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Growth Mindset and Academic Resilience: The Mediating Role of Academic Stress Management

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ABSTRACT

Academic demands on high school students are growing more complex, which may raise their stress levels and erode their capacity to keep going in their studies. Academic resilience is a key psychological construct that enables students to respond adaptively to such pressure. This research examined the direct effect of growth mindset on academic resilience as well as its indirect effect via academic stress management. A correlational survey with a quantitative approach was carried out among 250 high school students (SMA/SMK/equivalent) recruited by stratified random sampling. Responses to a Likert-type questionnaire were analysed with Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), first by assessing the measurement model for validity and reliability and then by examining the structural model for direct and indirect paths. Every construct showed satisfactory validity and reliability. Growth mindset exerted a positive, significant effect on both academic stress management and academic resilience, and academic stress management in turn significantly predicted academic resilience. Academic stress management was also found to partially mediate the link between growth mindset and academic resilience, and the model displayed strong explanatory power for students' academic resilience. The study concludes that growth mindset contributes meaningfully to high school students' academic resilience, particularly when students are also able to manage academic stress effectively. These results point to the value of integrative educational psychology interventions that build students' mindset and stress-management skills together in order to strengthen their academic resilience.

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1. INTRODUCTION

High school students today face academic demands that are becoming more varied and complicated. Large amounts of coursework, continual assessment, and pressure to perform at their best have become part of everyday school life [1]. Under these

circumstances, academic stress is common among students, and when it is poorly handled it can undermine their ability to persevere and to adjust well to schooling [2]. Academic resilience is therefore a crucial psychological construct, because it captures how well students bounce back from setbacks, cope with academic pressure, and stay engaged in learning in spite of the obstacles they meet [3], [4].

Recent studies show that academic resilience plays a considerable part in students' achievement, psychological well-being, and long-term motivation to learn [5], [6]. Highly resilient students generally regulate their emotions better, rely on adaptive ways of coping, and keep trying longer when schoolwork becomes difficult [7]. Finding out which psychological factors build and sustain academic resilience has thus become a major concern in present-day educational psychology.

Growth mindset is one internal factor that has repeatedly been linked to academic resilience. It refers to the belief that intelligence and cognitive ability are not fixed but can be developed through effort, good learning strategies, and ongoing learning experiences [8]. People who hold this belief see difficulty and failure as a normal part of learning instead of a sign of some built-in personal shortcoming [9]. Many empirical studies have found growth mindset to be a strong predictor of academic resilience at various levels of schooling and in different cultures [10], [11].

Recent evidence further suggests that growth mindset does not shape academic resilience only through a direct route. Some studies show that it strengthens resilience by way of internal psychological processes, for example grit and learning motivation [12], [13]. Other work similarly reports an indirect effect of growth mindset on academic resilience through higher achievement motivation and related psychological factors [14]. Mediating psychological variables therefore need to be taken into account to explain fully how growth mindset supports students' academic resilience.

In this framework, academic stress management stands out as a mediator that is both relevant and well suited to the situation of high school students. The term describes a person's ability to recognise where academic stress comes from, control cognitive and emotional reactions, and apply adaptive coping when facing school demands [15]. Students who hold a growth mindset tend to regard stress as a challenge they can overcome, which helps them handle academic pressure in a more constructive way [16], [17].

The recent literature suggests that good stress management markedly strengthens academic resilience, particularly in post-pandemic and technology-based learning settings [18]–[20]. Changes in teaching during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the move to online classes, placed greater demands on students' ability to adapt and made stress management a decisive factor in maintaining resilience [21]. Even so, few studies have explicitly tested whether academic stress management mediates the link between growth mindset and academic resilience in high school students, and such studies are especially rare in Asian and developing-country school settings.

To address this gap, the present research examines how growth mindset affects the academic resilience of high school students, with academic stress management as the mediator. Theoretically, the study is expected to advance mindset-based psychological models of academic resilience. Practically, it offers guidance for teachers and schools in

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planning programmes that reinforce growth mindset and stress management as a way of raising students' academic resilience.

2. METHOD

A correlational survey design within a quantitative approach was adopted. This choice made it possible to test hypothesised causal paths among latent constructs empirically, including the part played by a mediating variable within a structural model [22]. A survey was used because it gathers data from many respondents efficiently, allowing the psychological condition of high school students to be represented accurately.

The participants were students attending senior high schools (SMA/SMK/equivalent). They were selected through stratified random sampling, a probability technique chosen so that respondents would represent the various grade levels and school types. Sample size was set following SEM-PLS guidance, which calls for at least ten times the number of indicators of the construct with the largest number of indicators [22]. On this basis, 250 respondents were targeted, a number regarded as sufficient for stable and dependable parameter estimates.

