

Examining the Growth Mindset Among Academics at Private Higher Educational Institutions (PHEIs) in Sabah, Malaysia: A Quantitative Study

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ABSTRACT

Growth mindset or the belief that intelligence and abilities can be developed through dedication and effort is vital for Malaysian academics because it fosters academic resilience, enhances adaptability in the fast-paced digital economy, and helps overcome anxieties around complex issues. Adopting this perspective is crucial for Malaysia's socioeconomic development, directly impacting several principal areas of higher education, including science, technology, and entrepreneurship. The purpose of this study was to examine the growth mindset among academics at private higher educational institutions (PHEIs) in Sabah, Malaysia. The sample comprised 61 academics from four PHEIs in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, who completed the Growth versus Fixed Mindset Assessment on Google Forms. Data were subsequently transferred onto a spreadsheet and analyzed using SPSS 29.0. First, findings showed that below average proportions (52.5 to 58.8 percent) of academics tend to strongly agree/agree on eight of the items, while average proportions (72.1 to 83.6 percent) of them tend to strongly agree/agree on 12 of the items. Additionally, Mann-Whitney U test indicated nonsignificant gender differences in growth mindset, while Kruskal-Wallis H test showed nonsignificant differences by way of age and job experience. Besides, Wilcoxon signed rank test indicated that 16 of the growth mindset items were significantly different from the hypothesized median value of 3.5 at $p < .001$, while four of the items were significantly different from the hypothesized median value of 3.5 at $p < .05$. Findings imply that only below average to average proportions of PHEI academics tend to

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possess a high growth mindset. In light of the findings, several recommendations were made on ways to enhance academics' growth mindset in Sabah, Malaysia.

1. Introduction

In her extensive research on achievement and success, psychologist Carol Dweck identified two types of mindsets, namely, fixed mindset and growth mindset. Individuals with a fixed mindset tend to believe that their qualities and talents are unchangeable, while asserting that talent is a prerequisite for success. In contrast, those with a growth mindset maintain that most fundamental abilities can be nurtured through perseverance and dedication. To advance their educational and career potential, it is more pragmatic for teachers to leverage a growth mindset to achieve goals and gain self-improvement, while modeling that mindset to their school community. On the other hand, curriculum and instruction leaders need to support and engender a school-wide growth mindset to help create a culture of meaningful learning and engagement, continuous improvement, and achievement for both teachers and students (Dweck, 2014; Northwest Missouri State University, 2024).

Dweck (2014) asserted that teachers' growth mindset fundamentally shapes classroom dynamics and student achievement. Teachers with a growth mindset believe that their instructional skills can be developed through diligence and reflection, persevering when they feel overwhelmed, while pushing themselves to continuously refine their pedagogic practices. Additionally, they believe in students' universal potential, fostering classrooms where even the low-achieving can thrive. In contrast, teachers with a fixed mindset believe that students' intelligence is unchangeable; they often engage in ability grouping and form limiting self-fulfilling prophecies (Dweck, 2014; 2016).

In their study, Ronkainen, Kuusisto, and Tirri (2019) investigated how a growth mindset was actualized in a first-grade teacher's classroom through classroom observations, videotaping, and stimulated recall interviews. Findings revealed that the teacher tends to actualize a growth mindset by providing critical feedback in the form of "not yet", which gradually changes students' fixed mindset behavior. The teacher's growth mindset also tends to manifest in the class as a whole, fostering students' process-focused thinking with concrete and immediate praise, indicating high expectations. Findings imply that the "not yet" concept allows teachers to give constructive feedback using the phrase, framing learning obstacles as a temporary stage rather than a permanent inability, gradually modifying students' attitudes. Through process-focused thinking, teachers with a growth mindset actively steer away from trait-based views of intelligence by providing immediate, concrete praise for students' effort, courage, and learning strategies.

In their investigation, Hecht, Bryan, and Yeager (2023) examined the impact of an online intervention aimed at promoting growth-mindset communication practices among high school teachers. Findings showed that the intervention program tends to have a positive impact on teachers; they tend to show greater intentions to adopt the suggested growth mindset-supportive practices, besides demonstrating higher levels of growth mindset beliefs about their students. Additionally, the intervention tends to have a positive impact on students' passing rates and grades, besides reducing inequality between the socioeconomically disadvantaged and privileged. Findings imply that cost-effective growth mindset training can motivate teachers to adopt new practices that support

academic outcomes among the underserved and disadvantaged, creating a more equitable learning environment.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The concept of growth mindset has received little attention in Malaysia (Lim et al., 2026). Growth mindset research among academics is crucial in the Malaysian higher education context because it shifts their focus from innate intelligence to effort and resilience. By having confidence that their pedagogic and research skills can be enhanced, they can improve their job performance, while enhancing students' academic engagement. More research is needed to highlight the significance of growth mindset among Malaysian academics, who need to demonstrate specific behaviors and approaches that translate directly into positive teaching and learning outcomes. Growth mindset research will inspire academics to become better equipped to handle strenuous job demands, manage diverse classrooms and unexpected behavioral issues, face daily obstacles as opportunities to learn and adapt, experiment with new teaching strategies, and focus on increasing their own competencies and intellectual engagement.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The study was significant because findings would highlight the role of growth mindset in influencing academics' perceptions of tertiary teaching and learning. They would develop greater understanding about the learning process, practicing specific learning strategies, and display continuous effort rather than focusing only on innate talent. They would also learn to treat mistakes as useful data, destigmatizing failure by discussing their own professional hurdles and reframing errors as opportunities for cognitive and emotional adjustment. Additionally, findings would encourage academics to develop a growth mindset to better participate in peer-collaborative pedagogical training and actively adapt to new teaching technologies. Moreover, this study would increase academics' understanding on the underlying mechanisms of how students learn and react to struggle, while helping shape better curricular designs and support systems. Lastly, findings could offer a framework to policymakers and curriculum planners to develop culturally appropriate growth mindset programs to help academics respond constructively to mistakes, build resilience, decrease anxiety, and close achievement gaps. The purpose of this study was to examine the growth mindset among academics at PHEIs in Sabah, Malaysia.

1.3. Research Questions

Three research questions are formulated to anchor this educational study, define the scope of the survey, determine the most appropriate methodology, and allocate sufficient time on relevant data collection. Well-formulated, they directly guide the research toward evidence-based solutions that help academics improve teaching and learning outcomes. The research questions are foundational because they act as an operational guide, keeping the project tightly constrained to a specific topic (academics' growth mindset), and help determine the most suitable data-collection technique. The research questions are as follows:

- i. Are there any significant differences in academics' perceptions of growth mindset by way of gender, age, and job experience?
- ii. Are there any significant differences in academics' perceptions of growth mindset

- based on a hypothesized value of 3.5?
- iii. What are the descriptive statistics on academics' perceptions of growth mindset, and what do they imply?

