

## Neglected Role of Value in Growth/Fixed Mindset Theory?

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### Abstract

This article explores the integration of growth and fixed mindsets with ethical considerations and primal instincts, offering a fresh perspective on understanding human behavior. The motivation behind this exploration is to extend Carol Dweck's mindset theory by incorporating moral and instinctual dimensions, addressing a gap in how these mindsets intersect with ethical decision-making and innate impulses. The primary method involves constructing a 2x2 matrix that categorizes individuals based on their mindset (growth or fixed) and their tendency to either uphold ethical and moral principles or succumb to primal brain stem impulses. This matrix serves as a tool to elucidate the complex interaction between cognitive orientations and ethical or instinctual drives. The deliverable, a comprehensive framework, highlights the nuanced relationship between mindset typologies and ethical or primal inclinations, proposing that behavior is a product of this multifaceted interaction. The article concludes with insights on how this integrated approach can enhance our understanding of human actions and decision-making processes.

### Keywords

Growth Mindset; Fixed Mindset; Carol Dweck; Ethical Decision-Making; Cognitive Psychology; Brain Stem Impulses; Human Behavior; Moral Values; Behavioral Psychology; Mindset Dynamics

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### Introduction

The significance of mindset in shaping workplace dynamics and employee performance has been a focal point in recent organizational behavior (OB) research. Recent advancements in organizational behavior research have underscored the significant influence of mindset on workplace dynamics and employee performance. The significant role of mindset in organizational behavior, as outlined in Carol Dweck's Growth Mindset Theory (Dweck, 2007), is crucial for

understanding employee performance, teamwork, and leadership dynamics. This theory illustrates how a growth mindset contributes to resilience and innovation, while a fixed mindset may hinder organizational change (Howell, 2016; Rodriguez & Lieber, 2020). Its applications extend to employee engagement (Anitha, 2014), negotiation performance (Turetsky et al., 2022), and even teaching beliefs (Katz-Buonincontro et al., 2020), highlighting mindset's pervasive influence in fostering a culture of adaptability and continuous learning within organizations.

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The role of mindset in organizational behavior is pivotal in shaping employee performance, teamwork, and leadership. This theory, further elaborated by Dweck and Leggett (Dweck & Leggett, 1988), illustrates how growth mindsets contribute to resilience and innovation, in contrast to fixed mindsets that may restrict organizational change. Its wide-ranging impact, from enhancing employee

engagement to negotiation performance, underscores the theory's importance in cultivating a culture of adaptability and continuous learning within organizations. This table captures the fundamental differences between the two mindsets in how individuals perceive their capabilities and react to various situations, shaping their approach to learning, challenges, and personal development.

Aspect	Growth Mindset	Fixed Mindset
<b>Intelligence &amp; Ability</b>	Belief that intelligence and abilities can be developed.	Belief that intelligence and abilities are static traits.
<b>Challenges</b>	Embraces challenges as opportunities to grow.	Avoids challenges due to fear of failure.
<b>Effort</b>	Sees effort as a path to mastery and growth.	Views effort as fruitless or a sign of inability.
<b>Feedback &amp; Criticism</b>	Learns from criticism and uses it for improvement.	Ignores or takes offense to criticism.
<b>Success of Others</b>	Finds inspiration and lessons in the success of others.	Feels threatened by the success of others.
<b>Persistence</b>	Shows resilience and perseverance in the face of setbacks.	Gives up easily when faced with obstacles.

**Figure 1. Carol Dweck's Key Characteristics of Growth and Fixed Mindsets (Dweck, 2007)**

### **Conceptual Model in Navigating Mindsets and Ethical Choices**

In the ever-evolving discourse on human behavior and psychology, the concepts of growth and fixed mindsets, as delineated by Carol Dweck, have been pivotal. However, an intriguing dimension unfolds when these mindsets are considered alongside ethical considerations and instinctual drives. This article delves into a novel "Value Based Mindset Matrix" that juxtaposes growth and fixed mindsets with upholding ethics and

morale versus succumbing to brain stem impulses.

