Happy Little Accidents: Overcoming Setbacks by Self-Compassion

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to understand why some people successfully achieve goals where others fail in achieving goals, when confronted with setbacks in the workplace. To better understand this we examined the influence of growth and fixed PSAM in dealing with setbacks in a professional setting. Additionally, the moderating role of the trait self-compassion has been examined to determine if it buffers the effect of setbacks. For this research an online questionnaire was used to collect data, which involved manipulation vignettes and experimental tasks and was filled in by 98 working adults. Expected was that primed growth mindset employees have higher success expectations opposed to fixed mindset employees by using more self-compassion, when confronted with setbacks in a professional setting. Results showed that the relationship between PSAM and self-efficacy did not differ depending on participants' level of self-compassion.

Keywords: Professional Skills and Abilities Mindsets, SOMA Model, Setbacks, Self-Compassion, Success Expectations

Happy little accidents: overcoming setbacks by having self-compassion

In a rapidly changing work environment it is key to adapt to changes, which often includes success as well as failures (Gonzalez Vazquez et al., 2019). In our daily lives, for example on social media platforms, in conversations with friends and colleagues we mostly see and hear the success stories of their professional lives. Rarely do we hear about the struggles leading up to the promotions and pay raises. Comparing our own lives to someone similar to us is a normal reaction. The way in which we perceive our own chances of achieving goals, especially when confronted with setbacks, might influence our wellbeing at the workplace (Buruck et al., 2016). Regulating our own beliefs to accomplish goals in a professional setting can affect our perceived wellbeing (Scheibe, 2021). The aim of this research was to understand why some people successfully achieve their goals where others fail in achieving their goals, when confronted with setbacks in a professional domain.

While success usually elicits mostly positive feelings, people can react to failure differently; some stay motivated to reach their goals, where others feel dejected and tend to avoid their set goals (Todt et al., 2021). We aimed to propose an explanation for this difference in reactions by looking at the concept of beliefs. Namely, how one reacts to setbacks in the workplace may depend on their professional skills mindset. Professional skills mindsets refer to people's beliefs regarding the malleability of their set of work related skills (Schmitt & Scheibe, 2022). Information about setbacks and goal progress is differently incorporated depending on one's beliefs (Burnette et al., 2012). Where one believes they can learn new things to adapt to changes, the other believes that there is a limitation to what they can learn and achieve (Dweck, 1999). When confronted with setbacks, depending on one's beliefs, different outcomes are expected in the process of goal striving. The expectation was that depending on someone's mindset in the process of goal achieving; one can cope better or worse with setbacks (Burnette et al., 2012). When skills are seen as malleable, adapting to

changes may seem more achievable than when skills are seen as unchangeable. In contrast to popular views, mindsets are malleable and can differ per domain (Dweck, 1999; Schmitt & Scheibe, 2022). There are mainly academic studies about setting- and achieving goals (Sisk et al., 2018). In order to fill in a gap in previous research, the focus of this study lied on the professional domain of goal monitoring. Additionally, the moderating effect of personal traits like self-compassion was examined to determine if it buffers the effect of setbacks.

Implicit theories & Self-regulation

The Setting, Operating, Monitoring, Achievement (SOMA) model is a comprehensive theory to better understand the determinants of achievement depending on one's beliefs. This model links implicit theories with the process of self-regulation (Burnette et al., 2012). Implicit theories are appraisals of personal, in-built schematic knowledge structures that influence behaviour when exposed to new information (Ross, 1989). In the context of goal striving, implicit theories can be seen as beliefs one has about their abilities when confronted with new situations where interpretation and integration of said situations is needed (Burnette et al., 2012). According to implicit theories, when confronted with setbacks in general people can react differently depending on their beliefs which can be either entity or incremental (Burnette et al., 2012; Dweck, 2008). Where one is trying to conserve and prove their abilities because entity theorist sees them as unchangeable, the other tries to work on and improve their abilities because incremental theorist sees them as malleable (Dweck, 2012; Burnette et al., 2012). How people perceive their own abilities influences the path of their self-regulatory processes in achieving goals. Self-regulation can be viewed as an internal thermostat to manage one's own behavioural process in order to achieve and maintain certain goals (Carver & Scheier, 1982, 1998).