2. Review of Literature

The literature review positions growth mindset research within the broader academic conversation, showing how the current study relates to previous studies. It enables the writers to evaluate what has already been done, uncover unanswered questions, controversies, or limitations, providing a roadmap for their study. It also helps them refine the research questions, clarifying, and specifying them. Lastly, it highlights the most prevalent theories, methodologies, and models related to growth mindset, helping the writers design a robust methodology for the study.

2.1. Benefits and Characteristics of a Growth Mindset

According to King (2024), a growth mindset benefits academics in three ways, helping them face obstacles, while adapting to the ever-changing educational landscape. First, a growth mindset enhances academics' adaptability, allowing them to handle difficulties with resilience, which helps them adequately adapt to a constantly evolving educational landscape. Second, a growth mindset enables them to pursue continuous improvement, exploring new strategies and methods. It motivates them to engage in lifelong learning, often leading to improved teaching practices, as they are more likely to seek professional development, attend workshops, and collaborate with peers. Third, academics with a growth mindset often experience increased job satisfaction, appreciate their work more, and manage their job demands better, which ultimately reduces burnout, lowers turnover rates, and promotes staff retention.

Asserting that their abilities can change, teachers with a growth mindset are more likely to embrace challenges and persevere when faced with setbacks. They often learn or improve from feedback, albeit negative, which enhances their teaching practices and sets a positive example for their students. Besides perceiving feedback as a useful tool for improvement, they also tend to be open to constructive criticism, using it to refine their pedagogy. In contrast, teachers who lack a growth mindset tend to view feedback, albeit constructive, as a personal attack or confirmation of their limitations, which can lead to defensiveness or disengagement (King, 2024). Additionally, teachers who model a growth mindset often create an environment that encourages students to build persistence and engage more deeply in their learning, believing that they can develop their skills and abilities through effort and learning and viewing adversities as valuable opportunities for improvement. They regard their abilities as malleable and changeable, which often leads them to take calculated risks and welcome novel classroom approaches (King, 2024).

Moreover, teachers with a growth mindset usually approach challenges with a development-focused perspective. Besides being open to experimenting with new strategies, they are likely to tackle barriers and obstacles promptly, recognizing that struggle is an integral part of the learning process. In contrast, teachers who lack a growth mindset tend to avoid hurdles, often fearing failure or predicting that they are unlikely to succeed (King, 2024). Besides, teachers with a growth mindset encourage collaboration among colleagues. Believing in their ability to grow, they are more likely to share ideas, seek help from colleagues, and participate in professional learning communities.

Conversely, teachers without a growth mindset often hesitate to collaborate, perceiving that sharing their struggles could expose their weaknesses (King, 2024). Lastly, teachers with a growth mindset are likely to engage in ongoing professional development, often seeking opportunities for learning and improvement, which can enhance their job performance over time. However, teachers with a fixed mindset often become stagnant in terms of their professional growth, which can limit their effectiveness and career advancement (King, 2024).

2.2. Math Outcomes, Student Feedback, and Students' College Experiences

In their study, Rattan, Good, and Dweck (2012) examined the impact of comfort-oriented feedback (fixed mindset) on students' math achievement. Findings showed that comfort-oriented feedback (e.g., "It's OK not to be good at math") tends to subtly convey to students that their teacher views math intelligence as a fixed trait (an entity theory) and doubts their capacity to improve. Teachers who provide comfort feedback tend to possess a conspicuously stronger fixed mindset, leading students to hold lower expectations for themselves. Findings imply that well-intentioned, kind ability-comforting feedback tends to result in several negative outcomes for students, which include (1) perceived low expectations, leading them to interpret that their teachers regard them as having low mathematical ability with immutable struggles, (2) diminished motivation, making them feel less supported, encouraged, or motivated to continue, (3) changing paths, leading them to lower their own expectations, disengage from math, and show a higher intention to switch to non-math-related fields. Instead of using comfort-oriented feedback (via a fixed mindset), teachers should demonstrate a growth mindset by providing process-oriented feedback, which focuses on specific strategies, recognizes effort, and offers actionable guidance on how students can improve their math performance.

Similarly, Good, Rattan, and Dweck (2012) examined the impact of teachers' growth mindset and educational environments on students' mathematics performance. Findings showed that students' sense of belonging is critical for their math persistence; however, women's sense of belonging in math tends to be eroded by two environmental factors that diminish their self-confidence, which include (1) the message that math ability is a fixed trait (entity theory) and (2) the comforting feedback trap. Teachers who believe that math intelligence is fixed tend to hold low expectations for female students, stereotyping that women possess less natural math ability than men. Teachers who comfort students with "it's okay, not everyone is good at math" often subtly lower women's math motivation and performance. To improve women's performance and engagement in male-dominated fields (STEM), teachers should adopt a growth mindset to significantly protect girls against harmful stereotypes, while boosting their sense of belonging and academic achievement. They should emphasize that math ability can be developed through diligence and perseverance, which promotes a higher sense of belonging, resilience, and intent to pursue further education in STEM amongst women.

In their study, de Kraker-Pauw et al. (2017) examined the impact of teachers' growth mindset on their amount and type of feedback provided to students. Findings showed that a significant negative correlation tends to exist between teachers' growth mindset and the total amount of feedback they provide. Findings imply that teachers who possess a stronger growth mindset (believing intelligence is malleable) often provide fewer total feedback interventions compared to their fixed-mindset peers. Besides, they often promote student autonomy, learning goals, and process-focused appraisal, rather than inundating students with corrective interventions. In contrast, teachers with a fixed

mindset are more likely to provide person-focused or outcome-focused feedback (e.g., emphasizing absolute grades or praising stable traits), which can hinder students' motivation to learn from mistakes.

The impact of instructor mindset (beliefs about whether intelligence is fixed or malleable) and demeanor (warm versus cold behavior) on students' college experiences was investigated by White, Olson, and Canning (2024). Findings showed that instructors with a growth mindset (who express that abilities can be developed) tend to yield significantly better student experiences, making students feel a stronger sense of belonging, display lower imposter feelings, and demonstrate greater willingness to try harder in their studies. Warm demeanor, combined with a growth mindset, tends to provide the best overall student experiences. Findings imply that students are more motivated and have better college experiences with instructors who underscore the potential or ability to grow and improve, compared to those who believe that ability is fixed and unchangeable. Lastly, while students respond best to a combination of warmth and a growth mindset, a growth mindset is still more advantageous for both warm and cold instructors, implying that growth mindset has a persistent, favorable impact on students despite distant instructor delivery.