Three variables were examined: growth mindset (independent), academic resilience (dependent), and academic stress management (mediator). The model was built to test the direct path from growth mindset to academic resilience and the indirect path running through academic stress management [23], [24]. Such a design follows current advice in psychological research to use mediation models when exploring the processes behind relationships between variables, notably in studies of academic motivation and adjustment [25].

Data were gathered with a closed questionnaire using a five-point Likert format from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The items were adapted from scales whose validity and reliability had already been established in earlier studies. Growth mindset was assessed with an academic mindset scale derived from the framework in [26], which captures students' beliefs that their abilities can grow through effort and learning.

Academic resilience was assessed with the Academic Resilience Scale (ARS-30), which taps students' resilience, perseverance, and adaptability when dealing with academic difficulties [3]. Academic stress management was assessed with an instrument covering perceived academic stress, the capacity to control emotional and cognitive reactions, and adaptive coping strategies [2], [15]. Each instrument underwent forward–backward translation and contextual adaptation following the guidelines in [27].

With permission from the schools, the questionnaire was distributed online through a digital survey platform. Respondents first received information about the purpose and procedure of the study and were assured that their data would be kept confidential. Taking part was voluntary and anonymous, consistent with the ethical standards of psychological research.

SEM-PLS analysis was performed in SmartPLS. This technique was selected because it handles complex structural models, does not assume normally distributed data, and fits predictive as well as exploratory work in educational psychology. The analysis proceeded in two stages: assessment of the measurement (outer) model and assessment of

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the structural (inner) model. In the first stage, convergent validity was checked through factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE), followed by discriminant validity and construct reliability using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. In the second stage, the path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and significance of the mediation path were examined through bootstrapping. The mediation analysis, carried out in line with recent practice in quantitative psychology, clarified how far academic stress management links growth mindset to academic resilience.

Ethical principles were observed throughout the study: participants gave informed consent, their data were kept confidential, and the data were used only for academic purposes. Because no direct intervention was involved, risks to participants were judged to be minimal.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Sample Characteristics and Adequacy

The sample comprised 250 students from SMA/SMK/equivalent schools, chosen through stratified random sampling. This figure is above the minimum suggested for SEM-PLS, giving enough statistical power to test the paths among latent constructs. The parameter estimates can therefore be regarded as stable, and the findings may be generalised, within limits, to high school students with comparable characteristics.

3.2. Measurement Model (Outer Model) Assessment

The measurement model was assessed to confirm that the instrument captured the latent constructs in a valid and reliable way. Every indicator of the three variables loaded above 0.70, satisfying the requirement for convergent validity. In addition, all constructs had AVE values higher than 0.50, which means each construct accounted for over half of the variance in its indicators.

Table 1. Construct Validity and Reliability

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Growth Mindset	0.89	0.92	0.65
Academic Stress Management	0.91	0.93	0.68
Academic Resilience	0.90	0.93	0.67

Table 1 shows Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values above 0.70 for every variable, pointing to excellent internal consistency. Such high reliability means the instrument yields stable and consistent scores. The fairly high AVE values of the three variables also show that their indicators represent the constructs well. All variables thus satisfy the validity and reliability requirements and are fit for the structural model analysis.

3.3. Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

With the measurement model meeting the required standards, the structural model was then evaluated to judge its predictive power, using the R^2 values of the endogenous variables.

turnitin Page 10 of 17 - Integrity Submission Submission ID trn:oid:::1309:155425094

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Table 2. R^2 of the Endogenous Variables

Endogenous Variables	R^2	Interpretation
Academic Stress Management	0.47	Moderate
Academic Resilience	0.62	Strong

For academic stress management, $R^2 = 0.47$, meaning that growth mindset accounts for 47% of the variation in how well students manage academic stress. Growth mindset is thus an important predictor of the way students handle academic pressure. For academic resilience, $R^2 = 0.62$, so growth mindset and academic stress management together account for 62% of its variation, an amount regarded as strong explanatory power. The model therefore predicts well and is theoretically meaningful for explaining high school students' academic resilience.

3.4. Direct Effects among Variables

The hypotheses were tested through bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples so that the path coefficient estimates would be robust. Every path in the model turned out positive and statistically significant.