SOMA

The theory of self-regulation and implicit theories are integrated into the model of Setting, Operating, Monitoring Achievement (SOMA) by Burnette et al. (2012). The SOMA model includes the self-regulation stages of goal setting, goal operating and goal monitoring (Carver & Scheier, 1982, 1998). The SOMA model builds upon the classic model of self-regulation (Carver & Scheier, 1982) by showing that entity and incremental theorists approach goal striving differently, depending on their beliefs. Thus different beliefs about abilities influence the road to goal achievement and the cognitive and emotional processes that lead to it (Carver & Scheier, 1982, 1998). The starting point in the pathway of achieving goals is goal setting. There are two types of goals, depending on one's believes about the malleability of their abilities (Burnette et al., 2012). People with fixed beliefs about their abilities are more prone to performance-orientated goals to conserve their abilities, where people with malleable beliefs about their abilities will set more learning-goals in order to develop their skills (Burnette et al., 2012). The second phase in achieving goals, after setting specific targets, is goal operating. Goal operating includes planning and performing specific tasks and behaviour to obtain the set goal (Carver & Scheier, 1998). Entity theorists make use of avoidance strategies while incremental theorists make use of approach strategies in the process of goal setting (Burnette et al., 2012 ; Elliot, 1999).

The following phase in the self-regulation process is goal monitoring. During this phase limitations and resources are evaluated in order to assess if the goal state is achieved or if further action is needed (Carver & Scheier, 1998). A difference in mindsets drives the interpretation of the progress made thus far. The most distinct difference between people in interpreting the progress of goal achieving can be found in the affective processes one experiences (Carver & Scheier, 1990). Depending on one's implicit theory, expected is that incremental theorists will experience less negative affect and more success expectations,

where entity theorists experiences less success expectations and more negative affect (Burnette et al., 2012).

Mindset at work

Similar to the self-regulation theories, implicit theories also made a distinction between beliefs named mindset, respectively divided in growth and fixed-oriented (Dweck 1999; Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Research about differences in mindset is mostly conducted in an academic setting (Sisk et al., 2018). Mindset has become a popular phenomenon in various domains like creativity, sports, and intelligence (Dweck, 1999). Little research has been conducted on the influence of implicit mindsets in the professional field. Akin to incremental theorists, people who hold a growth mindset believe their skills can be improved by working on their weaknesses. Similar to entity theorists, people who hold a fixed mindset believe the opposite and they assume that their skillset is fixed and therefore cannot be improved (Dweck, 2012).

A novel concept in determining one's performance and activity in a professional domain is the professional skills and abilities mindset (PSAM), which refers to the perceived malleability of work-related aptitudes (Schmitt & Scheibe, 2022). Depending on one's mindset, employees with a professional skills and abilities growth mindset believe that their abilities can develop in favour of their career, where employees with a professional skills and abilities fixed mindset believe that their abilities are pre-determined and indifferent to change (Schmitt & Scheibe, 2022). An employee with a professional skills and abilities growth mindset in comparison to a fixed mindset, when confronted with career-related challenges, is more likely to use acquired traits in order to develop their career (Schmitt & Scheibe, 2022).

Setbacks & Succes Expectations

As stated before, setbacks occur frequently in the workplace and in the process of goal striving it is expected normal to receive negative feedback. This research aimed to see

whether differences in reactions following setbacks could be explained through the medium of PSAM (Schmitt & Scheibe, 2022). An indicator to determine if one's actions lead to successful goal achievement is the affect one experiences during the goal-monitoring phase (Burnette et al. 2012). Positive affect is obtained when the perceived goal progress matches the desired goal progress towards achievement. If there's a discrepancy between the perceived and desired course of the process, negative affect or success expectations will be experienced (Carver, 2004; Carver & Scheier, 1990). Negative affect is expressed in feelings of helplessness, depression and anxiety. This can negatively influence one's beliefs about their abilities in obtaining goals in future self-regulatory processes (Carver & Scheier, 1998).