2.3. Instructional Ability, Teaching Value, Life Satisfaction, and Lifelong Learning

In their investigation, Frondoza et al. (2022) examined the impact of growth mindset on the instructional ability among in-service teachers. Findings showed that perceived instructional ability can be developed rather than it being an innate trait, while predicting higher autonomous motivation and significantly greater work engagement in the classroom. Findings imply that growth mindset boosts overall instructional ability by (1) increasing autonomous motivation, whereby teachers with a growth mindset are driven by internal passion rather than external pressures, which leads to better lesson planning and delivery, (2) increasing teacher engagement, which translates into more dynamic, student-centered instruction and a stronger focus on mastery goals, (3) enhancing wellbeing and flow, which allows teachers to view challenges and setbacks as opportunities to improve, while supporting the sustained energy required for effective, responsive teaching.

The impact of teaching growth mindset, preparedness, student growth mindset, and mentor support on perceived value of teaching practice among preservice teachers was determined by Samuel et al. (2023). Findings showed that teaching growth mindset tends to positively mediate the relationship between perceived students' growth mindset and value of teaching practice. Findings imply that how much preservice teachers value their teaching practice tends to be indirectly influenced by students' growth mindset. Preservice teachers' own growth mindset acts as a bridge; even when their preparedness remains constant, the value they place on their teaching experience is still funneled strictly through growth mindset. Preservice teachers who adopt a teaching growth mindset can more effectively internalize student feedback, view challenges constructively, and positively value their real-world classroom experiences.

In their survey, Lee et al. (2023) examined the impact of growth mindset on teachers' life satisfaction and teaching innovativeness. Findings showed that growth mindset tends to help teachers maintain their wellbeing and adapt their teaching strategies when facing new job demands and workplace challenges. Findings imply that, compared to teachers with a fixed mindset, teachers who possess growth mindset (1) are more likely to have

higher life satisfaction, which is especially true in environments where job resources and institutional support are lacking, (2) more readily adapt to crisis, feeling more capable, displaying stronger self-efficacy, and maintaining better subjective wellbeing, and (3) display greater innovativeness, viewing challenges as opportunities for progress, which makes them more willing to innovate their pedagogical approaches.

Lastly, Luo, Bi, and Wang (2026) examined the impact of university teachers' growth mindset and lifelong learning on their overall performance. Findings showed that, rather than acting directly, growth mindset and lifelong learning tend to boost performance by serving as a catalyst for active professional development. Findings imply that teachers who believe that their pedagogical skills and capacities can be enhanced tend to proactively engage in teaching, research, and training. Moreover, continuous participation in professional development allows them to upgrade their competencies, which strongly mediates their teaching performance. Because growth mindset, lifelong learning, and pedagogy form a continuous loop, higher educational leaders should foster a growth mindset, while providing resources for lifelong learning, which ultimately improves the quality of tertiary education.

2.4. Wellbeing, Teaching Preparedness, Agency, and Self-efficacy

The relationships among EFL teachers' growth mindset, mindfulness, grit, and wellbeing were analyzed by He et al. (2023). Findings revealed that both growth mindset and grit tend to have a direct positive influence on wellbeing. On the other hand, grit equips teachers with unwavering dedication and perseverance, helping them remain enthusiastic and committed despite the lengthy and often difficult nature of EFL instruction. Mindfulness equips teachers with conscious awareness and presence, helping them manage stress and providing a protective effect on occupational wellbeing. Findings imply that teachers with a growth mindset tend to believe that their abilities are malleable; therefore, they are more willing to overcome classroom challenges, thus experiencing higher engagement and fulfillment. Combined with mindfulness and grit, growth mindset prompts teachers to modify their pedagogic methods based on students' needs, trust, and high expectations, making students feel safe to assume academic risks.

In their study, Hermayawati and Zakiah (2024) studied the level of teachers' growth mindset and readiness to face educational challenges. Findings revealed that a majority of teachers tend to neglect most growth mindset principles and lack preparedness in facing educational challenges, besides not embedding the local cultures into their teaching. Findings imply that, while teachers recognize the importance of cultural integration, they rarely adapt to new societal or organizational environments, while maintaining aspects of their original heritage. Findings imply that schools should promote a cultural language learning approach, using local cultural heritages and wisdom (e.g., traditional houses, dances, foods) as primary teaching discourses to help ethnic communities cope with globalization, while underscoring a collaborative mindset, mentorship, and the integration of local customs and norms into the curriculum.

The impact of a school-based growth mindset program on teachers as delivery agents was determined by Morgan et al. (2024). Findings revealed that the program tends to significantly improve teachers' knowledge, confidence, and instructional practices, leading to better student learning resilience, wellbeing, and academic engagement. Findings imply that the growth mindset program tends to (1) enhance pedagogy, transitioning teachers away from traditional "command and control" methods toward

more facilitative, knowledge-constructing approaches, (2) increase instructional self-efficacy, resulting in higher levels of confidence, enthusiasm, patience, and professional empowerment among teachers, and (3) help teachers become better equipped in identifying and responding to students' specific needs.

The relationships among teachers' growth mindset, self-efficacy, and perceived meaningfulness of teaching were assessed in two separate studies by Mudrák et al. (2025). Findings revealed that, in both studies, positive relationships tend to exist between teachers' growth mindset, self-efficacy, and perceived meaningfulness of teaching. Moreover, in both studies, self-efficacy tends to significantly mediate the relationship between growth mindset and perceived values of teaching. Findings imply that growth mindset provides a framework for teachers to interpret setbacks as opportunities, which builds self-efficacy (the belief in their capacity to drive student success), ultimately leading to deeper perceived meaningfulness of teaching. Teachers who embrace a growth mindset are more willing to experiment with new pedagogical strategies, which fosters successful instructional experiences, actively boosting their confidence and self-efficacy. Lastly, with higher efficacy and a developmental cognitive framework, teachers often display a greater sense of purpose and fulfillment (meaningfulness) from their profession, allowing them to better appreciate their daily impact on students.

