this process.

## **4. DISCUSSIONS**

The results of the literature review show that growth mindset has an important role in helping students reduce academic stress. Most studies conclude that students with a growth mindset tend to be better able to interpret challenges as learning opportunities, rather than as threats or failures, so they tend to experience lower academic stress. These findings are in line with research by Mosanya (2020), Zhao et al. (2021), Zhang (2022), Supriyadi et al. (2023), Calo et al. (2024), Khilma & Utami (2024), Meyer & Stutts (2024) which consistently show a negative relationship between growth mindset and academic stress. However, this relationship is not simple but is influenced by other variables that act as mediators and moderators. Negative emotions, students engagement, and self-regulation are important variables that mediate or moderate this relationship (Nazari & Far, 2019; Tormon et al., 2023; Nieuwenhuis et al., 2023). However, the discussion in several studies remains limited because it does not thoroughly explain how a growth mindset can affect academic stress based on existing theories of psychological, such as motivation theory and emotion regulation theory. This indicates that a growth mindset not only functions directly to reduce academic stress but also plays a key role in helping students manage other psychological factors that contribute to academic stress. Therefore, further research is needed that is more in-depth and comprehensive, involves more factors and explores other psychological variables that may play a role in the relationship between growth mindset and academic stress.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the 20 articles analysed, most studies indicate that a growth mindset plays an important and significant role in reducing academic stress among university students. These findings are consistent across various research approaches, including quantitative, qualitative, and systematic review. Students with a growth mindset are known to help view challenges as part of the learning and growth process, tend to be more capable of using adaptive coping strategies, and do not give up easily when facing difficulties, resulting in lower levels of academic stress. However, the relationship between growth mindset and academic stress is dynamic and influenced by various mediator and moderator variables, such as emotions, student engagement, and self-regulation. Interventions aimed at enhancing a growth mindset have been proven effective in reducing academic stress while also improving students' well-being and motivation. These findings suggest the importance of growth mindset in higher education settings a preventive and intervention strategy to help students cope with academic stress and enhance their academic success.

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