According to the career construction theory, how one expects success depends on how they perceive their behaviour in a professional setting (Savickas, 2005; Brown & Brooks, 1984). During the self-regulatory process of goal monitoring, when one is confronted with negative feedback, depending on their mindset one will differ in how they experience success expectations (Burnette et al. 2012). When confronted with negative feedback someone with a fixed, entity theory mindset about his or her abilities will tend to express lower success expectations, by judging the inadequate progress as coming from their fixed abilities. Someone with a growth, incremental theory mindset will tend to expect successful outcomes in relying on beliefs about their skills, which can be further developed towards success (Dweck, 2000). Similar results have been found in academic research where growth mindset is positively associated with success expectations (Burnette et al., 2020; Zander et al., 2018).

Hypotheses 1

Based on the theory, the first hypothesis is: primed growth mindset employees opposed to fixed mindset employees will handle setbacks in forms of negative feedback better by having higher success expectations.

Self-compassion – a potential moderator

How setbacks are processed during the goal-monitoring phase is influenced by how the information is emotionally charged (Carver & Scheier, 1990). Depending on one's mindset, inbuilt traits may moderate the relationship between setbacks and goal achievement. Self-compassion is a trait that can be used in order to achieve goals after being confronted with negative feedback. Self-compassion can be defined as coping with struggles and stressful situations in a caring way by being aware that these are common phenomena in one's life (Neff, 2003). Research has found that people with high in self-compassion, when being confronted with negative feedback, are less likely to experience negative emotions (Leary et al., 2007; Miyagawa et al., 2018).

Self-compassion can be seen as a protective factor in coping with setbacks and it may alter people's tendency to make negative attributions about their abilities. People with high self-compassion are more likely to have more positive perceptions about their abilities (Liao et al., 2021). People high in self-compassion, due to being more intrinsically motivated may be less likely to endorse the belief that their work-related abilities are fixed and instead are more likely to endorse the belief that their skills are malleable (Neff et al., 2005). In the process of goal achieving, the trait self-compassion is positively associated with goals similar to a growth mindset (Neff et al., 2005). In this research the focus will be on the next: depending on the amount of self-compassion someone has, one will react differently to mindset and negative feedback, leading to more or less success expectations (Figure 1).

Hypotheses 2

Based on the theory, the next hypotheses has been formulated: primed growth mindset employees have higher success expectations opposed to fixed mindset employees by using self-compassion when confronted with setbacks.

Figure 1.
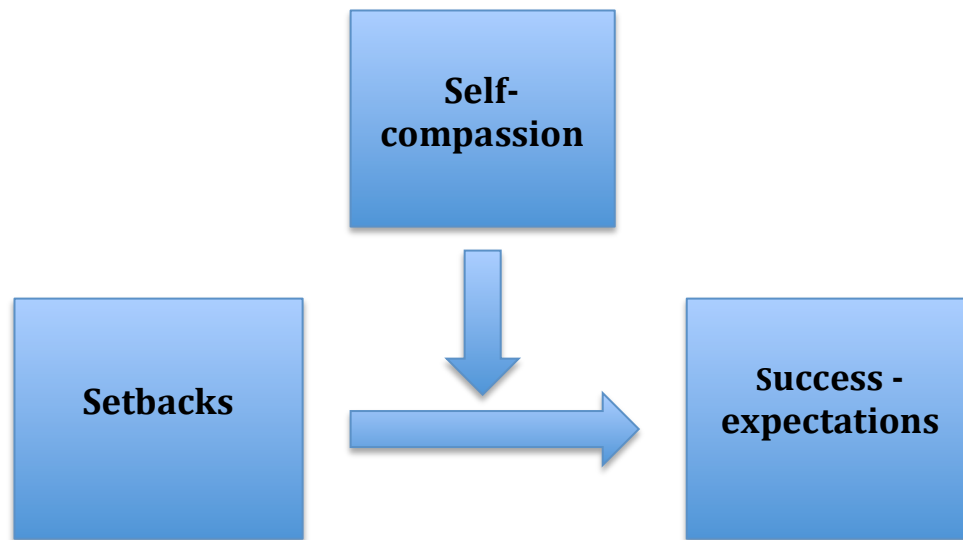
Methods

Materials

State Self-Compassion Scale (Short Form)

The short form of State Self-Compassion Scale (SSCS-S) is a self-report measure of one's state self-directed compassion. It contains six items rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Not at all true for me" to "Very true for me" (e.g. I'm keeping things in perspective). Cronbach's alpha for the long scale was found to be around $\alpha = 0.9$ by Neff and colleagues (2021) based on the long form scale. Scores on the short form were shown to be highly correlated with the long form and evaluated as comparably reliable (Neff et al., 2021). In comparison, the reliability of the scale in this research was somewhat lower ($\alpha = 0.726$).