#### **1. Growth Mindset with Upheld Ethics and Morale:**

Individuals in this quadrant are characterized by their belief in personal development and growth, underpinned by a strong adherence to ethical and moral values. This blend leads to a dynamic yet principled approach to challenges and learning, embodying adaptability without compromising ethical integrity.

## 2. Fixed Mindset with Upheld Ethics and Morale:

Here, we find individuals who possess a rigid perception of their abilities, yet this is balanced by a steadfast commitment to

ethics and morals. Despite their reluctance to embrace change, their strong values guide their actions, ensuring consistent and principled decision-making.

	Growth Mindset	Fixed Mindset
<b>Uphold Ethics and Morale</b>	Belief in development and growth, guided by ethical and moral principles. Positive approach to personal growth with ethical considerations.	Rigid view of abilities, coupled with strong ethical and moral standards. Consistent behavior guided by these principles.
<b>Succumb to Brain Stem Impulse</b>	Growth and adaptability potentially overridden by primal impulses, leading to reactive or unethical behavior.	Resistance to change and growth, with behavior possibly driven by primal impulses, potentially leading to harmful actions.

**Figure 2. Value Based Mindset Matrix**

## 3. Growth Mindset Succumbing to Brain Stem Impulse:

Occupants of this quadrant believe in their ability to grow but often find their actions driven by primal instincts. This intersection can lead to behaviors that prioritize immediate, instinctual responses over ethical considerations, posing challenges in maintaining moral integrity in the face of adaptability and change.

## 4. Fixed Mindset Succumbing to Brain Stem Impulse:

This quadrant represents a concerning combination where individuals exhibit resistance to growth and change, with their actions predominantly driven by basic survival impulses. Lacking both the drive for personal development and moral restraint, this mix can lead to potentially harmful behaviors, marked by stagnation and impulsivity.

This framework offers a comprehensive lens through which we can examine human behavior. It highlights the complex interplay between our mindset orientations — whether inclined towards growth or

fixity — and our ethical or primal inclinations. The model suggests that neither mindset alone suffices in predicting behavior; rather, it's the combination with our ethical compass or instinctual drives that paints a more complete picture. While growth and fixed mindsets provide valuable insights into our approach to challenges and learning, integrating these concepts with our ethical values or primal instincts reveals a richer, more nuanced understanding of human behavior. This 2x2 Value Based Mindset framework encourages us to look beyond traditional categorizations and consider the multifaceted nature of our actions and decisions, offering a deeper comprehension of the human psyche.

Values, *raison d'être*, and purpose in life may be distinct from the concepts of growth and fixed mindsets, as they stem from a deeper, more conscious choice, as deep as brain stem. While mindsets influence how we approach challenges and learning, values and purpose provide the ethical framework and motivation that guide our actions and decisions.

Is it perhaps true that having a growth mindset without underlying values can lead to a sense of aimlessness and misery. The drive for improvement and adaptability, unanchored by a moral compass, can lead to unethical choices and a lack of fulfillment. Or is it conversely, possessing a fixed mindset devoid of values can be even more detrimental. Such a combination results in rigidity and resistance to change, without the guiding principles necessary to navigate life ethically and meaningfully. In both cases, the absence of values can lead to a life that lacks direction and moral grounding, underscoring the importance of integrating values with any mindset.

### **Applying the Model: Shame**

Relating shame to the concepts of fixed and growth mindsets, as introduced by psychologist Carol Dweck, provides a valuable perspective on how individuals perceive and react to their own failures or shortcomings. However, this very same framework may create a vicious reinforcing negative feedback loop. Because the so much adored growth mindset's corruptor will recover easily and more victoriously from their shame or failure compared with those who are traditionally doomed as being fixed mindset.

