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The relationship between mentorship and internship students growth mindset: The mediating role of intrinsic motivation and work engagement

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the relationship between mentorship and growth mindset among interns, with intrinsic motivation and work engagement as mediating variables. Using a quantitative approach with a correlational explanatory design, data were collected from university students participating in internship programs through a Likert-scale questionnaire adapted from standardized instruments measuring mentorship, intrinsic motivation, work engagement, and growth mindset. Data were analyzed using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique. The results indicated that mentorship had a positive and significant effect on the growth mindset of interns. Furthermore, intrinsic motivation and work engagement were found to partially mediate this relationship, implying that effective mentor support should be complemented by internal motivation and active involvement from students to optimize the development of a growth mindset. These findings highlight the importance of collaborative efforts between educational institutions and internship programs in developing comprehensive mentoring systems. Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on educational and organizational psychology, while practically offering insights for designing internship programs that foster adaptive, resilient, and motivated future professionals.

INTRODUCTION

Amidst the increasingly complex and uncertain dynamics of the world of work, higher education faces crucial challenges in preparing graduates who are not only academically competent but also psychologically prepared, flexible in their thinking, and able to adapt to changes in the professional environment (Eimer & Bohndick, 2023). The fourth industrial revolution and accelerated digitalization have transformed the structure of work, requiring individuals to be able to learn independently, think critically, and adapt to uncertainty. However, various reports and surveys show that a significant proportion of college graduates still experience difficulties during the transition from academic life to the world of work, including stress, low adaptability, and lack of confidence in facing workplace demands (Kholifah et al., 2025; Monteiro et al., 2020). This phenomenon highlights the gap between the technical skills acquired in college and the psychological readiness needed to survive and thrive in the real world of work.

This condition emphasizes the need for universities to not only focus on mastering cognitive competencies, but also on shaping psychological attributes that help students to continue learning and developing. One psychological competency that is gaining attention in this regard is growth mindset, which is the belief that abilities and intelligence can be developed through effort, learning, and perseverance. Previous studies have demonstrated that a growth mindset contributes to learning motivation, resilience, and professional achievement (C. Dweck, 2016; Yeager et al., 2022). Consequently, cultivating a growth mindset among students becomes essential, particularly through contextual and experiential learning activities such as internship programs that expose students to real-world professional challenges.

Internship programs at higher education institutions are designed as a bridge between the academic world and the world of work. Through hands-on work experience, students are expected to hone professional skills, strengthen conceptual understanding, and develop confidence in facing career challenges. However, the success of the internship experience is not solely determined by the structure, but also by the quality of mentorship provided during the process. Effective mentorship, especially from experienced professionals, can offer both technical and emotional guidance, facilitate learning, and foster confidence and resilience among interns (Ivey & Dupré, 2022; Newsome et al., 2021).

Given this, mentorship has been widely recognized as one of the most significant external factors influencing the development of a growth mindset. An empathetic and supportive mentor can help students reinterpret challenges as opportunities for learning rather than signs of failure, thereby shaping a mindset that values effort and persistence (Hamilton et al., 2019). Alongside mentorship, internal factors such as intrinsic motivation and work engagement are equally crucial in shaping students' growth mindsets. Intrinsic motivation, the inner drive to learn driven by curiosity and personal satisfaction encourages persistence, openness to feedback, and active learning (Fishbach & Woolley, 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Similarly, work engagement, reflected in enthusiasm, dedication, and absorption in work tasks, reinforces students' belief in their ability to grow through experience (Augustyniak et al., 2016; Grigorescu, 2020).