Self-efficacy scale

The variable that is used in the SOMA-model is success expectation, however Burnette et al. (2012) used papers that measured self-efficacy for this variable. Burnette et al. (2012) used success expectation as an umbrella term; therefore we used a scale of self-efficacy to measure the dependent variable success expectation. Self-efficacy was measured

by 4 items targeting general self-efficacy (e.g. "I can increase my career skills beyond their current levels."). The items were inspired by Maurer et al. (2002) and scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "Disagree very strongly" to "Agree very strongly". Maurer et al. (2002) report a high reliability for the scale ($\alpha = 0.88$), which aligns with the reliability of the scale in this research ($\alpha = 0.858$).

Procedure

This research was conducted in the form of an experimental one-level study with two conditions. In this experiment participants were primed with a fixed or growth mindset within a professional setting. A discrepancy between the perceived course and the desired course of the process towards goal achievement was created by the acquisition of unwarranted negative feedback during the goal-monitoring phase. The negative feedback was intended to be experienced as a setback in a workplace environment.

For this research an online Qualtrics questionnaire was used to collect data, which involved manipulation vignettes and experimental tasks and measures. It took approximately 25 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Firstly, participants were asked to sign the informed consent, in which they were introduced to the research and granted permission to start. Participants were then presented with a manipulation by reading a vignette to prime one of the conditions, either a growth mindset or a fixed mindset. The vignettes were fabricated news articles appearing to be from 'Psychology Today'. To strengthen the manipulation, participants were asked to rate statements about the respective PSAM on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "Neutral" to "Strongly Agree", therefore disabling the option to disagree with the statements aligned with their condition. A manipulation check consisted of writing down the central message of their vignette. Following this, participants carried out two HR-inspired occupational propensity tasks that should appeal to a variety of individuals (Shafir et al., 2017). These included a video-based emotion-recognition task ("To what extent is the

person feeling…?",) and a pattern-recognition task by selecting the missing tiles from six incomplete pictures. After fulfilling each task, they were falsely informed about their below-average performance to elicit feelings of failure. Participants then filled out measures about their current affect and self-efficacy. Afterwards, participants answered items regarding the moderators: self-compassion and adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism. After answering demographic questions, participants were shown a movie clip in order to restore their mood. Finally, participants were debriefed and the deception was made transparent.

Participants

The questionnaire has been distributed through social media and family and work connections. 369 persons opened the link to the questionnaire, after removing the people who did not meet the inclusion conditions, 98 persons remained. The inclusion criteria were giving informed consent before and after the experiment (245 excluded cases), being over the age of 18, and working part-time or full-time (14 excluded cases). Participants who had a zero-hour contract were excluded because it could not be determined whether they were employed or not. 12 participants who guessed the aim of this study or were aware of the deception were excluded from further analyses. The ratio between men and women in this experiment was respectively 35:61, two participants did not specify their gender. The mean age of the participants was $M =32$ ($SD = 11.7$). Most of the participants were Dutch residents (57.1%) and 17 % of the participants were German residents. The highest level of education was mostly a (technical) university degree (49.0 %) and secondary school with a diploma (34.7%). The primed mindset was approximately equally divided, the growth mindset group contained 53 participants and the fixed mindset group contained 45 participants. Table 1 specifies the participant demographics.

Table 1.

Participant Demographics

Characteristic	n	%
Gender		
Male	35	35.7
Female	61	62.2
Not Specified	2	2.0
Country of Residence	56	
Netherlands	56	57.1
Germany	17	17.3
Other	25	25.2
Level of Education		
(Technical) University	48	49.0
High School	34	34.7
Other	16	16.3

Statistical procedure

ANOVA

The obtained data has been analysed by the program SPSS Statistics (version 26). The group means of the variables, fixed mindset, growth mindset, self-compassion and self-efficacy were calculated through ANOVA variance analyses. We set the significance level to $p = .05$.