Ruth Benedict ((Benedict, 1946), a concept also cited by (Koentjaraningrat, 1969) differentiates between shame and guilt in cultures. In cultures where the primary goal of work is to achieve position and rank, making a mistake is not a major concern as long as it goes unnoticed and does not lead to loss of face. In such contexts, a person's attitude is not affected, and their conscience remains undisturbed by feelings of shame or regret. Here, the feeling of wrongness, or shame, does not arise from the act of wrongdoing itself. Conversely, in cultures characterized by guilt (guilt culture), individuals feel guilty for doing something wrong, regardless of whether their actions are known to their superiors or others, and this guilt continues to disturb their conscience.

Koentjaraningrat (1969) emphasizes that Indonesians predominantly adhere to a 'shame culture' rather than a 'guilt culture'. This is attributed to the 'priyayi' mentality, where being an employee shapes one's approach to mistakes - they are considered serious only if known by a superior. This mindset can lead to panic and potential mental disturbance when mistakes are exposed.

Shame culture is rooted in the brain stem, a much older part of the brain, functioning as a survival mechanism, whereas guilt culture is associated with the neocortex, a relatively newer region of the brain. The brain stem's realm, governing instinctive responses, shares a remarkable 96% similarity with the brain functions of chimpanzees (Sagan & Druyan, 1992). This similarity suggests that shame culture, regulated by these more primal brain areas, is characteristic of what might be considered less sophisticated societies. In contrast, guilt culture, linked to the more evolved neocortex, tends to be prevalent in societies deemed more sophisticated.

Such description prevails among fixed mindset where failures or mistakes are often internalized as personal deficiencies. This can lead to a heightened sense of shame, as these individuals may see their shortcomings as reflections of their unchangeable, inherent self. They are more likely to feel deeply ashamed of their failures, perceiving them as evidence of their inadequacy.

In a fixed mindset, the way one copes with failure and the associated feelings of shame can be significantly influenced by their mindset. A fixed mindset might lead to avoidance of challenges and a lower resilience to shame, while a growth mindset can foster resilience, adaptability, and a more constructive engagement with personal shortcomings.

However, individuals with a growth mindset are less likely to experience debilitating shame in the face of failure.

They tend to view mistakes as learning opportunities rather than as reflections of their core self. This perspective enables them to constructively engage with their failures, without the burden of shame hindering their ability to grow and improve. Encouraging a growth mindset in educational, professional, and personal settings can help individuals deal with shame more effectively. By shifting the focus from inherent ability to effort and learning, individuals can use their experiences, including their failures, as catalysts for development rather than as sources of shame. However, this approach can be a double-edged sword. It may explain why individuals leaving penitentiaries after serving time for corruption can be forgiven or forgotten due to their apparent growth mindset traits. For growth mindset people, shame is a natural emotion and can be experienced by anyone, regardless of their mindset. A growth mindset does not make one immune to feeling shame in response to social judgment, failures, or mistakes. The individuals with a growth mindset are often better equipped to process and move past shame. They're more likely to use the experience as a springboard for personal development, rather than allowing it to detrimentally impact their self-esteem or hinder their progress.

## Conclusions

The conclusion of the article emphasizes the significant contributions of Carol Dweck's mindset research in understanding behavioral tendencies in organizational settings. It underscores the importance of integrating growth and fixed mindsets with underlying neural processes and ethical considerations for a more comprehensive approach. This integration could lead to more effective strategies in nurturing ethical decision-making and behavior, aligning closely with the principles of growth and fixed mindsets. The article advocates for a holistic view that considers cognitive attitudes, ethical implications, and neural mechanisms, particularly in

situations that invoke primal survival responses. Cultures vary significantly in aspects such as individualism, power distance, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance. However, the phenomena of growth and fixed mindsets, as well as the principles of the Value Based Mindset Matrix, operate independently of these cultural variances. This suggests that these mindsets are fundamental human attributes, applicable across different cultural contexts.

## Notes on Contributors

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