2.5. Students' Growth Mindset

In a study, Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck (2007) explored how middle school adolescents' beliefs about intelligence (their own mindsets) impact their mathematics achievement and academic resilience over time in two separate studies. Findings of the first study over two years revealed that students with an incremental theory of intelligence tend to believe that intelligence is malleable and can develop through effort, thus demonstrating an upward trajectory in math grades. Conversely, students with an entity theory tend to believe that intelligence is a fixed, unchangeable trait, thus displaying flat or declining grades. The second study (intervention) revealed that teaching students to adopt a growth mindset tends to improve their motivation and math grades. Findings imply that intelligence resembles a muscle that can be developed among students through intervention, who will display greater learning motivation and achieve higher math grades compared to the non-intervention group. In the face of setbacks, students with a growth mindset often view mistakes as learning opportunities, leading to increased effort, improved use of learning strategies, and greater resilience. In contrast, students with a fixed mindset often perceive failure as evidence of a lack of ability, leading to helplessness, decreased effort, and avoidance of future challenges.

On their other hand, Compagnoni, Karlen, and Merki (2019) examined the motivational frameworks of young children in relation to different mindsets. Findings revealed that trait beliefs and goal orientations tend to represent two different, but related motivational beliefs among children. Trait beliefs and goal orientations tend to have a significant impact on executive functions (EF) and classroom behavioral self-regulation (CBSR) among children. Findings imply that children with a mastery mindset (focusing on learning, skill development, and continuous self-improvement) possess better EF, whereas children with a belief in malleable traits (perceiving that traits can be developed through effort) have better CBSR. Overall, children's motivational mindsets play a crucial role in fostering behavioral self-regulation for successful adjustment to academic demands.

Additionally, Lam and Zhou (2020) explored the impact of growth mindset on undergraduate students' perseverance of effort. Findings showed that growth mindset tends to operate through a specific psychological chain, but does not directly translate into perseverance. Findings imply that growth mindset increases overall life satisfaction, with higher life satisfaction acting to decrease or buffer against perceived psychological distress among students. Reduction in perceived distress ultimately leads to a higher capacity for sustained effort and goal persistence. Undergraduates who believe in their capacity for growth display better psychological wellbeing, which subsequently offers them the emotional foundation needed to persist through challenges.

The impact of growth mindset and self-efficacy on university students' academic achievement and employability was studied by Khairudin et al. (2020). Findings revealed that growth mindset tends to be significantly related to academic achievement and employability, while self-efficacy and academic achievement were significantly related. Findings imply that students with a growth mindset (1) view difficult tasks as opportunities to learn rather than as threats to their ego, (2) persist through academic setbacks or poor grades, perceive effort as essential for mastering complex material, and (3) adopt deeper, self-regulated learning strategies. Further, students with a growth mindset have higher self-efficacy because they (1) are motivated to try harder and have the resilience to bounce back from failures, (2) believe that they actually possess the skills or can develop the skills to tackle specific challenges, and (3) synergize their self-efficacy and growth mindset to achieve ambitious goals, persist longer in the face of obstacles, and embrace constructive feedback. Lastly, students with a growth mindset have greater employability because they (1) actively solicit feedback and view constructive criticism as an essential tool for professional development rather than a personal failure, (2) believe that their skills can evolve, and are therefore, more willing to tackle new challenges, learn emerging technologies, or pivot to new roles when industry requirements shift, (3) face setbacks or rejections as a learning opportunity rather than insurmountable roadblocks, which translates directly into greater persistence during job searches, and (4) engage in job crafting by proactively reshaping their roles, building new abilities, and helping team members mutually advance.

In their investigation, Mesler, Corbin, and Martinm (2021) examined the impact of teachers' growth mindset on students' growth mindset over the school year. Findings showed that teachers with growth mindset tend to exert a statistically significant, positive impact on the development of students' growth mindset; conversely, teachers with a fixed mindset tend to negatively influence students' growth mindset development, with boys showing particular vulnerability to this effect. The educational environment also has a profound influence on students' growth mindset since classroom and school contexts account for approximately five to nine percent of the variance. Findings imply that, teachers believing that abilities can be developed, often provide encouraging feedback and build classroom environments that reinforce these beliefs among students. Teachers with growth mindset are inclined to observe students' performance over time and their attributions, in turn, can influence how they treat students and shape their mindsets themselves.

The impact of teachers' growth mindset on the relationship between students' growth mindset and academic achievement was explored by Zhang and He (2025). Findings revealed that teachers' growth mindset, together with perceived school climate support and perceived positive parental autonomy support (i.e., acknowledging the student's perspective, offering choices, providing clear reasoning for rules, and encouraging

personal exploration), tends to positively moderate the relationship between students' growth mindset and academic achievement. In contrast, perceived negative parental autonomy factors (e.g., punishment threats, performance pressure, guilt-inducing criticism) tend to negatively moderate this relationship. Findings imply that teachers' growth mindset acts as a catalyst that positively interacts with students, providing the essential guidance and encouragement that they need to translate their beliefs into academic success. Perceived school climate and perceived positive parental autonomy support, when combined with teachers' growth mindset, act as essential mechanisms to unlock students' true academic potential.

In their comparative study, Ramadhona et al. (2025) investigated the impact of growth mindset on students' academic resilience in Indonesia and Malaysia. Findings revealed that students with a pronounced growth mindset tend to demonstrate higher levels of academic resilience, evidenced by their ability to handle setbacks and maintain high motivation during difficult times. Findings imply that a strong growth mindset (1) enables students to successfully adapt, overcome, and achieve educational success despite adversity, stress, or disadvantages, (2) makes students view adversity as changeable and adopt healthier coping mechanisms, resulting in lower levels of anxiety and a better ability to reshape their response to life's inevitable stressors, and (3) motivates students to frame adversity as feedback rather than final failure, celebrating micro-wins and shifting their focus toward actionable learning.

Lastly, Lamlong, Sanrattana, and Phrasrivajiravati. (2026) examined the impact of an online teacher training program on students' growth mindset. Initial training revolved around the growth mindset theory and effective ways to enhance students' growth mindset. Subsequent training equipped teachers with the practical skills to implement growth mindset principles in the classroom, including hands-on activities, case studies, and real-life scenarios. Findings revealed significant improvements in teachers' conceptual understanding of students' growth mindset, attitudes, and learning engagement. They imply that targeted professional training significantly improves teachers' conceptual understanding of student growth mindsets, leading to positive shifts in classroom attitudes and student learning engagement.