ANCOVA

For the testing of hypotheses regarding the moderator variables, the ANCOVA procedure was used. ANCOVA is used for measuring the effect of the moderator variable

self-compassion by controlling the means of the dependent variable self-efficacy that belong to the groups fixed and growth mindset.

Applying this method in a slightly unconventional manner, we sought to confirm the interaction effect between the moderator self-compassion and the independent variable, instead of controlling for it. Assumptions for both the ANOVA and ANCOVA were checked, this was achieved by a test of normality, a p-p plot to test linearity, Levene's test to check homogeneity of variance.

Results

Descriptive Statics and Correlations

Table 2 shows the means, standard deviatons and correlations between the dependent variables self-efficacy after trial 1 (SE_1), self-efficacy after trial 2 (SE_2), self-efficacy combined (SEC) and the moderator self-compassion trait (SC).

Table 2.

Means, Standard deviations and Correlations

	Growth		Fixed					
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*SE₁*	*SE₂*	*SEC*	*SC*
SE_1	22.0	5.1	18.7	4.6	1	0.92**	0.98**	0.06
SE_2	21.1	5.8	18.2	4.9		1	0.98**	0.13
SEC	43.1	10.6	37.0	9.3			1	0.09
SC	20.2	4.7	19.8	4.5				1

Note. SE_1 = Self-Efficacy after Trial 1. SE_2 = Self-Efficacy after Trial 2. SEC = Self-Efficacy Combined. SC = Self-Compassion.
** $p < .01$

Assumptions

The assumption of normality was calculated by using the Shapiro-Wilk's test with a significance level of $p < 0.05$ (Table 3). The assumption of normality on self-compassion divided by fixed mindset was not violated ($W(45) = 0.96$, $p = 0.14$). The assumption of normality on self-compassion divided by growth mindset was not met ($W(53) = 0.96$, $p = 0.05$). The assumption of normality on self-efficacy divided by fixed mindset was met ($W(45) = 0.96$, $p = 0.08$). The assumption of normality on self-efficacy divided by growth mindset ($W(53) = 0.95$, $p = 0.03$) was not met. The Q-Q plots in Appendix A did not show signs of violated assumptions of normality on self-compassion and self-efficacy divided by growth and fixed mindset.

Table 3.

Test of Normality

	Shapiro – Wilk		
	Statistic	*df*	*Sign*
Self-Compassion			
Fixed mindset	0.96	45	0.14
Growth mindset	0.96	53	0.05
Self-Efficacy			
Fixed Mindset	0.96	45	0.08
Growth Mindset	0.95	53	0.03

* $p < .05$

The assumption of homogeneity of variances was calculated by using Levene's test with a significance level of $p < 0.05$. The assumption of homogeneity on self-efficacy was

not violated (F(1,96) = 1.6 p = 0.21). The assumption of equality of variances was calculated

by using Levene's test with a significance level of $p < 0.05$. The assumption of equality of

variances on self-efficacy was not violated (F(1,96) = 1.6 p = 0.21). The Q-Q plot in

Appendix B did not show signs of violated assumptions of normality on self-efficacy.

Main Analyses

Table 4.

ANOVA

	Growth		Fixed					
Predictor	M	SD	M	SD	F	sign.	η^2	95% CI
SEC	43.1	10.6	37.0	9.3	9.14	0.03*	0.07	[0.004, 0.179]

Note. SEC = Self-Efficacy Combined
(R^2 = 0.077, Adjusted R^2 = 0.048)
* $p < .05$

The ANOVA (Table 4) shows a significant difference in self-efficacy between the

growth and fixed mindset at a significance level of $p < 0.05$ (F (1,96) = 9.14 p = 0.03).

According to the ANOVA mindset is a predictor for self-efficacy. This supports the

hypothesis that primed growth mindset employees opposed to fixed mindset employees will

handle setbacks better by having self-efficacy.

Table 5.

