

Dweck's Growth Mindset: A Fad?

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If Dweck's growth mindset is a robust theory, then it must hold to scientific scrutiny. Particularly, a theory must both explain known phenomena and make verifiable predictions. If it does not, it cannot claim causality, but is a merely sociological observation of some correlation. Thus, if examples exist that contradict the predictions of the theory, they raise doubts about its credibility.

GPA and Advanced Positions

If effort is the most significant contributing factor to success, then it should be expected that those students who work hardest should also be the ones who, after years of academic education, manage the best grade averages when graduating. It is also expected that this attitude does not drop off unexpectedly after graduating. Numerous studies show that effort during studying and effort at the workplace do not appear to lead to the same successful consequences. Puljak et al. (2008) noted that although Croatian women averaged better when completing medical school than men, they remain a minority in faculty and leadership positions. This gender gap is particularly expressed in Iran, where women make up the biggest part of higher education graduates, yet are underrepresented in qualified workforce positions (Rejali, 2016). If effort was the driving factor of success, these gender gaps, that have been reported from many WEIRD societies, should not exist. The fact that they do invalidates effort as most influential driver, and thus growth mindset.

Game Performance

The percentage of female chess grandmasters is only 1%. Similarly, women compete at lower levels in games like snooker and pool billiards, where fine motor skill, rather than muscular strength are necessary. Typically, men and women undergo similar training schedules in both disciplines. Many stereotyped gender-differences in intelligence, perseverance, and motor ability have been discussed to explain the difference. The simplest explanation, however, is statistics. Chabris & Glickman (2006) propose that many more male than female players pick up the game at a comparably young age. Consequently, the larger cohort has a greater chance to contain those players, where all factors, idiopathic and environmental, come together to promote success. This reduces the fixed mindset to an attitude that prevents people from even trying. As a conclusion, however, a large part of young women would need to have a fixed mindset with respect to many competitive disciplines. This assumption has been debunked by Storek & Furnham (2013), who found no correlation between self-estimated intelligence and domain masculine intelligence scales in a sample of more than 120 participants. Apparently, growth mindsets explain neither entry nor outcome effects.

Conclusion

Growth mindset may boil down to the assumption that if all other factors are equalised, then effort may remain as the one driving factor. This view, however, excludes the very social construction that self-efficacy, growth mindset's underlying basis, is built on: all factors are embedded in a social context and act in reciprocity, thus no two contexts are the same. This heterogeneity does not prevent researchers from finding laboratory settings or observational lenses that ignore or and normalize all extraneous variables. The above studies

have shown that, at a large scale, other factors appear to exhibit greater influence than focusing on effort.

References

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