Table 3. Direct Path Coefficients

Relationship between variables	Path Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value
Growth Mindset → Academic Stress Management	0.69	11.82	<0.001
Growth Mindset → Academic Resilience	0.31	4.76	<0.001
Academic Stress Management → Academic Resilience	0.54	8.94	<0.001

The strongest path ran from growth mindset to academic stress management (β = 0.69), showing that growth mindset has a powerful influence on students' capacity to manage academic stress. Students who believe they can develop their abilities therefore tend to respond more adaptively to academic pressure. Growth mindset also had a significant, though moderate, direct effect on academic resilience (β = 0.31). Academic stress management, for its part, had a strong effect on academic resilience (β = 0.54), underscoring how much stress-management skills matter for students' academic resilience.

3.5. Mediating Role of Academic Stress Management

An indirect effect analysis with bootstrapping was performed to examine the psychological mechanism that connects growth mindset with academic resilience.

Table 4. Indirect Effect (Mediation) Test

Mediation Path	β Indirect	t-value	p-value
Growth Mindset → Stress Management → Academic Resilience	0.37	7.26	<0.001

turnitin Page 11 of 17 - Integrity Submission Submission ID trn:oid:::1309:155425094

turnitin Page 12 of 17 - Integrity Submission Submission ID trn:oid:::1309:155425094

As Table 4 indicates, growth mindset has a positive and significant indirect effect on academic resilience through academic stress management. The mediation coefficient of 0.37 implies that the greater part of growth mindset's influence on academic resilience passes through students' capacity to manage academic stress. Since the direct path from growth mindset to academic resilience is still significant, academic stress management functions as a partial mediator. This result supports the study's conceptual model, in which growth mindset affects academic resilience both directly and by way of adaptive stress regulation.

The findings show that growth mindset has a significant positive effect on academic resilience, both directly and through academic stress management. This means that students' belief that abilities can grow through effort, learning strategies, and experience serves as a psychological resource that helps them cope with academic stress. As noted in [8], people with a growth mindset regard ability not as a fixed trait but as a capacity that keeps developing through learning. Failing academically is then read not as proof of incompetence but as feedback that can guide better learning strategies next time.

From a psychological standpoint, this link can be understood through shifts in cognitive appraisal under stress. According to the Stress, Appraisal, and Coping theory described in [28], how a person reacts to stress depends largely on how they appraise the event. Facing tests, piling assignments, or disappointing grades, students begin with a primary appraisal, judging whether the situation is a threat or a challenge. They then make a secondary appraisal, judging whether they have enough resources to meet the demand.

A growth mindset shapes both appraisals. Believing that ability can develop makes students more inclined to see academic difficulty as a challenge to overcome than as a threat to avoid. The same belief also raises their sense of efficacy as learners, so they feel capable of improving their results through continued effort. Academic pressure then turns into motivation to learn better instead of growing into maladaptive stress. This process is consistent with the account by Yeager and Dweck [9], according to which a growth mindset operates mainly by altering how people react to setbacks, criticism, and failure, so that their motivation and engagement in learning are sustained.

This altered perception of academic pressure in turn affects how students manage academic stress. Students with a growth mindset more often adopt problem-focused coping, for instance by setting study priorities, organising their time better, asking teachers or classmates for help when they struggle, and reviewing learning strategies that are not working. By contrast, when ability is seen as fixed, failure is quickly taken as a sign of incompetence, which encourages avoiding tasks, putting things off, or giving up in the face of difficulty. These contrasting ways of thinking thus produce different emotional and behavioural regulation strategies, which ultimately decide how much academic stress students feel.

The study shows that academic stress management acts as the psychological mechanism that connects growth mindset with academic resilience. Growth mindset therefore does not raise resilience automatically; its effect depends on how well students handle their reactions to academic pressure. Students who can identify what stresses them, control their emotional reactions, keep their learning goals in view, and select adaptive

turnitin Page 12 of 17 - Integrity Submission Submission ID trn:oid:::1309:155425094

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problem-solving strategies are more able to remain engaged in learning despite obstacles. Stress management, in short, is a self-regulatory process that turns positive beliefs about one's abilities into adaptive behaviour when academic demands arise.

This capacity is ultimately expressed as academic resilience, that is, the capacity to keep going, recover from failure, and sustain strong academic engagement and performance under learning pressure [29]. Resilient students do more than recover from bad academic experiences; they also treat them as chances to refine their learning strategies and build their competence. Accordingly, the present findings suggest that fostering a growth mindset at school can raise academic resilience by helping students manage stress adaptively.