Despite extensive literature highlighting the roles of mentorship, intrinsic motivation, and work engagement, previous research has mostly examined these variables in isolation. Studies on mentorship have largely focused on its influence on students' professional identity and career readiness (Ivey & Dupré, 2022; Newsome et al., 2021), while investigations on intrinsic motivation have emphasized its role in academic persistence and learning outcomes rather than professional development (Fishbach & Woolley, 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Similarly, research on work engagement has predominantly explored its connection to employee performance and well-being in organizational contexts (Grigorescu, 2020; Schaufeli et al., 2002), with limited attention to how it manifests during internship experiences. Only a few studies have attempted to explore how these psychological and contextual factors interact synergistically within an integrative framework that explains the development of a growth mindset (Hamilton et al., 2019; Zheng et al., 2023). Most existing studies focus either on formal education settings or on long-term career trajectories, leaving a gap in understanding how the transitional internship period shapes students' professional mindsets.

From this research gap, there is an urgent need to conduct an integrated study on how mentoring support can foster a growth mindset through psychological mechanisms such as intrinsic motivation and work engagement. This type of research is important because the internship phase is a critical transition period that greatly determines the formation of students' professional identity and mental readiness for the world of work. Without effective mentoring support and strong psychological encouragement, students have the potential to experience dissonance between academic expectations and professional realities, which can ultimately reduce their motivation, performance, and career readiness. Therefore, this research is of high urgency to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the interaction between external and internal factors can optimize the internship experience as a vehicle for developing students' mindsets and professional readiness.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the relationship between mentorship and interns' growth mindset, considering the mediating roles of intrinsic motivation and work engagement. Through this integrative approach, the study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how external support and internal psychological dynamics interact to shape students' growth-oriented attitudes during their transition to the professional world.

The findings of this research are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the study offers an integrative model explaining the mechanisms underlying growth mindset formation in internship contexts. Practically, the results are anticipated to inform higher education policymakers and program designers in developing more effective internship programs that foster resilience, adaptability, and professional readiness among future graduates.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational and mediation design, which allowed the researcher to measure variables numerically and analyze relationships statistically (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The correlational design was used to examine the relationships between mentorship, intrinsic motivation, work engagement, and growth mindset, while the mediation model aimed to test the indirect effects of intrinsic motivation and work engagement in the relationship between mentorship and growth mindset. The population consisted of undergraduate and diploma IV students who were undertaking internship programs in various industries for a minimum duration of one month. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, commonly applied in quantitative studies to identify respondents most relevant to the research objectives (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The inclusion criteria required participants to be active students who had completed or were currently undertaking an internship for at least one month and had received guidance from a mentor during their internship experience. Data were collected using an online questionnaire (Google Form) distributed through several professional and alumni networks in companies based in Bandung.

The research instrument used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), comprising several standardized scales. The mentorship scale was adapted from the Mentoring Functions Questionnaire (MFQ) developed by Noe (1988), which assesses career and psychosocial support. The intrinsic motivation scale was adapted from the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI) by Deci and Ryan (2000), which measures the internal drive for learning and performance. The work engagement scale employed the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli *et al.* (2002), consisting of vigor, dedication, and absorption dimensions. The growth mindset scale was adapted from Dweck (2006), which evaluates beliefs about the malleability of intelligence and abilities through effort and experience. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the assistance of SmartPLS software to examine both direct and indirect relationships and to assess the mediation model. Prior to hypothesis testing, validity and reliability analyses were conducted through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), followed by tests of normality, multicollinearity, and model fit indices to ensure the robustness and feasibility of the proposed model.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Regression Test Results

This section aims to explain the results of the analysis of the relationship between mentorship variables and growth mindset, both directly and through the role of intrinsic motivation and work engagement as mediators. For this reason, the researcher used multiple linear regression analysis and parallel mediation procedures using the PROCESS Model 4. To determine the relationship between independent variables (Mentorship) and dependent variables (Growth Mindset), as well as the contribution of mediating variables (Intrinsic Motivation and Work Engagement), multiple linear regression analysis was performed. The use of multiple linear regression in this study was aimed at identifying the relationship between more than one independent variable and dependent variables. The details of the regression results are shown in the following table:

Table 1. Results of Multiple Regression Analysis between Mentorship, Intrinsic Motivation, and Work Engagement on Growth Mindset

Variable Predictor	Coefficients (β)	ONE	t	Sig. (p)	95% CI
Mentorship (MNT)	0.3510	0.0413	8.4918	<0.001	0.2696 – 0.4324
Intrinsic Motivation (IMI)	0.3000	0.0660	4.5461	<0.001	0.1700 – 0.4300
Work Engagement (WE)	0.3081	0.0668	4.4959	<0.001	0.1893 – 0.6204

Based on table 1 above, the three independent variables have a significant positive relationship with the growth mindset. The value of the mentorship coefficient remained significant even though it was included with the mediation variable, which showed that some of the relationship between mentorship and growth mindset was direct, and some were indirect through mediators. The first regression model tested the direct influence of mentorship on the growth mindset without a mediator.

The results of simple regression analysis showed that mentorship had a positive and significant influence on the growth mindset with a regression coefficient value of $\beta = 0.4733$, $p < 0.001$. This shows that improved mentorship quality is significantly correlated with an increase in the growth mindset in interns. The next regression model is multiple regression which includes both mediating variables, namely intrinsic motivation and work engagement. The regression results showed that the regression model had a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.7128, which means that about 71.28% of the variation in growth mindset can be explained by mentorship, intrinsic motivation, and work engagement together.

Mediation Test Results (Parallel Mediation PROCESS Model 4)

The mediation analysis was carried out using the PROCESS Macro approach version 4.2 by Hayes with model 4 (parallel mediation), to test whether intrinsic motivation and work engagement simultaneously mediate the relationship between mentorship and growth mindset. The bootstrap technique of 5000 samples was used with a 95% confidence level.

Table 2. Results of Mentorship Path Analysis on Growth Mindset through Intrinsic Motivation and Work Engagement

Mediation Pathway	Coefficient β	HERSELF	t	p	95% CI
MNT → IMI	0.4637	0.0196	23.6252	<0.001	0.4251 – 0.5024
MNT → WE	0.4400	0.0169	26.0801	<0.001	0.4068 – 0.4732
IMI → GMS	0.3000	0.0660	4.5461	<0.001	0.1700 – 0.4300
WE → GMS	0.3081	0.0668	4.4959	<0.001	0.1893 – 0.6204
MNT → GMS (live)	0.3510	0.0413	8.4918	<0.001	0.2696 – 0.4324

Furthermore, the results of indirect effects are shown in the following table:

Table 3. Results of Total, Direct, and Indirect Analysis (Mediation) of the Influence of Mentorship on Growth Mindset

Types of Effects	Coefficient	HERSELF	BootLLCI	BootULCI	Information
Total Effect	0.4733	0.0200	0.4339	0.5128	Significant
Direct Effects	0.3510	0.0413	0.2696	0.4324	Significant
Indirect via IMI	0.1391	0.0318	0.0769	0.2036	Significant
Indirect via WE	0.1168	0.0375	0.0615	0.1566	Significant
Total Indirect Effects	0.2560	0.0377	0.1103	0.2589	Significant

The following is a Visualization of the Mediation Path Model:

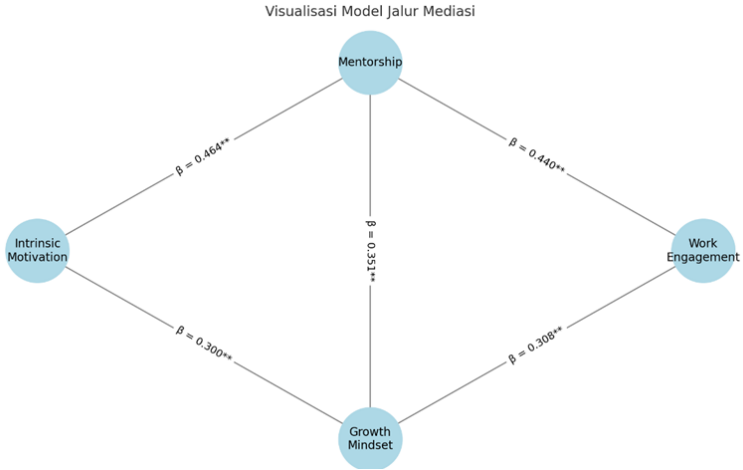

Figure 1. Visualization of the mediation pathway model of the influence of mentorship on growth mindset through intrinsic motivation and work engagement

