

Exploring the Mediating Roles of Help-Seeking and Student Engagement in The Relationship Between Mindset and Academic Performance

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Abstract:

Academic performance is influenced not only by cognitive abilities but also by students' beliefs, behaviors and engagement patterns. Understanding the mechanisms through which mindset influences academic performance can inform targeted interventions that enhance overall academic achievement. While existing literature has established the link between mindset and academic performance, less is known about how the process of mediation works when academic help-seeking and student engagement come into play, particularly in the Filipino secondary education context.

This study aimed to examine the mediating role of academic help-seeking and student engagement in the relationship between students' mindsets and their academic performance. Using a descriptive-correlational quantitative design, data were collected from 119 senior high school students through validated instruments. The descriptive results revealed that students generally possessed a high level of growth mindset. Academic performance was found to be high as well; meanwhile, the student engagement level was moderate. Path analysis and bootstrapped mediation testing were performed using the PROCESS macro approach by Hayes to assess direct and indirect effects. Results revealed that mindset had a significant direct effect on academic performance. Help-seeking behavior significantly but partially mediated the relationship between mindset and academic performance, whereas student engagement did not show a significant mediating effect.

Policy recommendations include interventions that prioritize developing both growth mindset and help-seeking behaviors as a pathway for enhancing student outcomes. School administrators, educators, and counselors are encouraged to design programs that strengthen students' growth mindset and help-seeking competencies.

Keywords: growth mindset, help-seeking behavior, student engagement, academic performance, mediation analysis

Introduction

Academic performance has long been recognized as a multifaceted construct influenced by both cognitive and non-cognitive factors. Among these, students' beliefs about intelligence—referred to as mindset—play a critical role in shaping learning behaviors and outcomes. Carol Dweck's (2006) Mindset Theory distinguishes between a fixed mindset, the belief that intelligence is innate and unchangeable, and a growth mindset, the belief that intelligence can be developed through effort and learning. Students with a growth mindset tend to persist through difficulties, seek feedback, and utilize effective learning strategies, leading to improved academic performance (Yeager et al., 2022). In contrast, fixed-mindset students often avoid challenges for fear of failure, hindering their engagement and achievement.

Although the direct relationship between mindset and academic performance has been well documented, less is known about the mechanisms underlying this relationship, particularly in the Philippine educational context. Two variables—academic help-seeking and student engagement—are increasingly recognized as potential mediators. Help-seeking, rooted in Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, refers to the proactive pursuit of assistance to overcome academic challenges. Students who hold a growth mindset are more likely to view help-seeking as a constructive strategy, whereas those with a fixed mindset often perceive it as a sign of weakness (Ryan & Shin, 2023). Similarly, student engagement, encompassing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions, represents the degree to which learners are actively involved in academic activities (Fredricks et al., 2004; Wang & Eccles, 2022). Growth-minded students demonstrate higher engagement levels, leading to stronger academic outcomes.

This study, therefore, investigates the mediating roles of help-seeking behavior and student engagement in the relationship between mindset and academic performance among senior high school students. By identifying the behavioral and psychological mechanisms that explain how beliefs about intelligence translate into performance, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of educational motivation and learning strategies. Grounded in Dweck's Mindset Theory and Bandura's Social Learning Theory, this paper provides evidence-based insights to inform interventions that enhance resilience, persistence, and achievement among Filipino learners.

Method

This study utilized a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to explore the direct and indirect effects of mindset on academic performance, mediated by help-seeking behavior and student engagement. Data were collected from 119 Grade 12

students from a public senior high school in Gingoog City, Philippines. Stratified random sampling ensured representation across four academic strands: STEM, ABM, HUMSS, and GAS.

Standardized instruments were used: (a) an adapted Mindset Scale based on Dweck (2006), (b) the Academic Help-Seeking Questionnaire (ASHQ) assessing instrumental, executive, and avoidance help-seeking, and (c) the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale–Student (UWES-S), relabeled to assess behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Academic performance was measured through students' General Weighted Averages (GWA). Reliability testing yielded Cronbach's α values above 0.77 across all instruments, indicating strong internal consistency.

Ethical approval was obtained from the school's review board, and informed consent was secured from all participants. Descriptive statistics summarized levels of mindset, help-seeking, and engagement. Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analyses examined direct relationships among variables, while mediation analysis using Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4, 5,000 bootstrap samples) tested indirect effects.

Results

Descriptive results indicated that students exhibited a high level of growth mindset ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 0.33$) and high academic performance ($M = 89.62$, $SD = 2.68$). Help-seeking behavior was strong overall ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.50$), with instrumental help-seeking rated highest and avoidance lowest. Student engagement was high ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 0.60$), with emotional engagement rated higher than cognitive and emotional components.

Correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships among mindset, help-seeking behavior, and academic performance ($r = .18$ to $.34$, $p < .01$). Regression analysis confirmed that mindset significantly predicted academic performance ($\beta = 0.338$, $p < .001$).