Mindset training provides teachers with a clearer grasp of the mindset theory and its practical ways to enhance students' resilience. Moreover, it results in a positive attitude shift that enables teachers to adopt a supportive, open environment that reduces students' fear of failure. Lastly, it encourages teachers to apply growth mindset practices, leading to higher student motivation, curiosity, and participation.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design, Approach, and Location

This study adopted a quantitative design that provided a structured method to collect numerical data from a representative sample of academics in response to three research questions. A questionnaire containing standardized, closed-ended, and neutral items that are mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive was administered on Google Forms. The key component of this quantitative survey design is a cross-sectional, one-time measurement. Further, nonprobability sampling (subjective) was conducted to provide logistical ease and direct analysis of data, while instrumentation was based on a survey that was pilot tested to ensure validity and reliability. The research location was Kota

Kinabalu where most private colleges are located, making data collection more convenient, cost-effective, and time-efficient.

3.2. Sample and Justification

The sample consisted of 61 academics ($n = 61$) from four PHEIs in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, who have at least a basic degree and teach full-time at their institutions. Initially, administrators of 10 randomly selected PHEIs were invited to participate in the study via email and phone, but eventually, only four agreed to share the survey link with their staff. To get a realistic and contextually relevant sample, voluntary participation and convenient access were emphasized.

The sample was culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse and its size was justified according to the central limit theorem, which states that a minimum of 30 respondents is enough to ensure statistical power and generalizability for basic survey research (Roscoe, 1975; RUBIKTOP, 2023). Therefore, the current sample size meets the minimum requirement for quantitative research in the social sciences, particularly in terms of academics' growth mindset, while ensuring a reasonable margin of error and sufficient power to identify modest effects in the nonparametric tests that used to interpret data in the present study.

The sample consisted of 45.9 percent males and 54.1 percent females. Age-wise, 31.1 percent are 24 to 34 years old, 37.7 percent are 35 to 45 years old, 23 percent are 46 to 56 years old, and 8.2 are above 56 years old (see Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents ($n = 61$)

Profile	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	28	45.9
	Female	33	54.1
Age (years)	24-34	19	31.1
	35-45	23	37.7
	46-56	14	23
	Above 56	5	8.2
Job experience (years)	1-5	13	21.3
	6-11	8	13.1
	12-17	15	24.6
	Above 17	25	41

3.3. Instrument

The Growth versus Fixed Mindset Assessment (Dweck, 2006) was adapted to collect data. It contains 20 statements to which academics rate their agreement on a Likert scale (ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree). The statements relate to beliefs about intelligence, talent, personality, and growth ability. Overall, they assess the psychological and practical belief that intelligence, skills, and talents are not fixed (but malleable), but can be developed through dedication, diligence, and persistence.

To determine its suitability for the study, it was pilot-tested on 20 lecturers and SPSS 29.0 was used to calculate its reliability. Results showed that its Cronbach's alpha is 0.946,

indicating strong internal consistency among the items. In brief, there is high confidence that the questionnaire will measure perceived growth mindset in a concise, concordant, and reliable manner.

3.5. Data Collection and Analysis

Academics were required to complete the growth mindset assessment on Google Forms and were informed that completion of the survey was their indication of consent to voluntarily participate in the study. All academics were given informed consent in relation to the purpose of the study, its voluntary nature, and the possibility to withdraw at any time without any repercussions. To ensure confidentiality, all responses were anonymized and the data were securely stored in a strong room. Only the first author has access to the data, thus guaranteeing that they would be used solely for scholarly purposes.

Data were transferred onto a spreadsheet and subsequently analyzed using SPSS 29.0. First, percentages of agreement (agree/strongly agree) on perceived growth mindset were collapsed to gain an overall view of the construct. Second, Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted to determine if there were any significant differences in relation to age and job experience, while Mann-Whitney U test was run to determine if there were any significant differences in terms of gender. Third, Wilcoxon signed rank test was conducted to determine if any of the items significantly differed from the hypothesized value of 3.5.

4. Findings

4.1. Percentages of Agreement

Percentages of agreement (agree/strongly agree) were combined for each growth mindset item to gain an overall view of the construct. First, findings showed that below average proportions (52.5 to 58.8 percent) of academics tend to strongly agree/agree that (1) they believe that music talent can be learned by anyone, (2) people can be truly good at sports, (3) they can always substantially change how intelligent they are, (4) their intelligence is something very basic about them that they can change a lot, (5) all human beings without a brain injury are capable of the same amount of learning, and (6) no matter how much intelligence they have, they can always change it quite a bit, (7) some people are good and kind, some are not; but they can often change, and (8) no matter what kind of person they are, they can always change substantially (see Table 2).

Second, average proportions (72.1 to 83.6 percent) of academics tend to strongly agree/agree that (1) they can always change basic things about the kind of person they are (2) they can learn new things, and they can really change how intelligent they are (3) they can do things differently; the important part of who they are can also be changed (4) human beings are basically good, but sometimes make terrible decisions (5) trying new things is interesting for them and they welcome it, (6) math ability is not related to gender or culture, (7) they often feel happy/grateful when they get feedback about their performance, (8) they are a certain kind of person, but there is much that can be done to really change that, (9) even truly smart people need to try hard, (10) an important reason why they do their work is that they like to learn new things, (11) they appreciate when parents, coaches, teachers give them feedback about their performance, and (12) the harder they work at something, the better they will be at it (see Table 2).

Table 2: Percentages of Agreement on Perceived Growth Mindset

Item	1	2	3	4	5	4+5 (collapsed)
My intelligence is something very basic about me that I can change a lot	1.6	3.3	34.4	36.1	24.6	60.7
No matter how much intelligence I have, I can always change it quite a bit	1.6	3.3	27.9	39.3	27.9	67.2
I can always substantially change how intelligent I am	1.6	3.3	34.4	39.3	21.3	60.6
I am a certain kind of person, but there is much that can be done to really change that	0	1.6	21.3	45.9	31.1	77
I can always change basic things about the kind of person I am	1.6	3.3	23	42.6	29.5	72.1
I believe that music talent can be learned by anyone	8.2	9.8	29.5	21.3	31.1	52.4
People can be truly good at sports; they don't have to be born with it	8.2	6.6	32.8	29.5	23	52.5
Math ability is not related to gender or culture	0	4.9	21.3	39.3	34.4	73.7
The harder I work at something, the better I will be at it	0	3.3	13.1	49.2	34.4	83.6
No matter what kind of person I am, I can always change substantially	0	0	32.8	41	26.2	67.2
Trying new things is interesting for me and I welcome it	0	1.6	19.7	44.3	34.4	78.7
Some people are good and kind, some are not; but they can often change	0	4.9	26.2	34.4	34.4	68.8
I appreciate when parents, coaches, teachers give me feedback about my performance	0	0	19.7	41	39.3	80.3
I often feel happy/grateful when I get feedback about my performance	0	0	26.2	37.7	36.1	73.8
All human beings without a brain injury are capable of the same amount of learning	0	8.2	29.5	26.2	36.1	62.3
I can learn new things, and I can really change how intelligent I am	0	1.6	24.6	41	32.8	73.8
I can do things differently; the important part of who I am can also be changed	0	0	26.2	41	32.8	73.8
Human beings are basically good, but sometimes make terrible decisions	0	3.3	21.3	42.6	32.8	75.4
An important reason why I do my work is that I like to learn new things	0	3.3	16.4	47.5	32.8	80.3
Even truly smart people need to try hard	0	0	19.7	47.5	32.8	80.3

Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1

4.2. Nonsignificant Differences

Mann-Whitney U test indicated nonsignificant gender differences in perceived growth mindset, while Kruskal-Wallis H test showed nonsignificant differences by way of age and job experience. Results imply that any observed variations between men and women (in terms of gender, age, or job experience) are so small that they can be attributed to random

chance rather than a true, underlying difference. The nature versus nurture debate can be used to explain the nonsignificant differences in growth mindset; any small differences that exist in the construct can be caused by cultural expectations, societal pressures, early-childhood socialization, and other environmental factors, rather than hardwired biological differences (see Table 3).

Table 3: Results of Kruskal-Wallis H and Mann-Whitney U Tests

Variables	Nonparametric Test	<i>p</i> -value
Gender	Mann-Whitney U	0.137
Age (years)	Kruskal-Wallis H	0.517
Job experience (years)	Kruskal-Wallis H	0.293

4.3. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Results

Wilcoxon signed rank test indicated that 16 of the growth mindset items were significantly different from the hypothesized median value of 3.5 at $p < .001$, while four of the items were significantly different from the hypothesized median value of 3.5 at $p < .05$ (see Table 4).

Table 4: Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Results on Growth Mindset

Items	<i>p</i> -value	Conclusion
My intelligence is something very basic about me that I can change a lot	<0.003*	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
No matter how much intelligence I have, I can always change it quite a bit	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I can always substantially change how intelligent I am	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I am a certain kind of person, but there is much that can be done to really change that	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I can always change basic things about the kind of person I am.	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I believe that music talent can be learned by anyone	<0.002*	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
People can be truly good at sports; they don't have to be born with it	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
Math ability is not related to gender or culture	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
The harder I work at something, the better I will be at it	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
No matter what kind of person I am, I can always change substantially	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement

Trying new things is interesting for me and I welcome it	<0.004*	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
Some people are good and kind, some are not; but they can often change	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I appreciate when parents, coaches, teachers give me feedback about my performance	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I often feel happy/grateful when I get feedback about my performance	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
All human beings without a brain injury are capable of the same amount of learning	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I can learn new things, and I can really change how intelligent I am	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I can do things differently; the important part of who I am can also be changed	<0.002*	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
Human beings are basically good, but sometimes make terrible decisions	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
An important reason why I do my work is that I like to learn new things	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
Even truly smart people need to try hard	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement

** $p < .001$; * $p < .05$

5. Discussion

This section addresses the theoretical implications of the study, answering the fundamental "so what?" question by highlighting the broader consequences, applications, and significance of the research, showing how the findings add to, support, or challenge existing theories and conceptual frameworks in terms of growth mindset. Based on the findings, recommendations are made, comprising actionable suggestions for PHEIs, academics, and future researchers. The discussion bridges the gap between the findings and practical, real-world application, highlighting what should be done next.

5.1. Implications

Findings imply that only below average to average proportions of PHEI academics tend to possess a growth mindset. While average growth mindset profiles are typical, Malaysian educators are encouraged to transition fully into agents of transformational change rather than traditional instructors. Although they may adopt incremental theorist beliefs (the idea that intelligence can be developed), campus implementation is often hindered by time and resource constraints. Since a growth mindset is increasingly recognized as a vital competency for Malaysian educators, PHEIs and other educational stakeholders should provide relevant intervention programs designed to transform pedagogic paradigms.

Since the Malaysia Education Blueprint actively pushes for holistic education and the evolution of teacher roles, more growth mindset training programs should be implemented to assist in reshaping educational mindsets in higher education. In Malaysia, growth mindset interventions are essential to transform the traditional, exam-focused educational system into dynamic, process-driven learning. By shifting the focus from innate intelligence to effort and resilience, HEIs can lower academic anxiety, boost engagement, foster lifelong learning, and augment psychological wellbeing among students, while aligning with the national Malaysia Madani values of innovation and continuous growth (Lang et al., 2018; Noor Atiqah, 2024; Jianping et al., 2024; Radzi et al., 2025).

5.2. Recommendations

5.2.1. Growth Mindset Strategies for HEIs

Facilitating a growth mindset and continuous improvement in educational settings can be challenging (Northwest Missouri State University, 2024), especially in the context of private higher education institutions (PHEIs) in Malaysia. Top management tend to praise academics who are diligent, polite, and personable; however, this type of reinforcement often promotes a fixed mindset and limits innovative learning and development. PHEIs should adopt a growth-mindset approach, focusing on academics' perseverance and the learning process rather than trying to get a single solution or answer for each issue or problem. Academics can benefit from the growth mindset theory in terms of pursuing their own continuous improvement or inspiring growth among colleagues and students. They can spur improvement through learning how to model the growth mindset for others, creating a cyclic expansion of a growth-oriented culture.

Encouraging a growth mindset among academics takes more than effort; it requires PHEIs to promote inquiry-based learning, encouraging academics to learn from experiences, while exploring and testing innovative ideas (Northwest Missouri State University, 2024). To promote a growth mindset among academics, PHEIs must ensure that they view learning as a journey that requires tackling challenges, while reframing them as opportunities to grow, or fail better. Academics should feel free to make progress, believing they are intelligent enough, and therefore, able to do anything to modify situations.

First, PHEIs can foster a growth mindset among academics by encouraging them to try new activities and test innovative ideas and approaches. They should encourage academics to learn from the process rather than focusing on whether an idea or approach will succeed or fail. Second, PHEIs should provide and allocate resources for reflection, allowing academics to mull over what they have learned from the process of performing a task. Third, PHEIs should practice formative feedback, which is an ongoing process that can help academics improve as they progress throughout the academic year. At present, most PHEIs practice summative evaluation, giving performance reviews to academics at the end of the semester and academic year. Formative feedback promotes continuous improvement among academics, making feedback more meaningful and applicable. Fourth, inculcating a growth mindset among academics takes time. PHEIs should encourage academics to move from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset over a period of time, not overnight. To promote a reflective, constructive environment that is conducive to developing a collective growth mindset, PHEIs can commence by providing professional development opportunities that enable academics to effectively evaluate

performance, besides giving feedback in constructive, meaningful, and actionable ways (Northwest Missouri State University, 2024).