The results of the analysis showed that Mentorship was significantly related to intrinsic motivation ($\beta = 0.4637$, $p < 0.001$) and work engagement ($\beta = 0.4400$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, intrinsic motivation and work engagement also have a positive and significant relationship with the growth mindset. These results show that an effective mentorship experience not only has a direct impact on the development of the growth mindset of interns, but also has an indirect impact through two mediation pathways: intrinsic motivation and work involvement. This reinforces the theory that meaningful interaction and mentor support can foster internal motivation and a sense of student involvement, ultimately creating a learning environment that supports a growth mindset.

Mediation Test Results (SmartPLS Parallel Mediation)

As a confirmation step to the previous analysis using linear regression and PROCESS Model 4, the follow-up analysis was carried out using the Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method through the SmartPLS 4 software. This approach was chosen because of its ability to test complex relationships between constructs simultaneously, as well as overcome limitations in normal distribution and sample size.

The results of the outer model test showed that all indicators in the constructs of mentorship, intrinsic motivation, work engagement, and growth mindset had a loading factor above 0.70. The values of AVE, CR, and Cronbach's Alpha also meet the cut-off criteria, indicating that the construct has convergent validity and good internal reliability.

The structural model is tested to assess the strength of the relationships between latent variables. Here are the main results of the inner test of the model based on the R^2 value and path coefficient:

Table 4. Table of Values of Determinative Coefficients (R^2) for Endogenous Variables in Mediation Models

Variable	R^2	Information
Intrinsic Motivation	0.687	Good
Work Engagement	0.728	Good
Growth Mindset	0.712	Good

The value of R^2 indicates that the model is able to explain construct variations with high predictive power.

Next, a path significance test was carried out, the test was carried out by bootstrapping 5000 samples. The results of the significance of the path are as follows:

Table 5. Table of Path Analysis (PLS-SEM) Mentorship on Growth Mindset through Intrinsic Motivation and Work Engagement

Route	Coefficient	T-statistics	P-value	Information
Mentorship → Intrinsic Motivation	0.463	23.625	<0.001	Significant
Mentorship → Work Engagement	0.440	26.080	<0.001	Significant
Intrinsic Motivation → Growth Mindset	0.300	4.546	<0.001	Significant
Work Engagement → Growth Mindset	0.308	4.496	<0.001	Significant
Mentorship → Growth Mindset (Direct)	0.351	8.492	<0.001	Significant
Mentorship → IM → GMS (Indirect)	0.139	—	—	Significant
Mentorship → WE → GMS (Indirect)	0.117	—	—	Significant

All relationships between the main constructs show high significance, both direct and indirect relationships. It reaffirms that the proposed parallel mediation model has strong empirical support. The following is a visualization of the path model image.