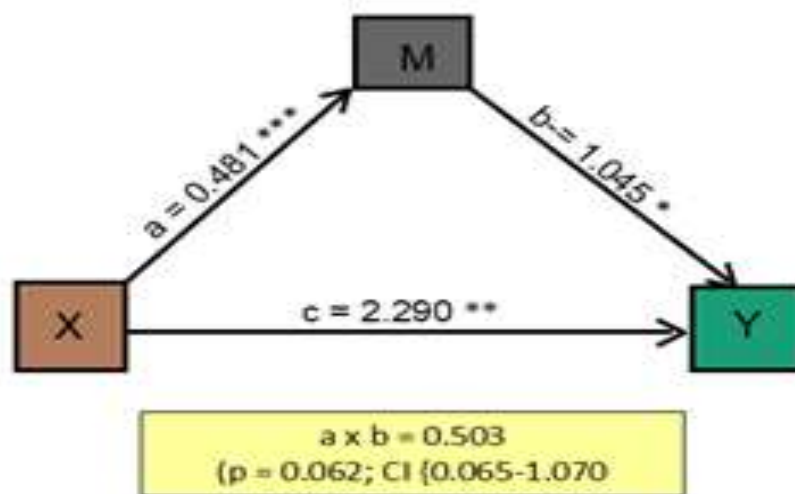


Figure 1. Help-Seeking Mediation Model of the Study

The model illustrates the direct and indirect effects of Mindset on Academic Performance through Help-Seeking Behavior. Mediation testing demonstrated that help-seeking behavior partially mediated the relationship between mindset and academic performance (indirect effect = 0.503, $p = 0.062$, 95% CI [0.65, 1.070]).

As shown in Figure 1, both mediators were examined simultaneously to assess their indirect effects between mindset and academic performance. Following the recommendations of Hayes (2022) and Preacher and Hayes (2008), the significance of indirect effects was determined using 5,000 bootstrapped samples. An indirect effect is considered significant when the 95% confidence interval (CI) does not include zero, even if the corresponding regression coefficient approaches the conventional alpha threshold. In this study, the help-seeking pathway met this criterion, indicating a statistically meaningful mediation effect, whereas the engagement pathway did not.

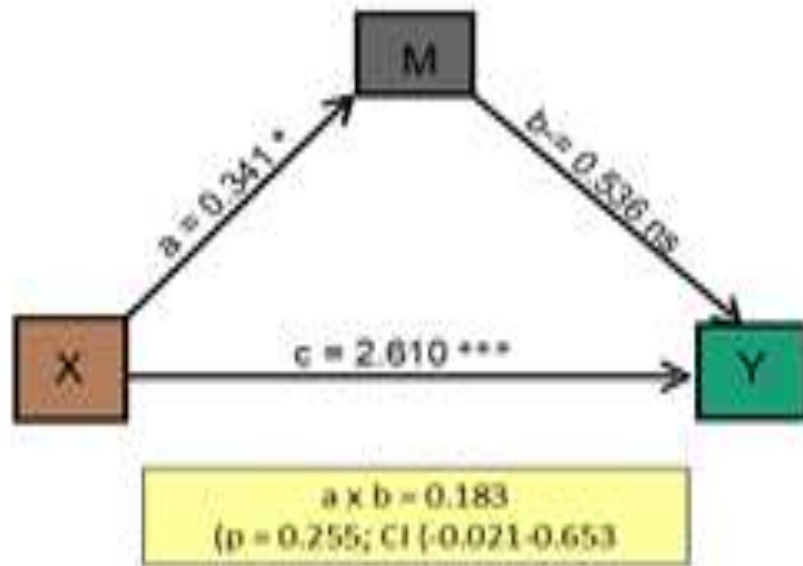


Figure 2. Student Engagement Mediation Model of the Study

The model illustrates the hypothesized direct and indirect effects of Mindset on Academic Performance through Student Engagement. On the other hand, student engagement did not show a significant mediating effect (indirect effect = 0.183, $p = .255$, 95% CI $[-0.021, 0.653]$). These results suggest that while engagement supports learning, help-seeking plays a more critical role in connecting growth mindset with academic outcomes.

Discussion

Findings confirm that students with a growth mindset tend to achieve higher academic performance, consistent with previous research (Claro et al., 2021; Yeager et al., 2022). The significant mediating effect of help-seeking aligns with Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which posits that learning behaviors are modeled and reinforced through social observation and feedback. Growth-minded students actively seek academic assistance, reflecting adaptive self-regulation and metacognitive awareness. Conversely, fixed-minded students are more prone to avoidance help-seeking, perceiving it as a threat to self-image (Karabenick & Newman, 2021).

The non-significant mediation of student engagement suggests that while engagement remains vital to learning, it may not fully account for the mechanism linking mindset to academic performance.

This finding resonates with studies highlighting the complexity of engagement as a construct influenced by multiple contextual and emotional factors (Lei et al., 2021; Çali et al., 2024). Cultural factors may also play a role—Filipino students often exhibit collective engagement rooted in peer and family relationships (Datu et al., 2020), which may differ from Western conceptualizations of individual engagement.

It is noteworthy that the bootstrapped confidence interval approach yielded a significant indirect effect for the help-seeking pathway even though its corresponding p -value was marginal. This apparent discrepancy reflects a well-documented difference in inferential criteria, where bootstrapping provides a more accurate estimation of mediation because it does not assume normality in the sampling distribution of indirect effects (Hayes, 2022)

Overall, the results support an integrated theoretical model: mindset influences academic performance both directly and indirectly through adaptive behaviors such as help-seeking. This aligns with the broader literature emphasizing the need for social and behavioral mediators in mindset research (Vestad & Bru, 2023; Canning et al., 2023). For educators and counselors, these findings suggest that interventions targeting both mindset and help-seeking competencies can meaningfully enhance students' academic outcomes.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that mindset significantly predicts academic performance, with academic help-seeking serving as a partial mediator. Students who believe in the malleability of intelligence are more likely to seek help proactively, enhancing their academic success. Student engagement, although important, did not significantly mediate this relationship in the present sample. These findings underscore the importance of promoting growth mindset and help-seeking training in educational settings.

From an applied standpoint, school counselors and educators can incorporate mindset and help-seeking modules in guidance programs and classroom instruction. By creating environments that destigmatize help-seeking and reward effort, institutions can cultivate resilience, motivation, and sustained academic engagement. Future studies may extend this research using longitudinal designs to explore causal relationships and the role of contextual moderators such as teacher support and school climate.

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