5.2.2. Practical Steps for Growth Mindset

According to King (2024), developing a growth mindset takes effort and a commitment to personal growth. By using the appropriate strategies, teachers can build a mindset that welcomes challenges, builds resilience, and encourages ongoing learning and improvement for themselves and their students. First, PHEIs should allow academics to experiment with new instructional activities and embrace mistakes; rather than solely focusing on success, academics should try to learn from failure. Second, academics should be allocated time to reflect on their professional development, which helps deepen the understanding of innovative pedagogy. By setting aside time to consider their experiences during the learning process, academics can gain better insights, besides evaluating their own teaching methods to determine their strengths and areas that need improvement. Third, academics should leverage formative feedback to continuously improve their performance. Unlike final appraisals or annual performance reviews, formative feedback encourages them to examine ongoing growth, which can be more helpful in terms of their professional development. Fourth, academics should set clear personal and professional goals to stay focused on improving their skills. Using specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals makes it easier for them to track progress and stay motivated. Fifth, they should leverage peer collaboration; working alongside colleagues encourages them to engage in shared learning and growth, while team observations and feedback often create a supportive space for them to learn from one another.

5.2.3. Workshops, Mentors, and Feedback Mechanisms

Schools can support a growth mindset among teachers by offering professional development opportunities, including workshops, mentorship programs, and effective feedback mechanisms (King, 2024). First, workshops focusing on growth mindset can equip academics with the practical tools and strategies needed in their classrooms. Training sessions can include interactive activities, discussions, and reflection exercises to help academics understand the difference between fixed and growth mindsets. Further, they enable academics to face obstacles and barriers, persist through setbacks, and view effort as key to mastering new pedagogic skills. Further, workshops can recommend ways to create a classroom environment that encourages resilience and adaptability, equipping academics with practical ideas that they can promptly apply to improve both their job performance and job satisfaction.

Second, mentorship programs and feedback mechanisms are also important in helping academics adopt a growth mindset. Experienced academics can guide newer ones through various challenges, while sharing strategies for growth and improvement. Mentoring can propagate a supportive atmosphere where new academics feel free to ask questions and try novel approaches. Both mentors and mentees also benefit from shared knowledge and experience, which reinforces the idea that learning is a continuous process (King, 2024).

Third, effective feedback mechanisms play a big part in helping academics improve. To authentically support a growth mindset among academics, PHEIs need to adopt feedback systems that encourage lifelong learning and improvement. A feedback system that

focuses on growth instead of criticism motivates academics to improve without feeling discouraged. Feedback that underscores improvement makes it easier for academics to assimilate and make changes; for example, deans should acknowledge academics' efforts, rather than just the final outcome. On the other hand, top administrators should create an environment that values effort, learning, and perseverance. They can also use staff evaluation software to provide meaningful feedback and data-driven insights that enable academics to continuously improve and succeed. Lastly, student appraisal should be tapped to improve academics' growth mindset; hearing from students gives them fresh insights into their teaching methods. By considering their students' perspectives, academics can adjust their instruction to keep them engaged and improve academic performance (King, 2024).

5.2.4. Performance Appraisal for Growth Mindset

Underlying growth mindset is the assertion that intelligence and abilities are malleable, which can be inculcated through effort, perseverance, and trial and error. It can be applied to performance evaluations in a way that promotes ongoing growth and development among educators (Stock, 2023). At its core, PHEIs should emphasize the importance of learning and improvement over innate abilities; instead of evaluating academics based on their current knowledge and skill level, PHEIs should focus on their potential to grow and develop over time, making them feel supported and motivated to continue learning and improving, which is in line with SDG 4 Quality Education.

To augment educators' growth mindset by way of academics' performance appraisal, administrators and policymakers should (1) focus on effort and improvement, (2) encourage calculated risk-taking and learning from mistakes, (3) provide ongoing feedback and support, and celebrate progress and achievements (Stock, 2023). First, PHEIs should focus on the effort that academics are putting in to improve their performance, rather than solely on the outcome or achievement. They should look for evidence of effort, such as attending professional development workshops, seeking out feedback, and trying new teaching strategies. Second, PHEIs should make academics feel safe to take risks and attempt new ideas or strategies, providing feedback that encourages experimentation and learning from errors, rather than criticism or punishment. Third, PHEIs should underscore formative feedback, focusing on academics' growth and development, which can include allocating resources and opportunities for learning and providing personalized feedback that highlights areas of strength and areas for improvement. Fourth, PHEIs should recognize and celebrate academics' progress and achievements, no matter how small they may seem, which can help reinforce a positive attitude toward lifelong learning and development, while motivating academics to continue growing and improving.

5.2.5. Growth Mindset Strategies for Academics

Just as they teach students to continuously improve, grow, learn, and change, so must educators. To create a school-wide growth mindset, educators should continue to grow, experiment, and innovate (Gunn, 2018). First, academics should undertake something that is challenging; trying to do something beyond what they have already mastered enables them to grow. Regardless of their age or ability, they should continue growing and learning, constantly seeking new ideas, methods, or ways of thinking to improve teaching and learning outcomes. Just as they encourage students to always push their learning further, academics should become lifelong learners. Since it is human nature to learn

intrinsically, academics can stretch their skills daily without questioning the difficulty level, worth, or emotional value. For example, they can study a new concept, try a new classroom management technique, or research the latest concept in higher education. Second, while teaching students to become young innovators, makers, and design-thinkers to succeed in an evolving global economy, academics should become trailblazers themselves. Since there are no perfect instructional methods, academics should experiment and innovate to provide dynamic, authentic, and effective instruction. Instead of limiting innovation to only technology, they can adapt classroom processes and systems, introduce novel student project ideas, or adjust programming work to avoid familiar methods that are no longer effective in today's classrooms. In brief, instead of just following the herd, academics should lead the charge and stay open to possibilities.