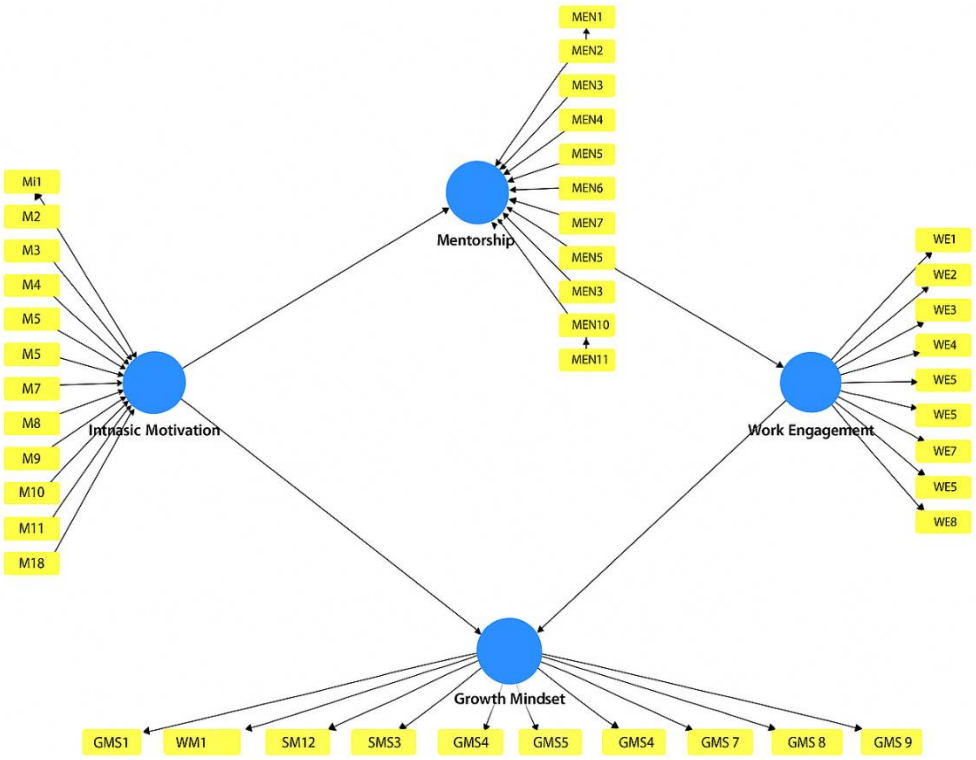

Figure 2. Visualization of the structural pathway model of the influence of mentorship on growth mindset through intrinsic motivation and work engagement

The results of the PLS-SEM analysis showed strong consistency with the previous regression results. Mentorship has proven to have an important role in influencing the development of the growth mindset of interns, both directly and through the mediation of intrinsic motivation and work engagement. This approach strengthens the reliability of the conceptual model used and gives additional validity to the research results.

Hypothesis Test Results

Based on the results of regression and mediation analysis using PROCESS Model 4 and path modelling assistance using SmartPLS, testing of seven hypotheses in this study has been carried out. The test results showed that all paths of relationships between variables showed statistical significance, both direct and indirect relationships. The following table summarizes the test results for each hypothesis (Hayes, 2017).

Table 6. Hypothesis Test Results in Mentorship Relationships, Intrinsic Motivation, Work Engagement, and Growth Mindset

Hypothesis	Hypothesis Statement	Test Results	Results
H1	There is a direct connection between Mentorship and Growth Mindset	Sig. (p = 0.000)	Accepted
H2	There is a connection between Mentorship and Intrinsic Motivation	Sig. (p = 0.000)	Accepted
H3	There is a connection between Mentorship and Work Engagement	Sig. (p = 0.000)	Accepted
H4	There is a connection between Intrinsic Motivation and Growth Mindset	Sig. (p = 0.000)	Accepted
H5	There is a connection between Work Engagement and Growth Mindset	Sig. (p = 0.000)	Accepted
H6	Intrinsic Motivation mediates the relationship between Mentorship and Growth Mindset	BootLLCI = 0.0769, BootULCI = 0.2036	Accepted
H7	Work Engagement mediates the relationship between Mentorship and Growth Mindset	BootLLCI = 0.0615, BootULCI = 0.1566	Accepted

The test results showed that all hypothesized pathways had significant coefficient values with a p-value < 0.001. These results show that all hypotheses in this study are accepted, including the main hypothesis that there is a relationship between mentorship and growth mindset with the mediating role of intrinsic motivation and work engagement.