Beyond these theoretical arguments, the interpretation is supported by the SEM-PLS evaluation, in which every construct satisfied the recommended validity and reliability criteria. The relationships among growth mindset, academic stress management, and academic resilience are therefore grounded not only in solid theory but also in sound measurement, which makes the resulting inferences highly dependable [30].

The structural analysis reveals that growth mindset contributes substantially to students' ability to manage academic stress. Compared with people holding a fixed mindset, those who believe intellectual ability can be improved through effort and suitable learning strategies usually react more adaptively to academic demands [11], [31]. This is in keeping with the transactional model of stress and coping, in which reactions to stress depend heavily on cognitive appraisal, namely how people judge the demands before them and the resources available to meet those demands [28]. Students with a growth mindset are thus more inclined to treat academic demands as challenges they can handle than as threats. Such appraisal promotes more adaptive coping, including studying, planning, solving problems, and regulating emotions [15], [16], [32].

The results also show a direct but moderate effect of growth mindset on academic resilience. Believing that ability can be developed through effort helps students stay persistent, academically optimistic, and brave when learning does not go well, all of which are central features of academic resilience [10], [12]. Yet the moderate size of the effect implies that growth mindset is not the only factor behind academic resilience. Resilience also depends on other psychological processes, for example self-regulation, self-efficacy, social support, and the adaptive management of academic stress [7], [18], [24].

A central finding of the study is that academic stress management strongly predicts academic resilience. Students who handle academic stress well show a stronger capacity to recover from failure, stay motivated, and adjust to shifting academic demands [5], [18]. This adds to the empirical evidence that regulating stress is vital for building academic resilience, since it allows students to keep functioning adaptively when pressure and evaluation are intense [18], [20].

The study's most important contribution is showing that academic stress management partially mediates the relationship between growth mindset and academic resilience. This offers empirical evidence that growth mindset affects resilience both directly and via students' capacity to manage academic stress adaptively. The study thereby

turnitin Page 14 of 17 - Integrity Submission Submission ID trn:oid:::1309:155425094

deepens our understanding of the psychological processes connecting growth mindset with academic resilience, especially among secondary school students.

From a theoretical angle, the results fit the self-regulated learning framework, according to which people with a growth mindset are more driven to set learning goals, track their progress, review their strategies, and adjust when they run into learning difficulties. Such self-regulation then strengthens their capacity to manage stress and stay engaged in learning despite academic obstacles [33], [34]. Consistently, a meta-analysis of growth mindset research found that belief in the malleability of ability is closely tied to stronger self-regulation, persistence, and adaptive learning strategies, which together help individuals succeed when facing academic challenges [31].

The findings further indicate that academic stress management is the operational mechanism through which growth mindset influences academic resilience. Put differently, growth mindset supplies the belief that learning difficulties are chances to grow, while stress-management ability allows that belief to be turned into adaptive action under academic pressure. As a result, students are better able to stay motivated, keep their emotional reactions in check, and recover after learning setbacks. The study also lends empirical support to conceptual models that treat self-regulation and emotion regulation as the processes through which growth mindset leads to a range of positive academic outcomes [23], [31], [32].

4. CONCLUSION

The study offers strong empirical support for the view that growth mindset raises academic resilience both directly and through academic stress management, which acts as a partial mediator. Changing mindset is therefore not enough by itself to build resilience; how effective it is depends on whether students can regulate their reactions to academic stress with adaptive coping. The main contribution of the study lies in establishing academic stress management as a psychological mechanism that explains the growth mindset–academic resilience relationship, thereby enriching educational psychology models that combine the Implicit Theory of Intelligence, the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, and Self-Regulated Learning. It also follows that school interventions are likely to work better when growth mindset training is paired with the development of academic stress-management skills, so that students become more resilient to increasingly complex academic demands.

Schools are advised to design integrated programmes that pair the strengthening of growth mindset with training in academic stress management. Such integration matters because growth mindset provides the cognitive foundation, whereas academic stress management is the practical skill through which students put their academic resilience into practice. Teaching programmes and counselling services should aim not only at academic achievement but also at building emotion-regulation skills, adaptive coping, and resilience to learning setbacks. Future studies are encouraged to adopt longitudinal or experimental designs to probe the causal dynamics among the variables more deeply and to consider further contextual factors, such as social support, school climate, and self-regulation. A more comprehensive model would deepen understanding of what drives academic

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turnitin Page 15 of 17 - Integrity Submission Submission ID trn:oid:::1309:155425094

resilience and provide a firmer scientific basis for evidence-based educational policy and practice across cultures and levels of schooling.

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turnitin Page 16 of 17 - Integrity Submission Submission ID trn:oid:::1309:155425094

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