To improve their growth mindset, educators should ask questions and be flexible (Gunn, 2018). In recent years, classrooms around the world have started integrating inquiry-based learning, posing problems, questions, or scenarios to encourage students to explore topics through deep questioning. As educators, academics should integrate the principles of inquiry into their own professional life. Educators who approach academic-based problems and ideas through an inquiry lens can dive much deeper and produce more innovative ideas. Adopting inquiry-based techniques enables academics to become habitual enquirers who can learn and grow more. Second, individuals who can change their minds are willing to modify anything to improve. In higher education, there is no space for obstinate and outmoded thinkers; nevertheless, innovative teaching can only occur when academics modify or stretch the rules, expectations, or boundaries, and consider multi-dimensional perspectives. To continue growing as educational professionals, academics must be willing to adapt their pedagogy to students' needs and best interests, while forging a way to include the input and contributions of colleagues and other stakeholders.

Further, educators should learn new technology, listen actively, and reflect to augment their growth mindset (Gunn, 2018). First, academics need to invest in digital technology to stay current and relevant. In another five to 10 years, students will have different digital needs; hence, academics should be prepared for the new digital era, staying current with technology to serve students and the academic community well. While technology seems to be in a constant flux, academics do not have to be experts on all things technology; however, they do need to continuously learn how to leverage, create, and integrate it. Second, when people present ideas, academics should pay undivided attention and actively listen to their contributions, taking time to ponder over what they have uttered before responding. Academics who take time and authentically listen to others not only open their minds to novel ideas, but they also create a community who feels heard and understood. When someone is speaking to them, they should just heed and listen first instead of interjecting, considering a response, or letting their eyes or mind wander. The more they listen and collaborate with one another, the more they grow together.

Lastly, academics should constantly reflect to progress, create more intended consequences, and achieve success (Gunn, 2018). To continue to grow and improve, they must consistently take time to evaluate their own work and analyze how they are progressing. Since the academic year is usually too hectic for self-reflection, academics should incorporate reflection activities into their professional development or academic meetings to maintain a consistent and meaningful routine. Overall, to regularly examine their strengths, weaknesses, triumphs, failures, and goals, academics need to continuously adjust, which ensures that they are on course with imminent success.

5.2.6. *Growth Mindset in Daily Teaching*

To build a growth mindset, educators can start by understanding that their abilities and intelligence can be developed through dedication, diligence, and resilience. Embracing this concept is not only personally transformative, but it also revolutionizes classroom dynamics and learning outcomes. When educators model and impart growth mindset principles, they can create learning environments where errors and challenges become opportunities and valuable lessons, respectively. Practical strategies that educators can implement to inculcate a growth mindset in their teaching routine include (1) embracing the power of “yet”, (2) modeling growth mindset thinking, (3) celebrating process over results, (4) creating a mistake-friendly classroom, and (5) providing growth-oriented feedback (Credits for Teachers, 2025).

First, academics should incorporate “yet” into their vocabulary. When they hear themselves or students say, “I can’t do this,” they should gently add “yet” to transform the statement into “I can’t do this yet.” This small linguistic shift acknowledges current struggles, while maintaining optimism about future growth. Second, academics should be aware that students learn as much from observing as from direct instruction. When they make a mistake in class, academics should use it as an opportunity to model growth mindset by admitting that they have made an error in the calculation; however, that is how our brains learn and grow stronger, which demonstrates that mistakes are valuable parts of the learning process. Third, academics should develop the skill of praising effort, strategies, and progress rather than just addressing mistakes and pinpointing the correct answers. Instead of saying that students have done a great job getting an A, they should comment that they have noticed how students have tried different approaches until finding a suitable one, and that kind of persistence can serve them well. Fourth, academics should establish classroom norms that welcome mistakes as learning opportunities; for example, they can hold a discussion on “the day’s favorite mistake”, which allows students to share what they learned from errors. This particular skill helps destigmatize mistakes and reinforces their value in the learning process. Fifth, academics should focus their comments on specific strategies, effort, and improvement rather than innate ability by encouraging students to compare with their previous performance rather than to their peers’. Instead of telling students that they are very smart at math, they should say that they have noticed how they have persisted with challenging problems and tried multiple strategies until they have found the solutions (Credits for Teachers, 2025).

5.2.7. *Growth Mindset Challenges*

Educators often face several growth mindset challenges, which include (1) system constraints, (2) time pressure, (3) perfectionism, and (4) student resistance (Credits for Teachers, 2025). First, academics have to deal with compulsory course assessments and rigid curriculum requirements, which often makes it difficult for them to focus on growth over achievement. Nevertheless, they should try to find small opportunities within constraints to emphasize process and improvement, balancing system requirements with growth-oriented practices. Second, academics are often compelled to constantly rush to cover course material, which can make it tempting for them to revert to fixed mindset shortcuts. They should try to integrate growth mindset practices into existing routines rather than treating them as separate activities; this mindset integration helps saves time, while allowing them to focus on growth. Third, academics often hold themselves to impossibly high standards, creating anxiety that triggers fixed mindset responses. They should practice self-compassion and view teaching as a continuous journey rather than a

destination. Lastly, students who have studied at a traditional school tend to be deeply entrenched in fixed mindset thinking, resisting growth-oriented approaches; therefore, academics should start with small wins and celebrate incremental shifts in student thinking, which often creates gradual but lasting change.

5.3. Final Thought

Although the study has yielded some useful findings on Malaysian academics' growth mindset, its primary weaknesses stem from its reliance on convenience sampling and self-reported data, making it vulnerable to response biases, inflexibility, and difficulties in capturing deep, contextual insights among academics. Academics may filter their answers to present themselves in a favorable light (social desirability bias) or struggle to remember past behaviors accurately. Additionally, the standardized items do not allow the writers to adapt or ask follow-up questions based on academics' unique answers. The survey is effective for determine the perceptions and extent of growth mindset in Malaysian higher education; however, it does not provide the exact reasons why only low average to average proportions academics possess a growth mindset. Further, unengaged academics might rush through the survey, skip difficult questions, or drop out entirely, which can heavily skew data. They may also interpret the fixed-scale answer options differently, leading to subjective or unclear interpretations. Often, only academics who are passionate about their growth mindset will respond, resulting in an unrepresentative sample that cannot be accurately generalized to the broader public.

To maximize the generalizability (external validity) of the current study, future researchers must ensure that their sample more accurately reflects the broader population of academics, which can be achieved through probability sampling, minimizing non-response bias, and ensuring adequate sample diversity. If possible, future researchers should not restrict the survey to a few tertiary institutions or geographic area because multi-center or nationwide surveys improve how well results apply to different cultural or regional contexts.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

This study has strictly adhered to all ethical procedures involving the use of human subjects. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents who were ascertained of their anonymity, with their responses kept strictly private and confidential. They were also informed that the study was of low risk and that they could stop participating any time without any repercussions.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors report no potential conflict of interest regarding this study in terms of the research or publication of this article.

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