It is also known that mentorship is directly and significantly related to growth mindset ($\beta = 0.351$, $p < 0.001$). This shows that the higher the student's perception of the quality of mentorship received, the higher the level of growth mindset they have. Then, mentorship is also strongly and significantly related to intrinsic motivation ($\beta = 0.463$, $p < 0.001$) and work engagement ($\beta = 0.440$, $p < 0.001$), which means that mentor support also strengthens intrinsic motivation and student involvement in internship activities.

Intrinsic motivation and work engagement separately had a significant relationship with growth mindset ($\beta = 0.300$ and $\beta = 0.308$, $p < 0.001$). This reinforces the finding that internal factors and work involvement play an important role in driving a growth mindset.

The mediation effect was also significant, where the mentorship pathway → intrinsic motivation → growth mindset and mentorship → work engagement → growth mindset both had a significant mediating effect with an estimated indirect effect of 0.139 and 0.117, respectively. This indicates that the influence of mentorship on growth mindset also occurs indirectly through increased motivation and student involvement.

Discussion

The Relationship between Mentorship and Growth Mindset and the Role of Intrinsic Motivation and Work Engagement Mediation

Mentorship has been proven to have a meaningful positive relationship with the development of growth mindset in interns. This strengthens the theoretical foundation put forward by Dweck (2006), that the growth mindset is not a static innate trait, but can be formed through a supportive environment, one of which is through mentoring relationships. In practice, students who receive guidance from a supportive, open, and reflective mentor tend to be better able to develop the belief that abilities can be improved through effort and learning. Research by Crisp and Cruz (2009) also supports this, showing that effective mentorship can increase self-confidence, academic motivation, and long-term thinking on students' personal and professional development. Even in the context of internships, the role of mentors is not only as a technical mentor, but also as a figure who inspires students to face challenges with an open attitude and not giving up.

Furthermore, mentorship is also closely related to the emergence of intrinsic motivation in students. This relationship can be explained through the theory of self-determination, Deci and Ryan (2000) stated that motivation from within will grow if individuals feel autonomy, feel competent, and have positive social connections. In this context, the role of a mentor who provides freedom of expression, provides appropriate challenges, and establishes open communication is able to create psychological conditions that strengthen students' internal drive to learn and grow. Research by Linnenbrink-Garcia *et al.* (2018) mentions that guidance that supports students' autonomy can increase a sense of ownership of the learning process, which ultimately strengthens intrinsic motivation. A similar finding was also found by Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020), which emphasized the importance of quality interpersonal interaction in shaping long-term learning motivation.

Not only that, mentorship also shows a strong relationship with work engagement, which is a psychological state when individuals feel energized, dedicated, and immersed in their work activities. In the context of an internship, students who feel guided and valued by a mentor will be more involved in work activities, feel their duties are meaningful, and willing to put in the extra effort. This is consistent with findings in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, Bakker and Demerouti (2017) stated that social support such as mentorship is one of the most important resources in increasing work engagement.

In addition to the direct relationship of mentorship, the findings of this study also show that intrinsic motivation and work involvement contribute important to the development of a growth

mindset. Interns who are motivated from within tend to have a positive view of learning and believe that skills can be honed. They are not afraid to face challenges, instead see difficulties as opportunities to develop. This is in line with Dweck and Leggett (1988) emphasized that intrinsic motivation is an important foundation in building confidence in learning and developing abilities.

Meanwhile, work engagement is also positively correlated with growth mindset. Students who feel engaged in their work tend to prefer challenges, focus on completing assignments, and look for ways to improve the quality of work. This engagement encourages them to be reflective of their self-improvement and reinforces an optimistic attitude towards change and learning.

Recent research by Schaufeli *et al*. (2002) showed that work engagement has a major contribution in encouraging psychological adaptability and readiness to face the complexity of tasks, both of which are characteristic of individuals with a growth mindset. This is also reinforced by Zhang and Bartol (2010) longitudinal studies, which found that work engagement can amplify the effects of learning in the long run, particularly when individuals get emotional and cognitive support from the work environment.

From the existing findings, it can be seen that intrinsic motivation and work involvement are not only independent variables, but also play a role as mediators that bridge the relationship between mentorship and growth mindset. This means that mentorship provided in a quality manner is able to foster positive psychological conditions in students, which ultimately encourages them to develop a mindset that is more open to learning and change.

Studies by Qomariyah et al. (2023) have long shown that high-quality mentorship can facilitate increased motivation and engagement through giving meaning and purpose in the work process. In this context, interns are not only equipped with technical skills, but also instilled with long-term learning values that strengthen self-efficacy and confidence in their own capacity. This is an important foundation of a growth mindset.

The Most Dominant Mediation Variable in the Formation of a Growth Mindset

Based on the results of the model analysis that has been carried out, it appears that of all the relationship paths that have been explored, the intrinsic motivation variable emerged as the most dominant mediator in bridging the relationship between mentorship and growth mindset. This relationship shows that when interns have an inner drive to learn, grow, and complete tasks based on personal interests and curiosity, the tendency to form and develop a growth mindset is higher.

In the context of self-determination theory, Ryan and Deci (2000) intrinsic motivation is the most autonomous and most effective form of motivation in encouraging sustainable behavior change. Students who are motivated by personal satisfaction tend to show perseverance, creativity, and confidence in facing challenges. These are key elements of the growth mindset as described by Dweck (2006), which emphasizes the importance of commitment to the learning process and the belief that failure is part of growth.

Research by Linnenbrink-Garcia *et al.* (2018) showed that intrinsic motivation has a high correlation with a developmental mindset because it encourages individuals to evaluate failure as information, rather than as a limitation of ability. This is also in line with studies Haimovitz and Dweck (2017) showing that when students feel emotionally supported and have a sense of ownership of their learning process, they are better able to internalize long-term learning values and adapt to increasingly complex challenges.

Meanwhile work engagement, although also showing a contribution to the growth mindset, turned out to have a relatively smaller influence compared to intrinsic motivation. Although students who are actively involved in work activities tend to have a positive view of the task and show dedication, but without strong inner encouragement, the effect of work involvement on the formation of a developing mindset can be less than optimal. This shows that work involvement is conditional: it will have a greater impact if it is accompanied by high intrinsic motivation.

The implications of these findings are crucial for the development of mentorship program design going forward. Mentors need to be directed to not only provide challenging tasks, but also to

activate students' intrinsic motivation through an approach that supports autonomy, gives meaning to tasks, and encourages self-reflection. That way, the transformation of the mindset that is to be achieved can be more profound and sustainable.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that mentorship has a significant role in shaping the growth mindset of intern students, especially when the mentoring process is carried out in an empathetic, consistent, and individual development-oriented manner. These findings reinforce the view that internship experiences accompanied by quality mentor support can be a transformative means for students to develop a mindset that is more open to challenges and changes.

In addition, intrinsic motivation and work engagement have been proven to play an important role in the relationship between mentorship and growth mindset. Students who have high intrinsic motivation and show active involvement in internship tasks tend to be able to absorb the benefits of the mentoring process more optimally. The combination of external factors (mentor support) and internal factors (motivation and work involvement) becomes a strong foundation in the formation of an adaptive, resilient, and progressive growth mindset.

The results of this study not only make a theoretical contribution to the development of literature in the field of educational psychology and human resource management, but also have practical implications for educational institutions and internship organizing organizations. To encourage students' job readiness and personal growth more comprehensively, it is necessary to design a holistic internship program with a structured mentoring system, motivational training, and strategies to increase work engagement. Thus, higher education graduates are not only academically competent, but also mentally resilient and ready to face the challenges of the dynamic world of work.

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