ANCOVA

	SS	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*sign.*	η^2
Intercept	6256.49	3	6256.49	61.19	0.00	0.39
IV	88.97	1	88.97	0.87	0.35	0.01
SC	77.09	1	77.09	0.75	0.39	0.01
IV*SC	8.04	1	8.04	0.079	0.78	0.00
Error	9610.88	94	102.24			
Total	169662.00	98				

Note. SC = Self-Compassion. IV = Fixed and Growth Mindset
($R^2 = 0.095$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.066$)
* $p < .05$

The ANCOVA (Table 5) does not show a significant difference between the covariate self-compassion and the independent variable fixed and growth mindset. Based on the results mindset is not a predictor for self-compassion. This does not support the hypothesis: primed growth mindset employees have more self-efficacy as opposed to fixed mindset employees by using self-compassion. The relationship between PSAM and self-efficacy did not differ depending on participants' level of self-compassion.

Discussion

How one perceives wellbeing at work depends on several personal and organizational factors. Regulating one's own emotions to accomplish goals in a professional setting can influence one's perceived well-being (Buruck et al., 2016). Dealing with setbacks in the forms of negative feedback is part of the pathway to achieving goals in a professional setting (Burnette et al. 2012; Schmitt & Scheibe, 2022). Different ways of coping with negative feedback or setbacks in the goal achieving process can influence one's perceived wellbeing at

work (Adams & Webster, 2013; Scheibe, 2021). The aim of this study was to determine differences between growth and fixed mindsets in coping with setbacks to achieve goals in a professional setting. Additionally differences in personal traits were expected to moderate the relationship between setbacks and goal achievement.

The first expectation had been that primed growth mindset employees opposed to fixed mindset employees will handle setbacks in forms of negative feedback better by having higher success expectations. According to the results this first hypothesis was confirmed. The results are in line with previous research; how someone copes with setbacks in the workplace depends on one's mindset. In means of goal achieving according to the PSAM theory someone with a growth mindset reacts to setbacks in ways of experiencing more success expectations and less negative affect, where someone with a fixed mindset will experience less success expectations and more negative affect (Schmitt & Scheibe, 2022). This is supported by earlier research in the academic field where students with a growth mindset handled setbacks better by having higher success expectations (Burnette et al., 2012; Dweck, 2000). In contrast, other research in the academic field also found null results in examining the influence of mindsets on success expectations in dealing with setbacks (Moore, 2018; Li & Bates, 2019). More research has to be conducted to broaden the knowledge about the influence of mindsets in dealing with setbacks in a professional setting.

The second expectation had been that growth mindset employees have higher success expectations opposed to fixed mindset employees by using self-compassion when confronted with setbacks. The results did not support the hypotheses. According to the results mindset is not a predictor for self-compassion and self-efficacy and self-compassion did not correlate. This is not in line with earlier research where a mediating effect of self-compassion in dealing with negative emotions was found while being confronted with setbacks (Leary et al., 2007; Miyagawa et al., 2018). An explanation can be found in the way self-compassion

influences the way someone evaluates their goals when confronted with setbacks. To reduce negative feelings instead of focusing on success expectations, one might tend to apply adaptive avoidance strategies to disengage from their goals (Miyagawa et al., 2018). In this research participants did not have to set their own goals and were therefore more likely to disengage from the process of goal achieving to avoid negative emotions.

Paradoxically, the results showed that self-compassion overruled the influence of the growth mindset in dealing with setbacks. An explanation for this can be found in the way one regulates their emotions when confronted with setbacks with adaptive emotion-focus strategies associated with self-compassion when being confronted with setbacks (Neff et al., 2005). Expected is that people with high self-compassion deal better with emotions, but are not necessarily more confident in dealing with feedback. Previous research on self-compassion merely focused on emotions instead of self-efficacy, more research has to be conducted on this topic.

Strengths and Limitations

This research is one of the first studies about the influence of mindset in dealing with setbacks in a professional setting. The foundation of this research is the professional skills and abilities mindset theory (PSAM) by Schmitt en Scheibe (2022). Previous studies mainly focused on the influence of mindsets in goal achieving processes in academic settings (Sisk et al., 2018). The results of this study can be used for future research on mindsets in a professional setting to broaden the use of the PSAM (Schmitt & Scheibe, 2022). Strengths of this research are the original PSAM mindset manipulation vignettes in forms of articles from a psychology magazine. Manipulation-strengthening items were used to further prime participants with their designated mindset, either growth or fixed mindset.

A limitation of this research is the validity of this study. The external validity is reasonable due to the heterogeneity of the sample group. The size of the sample group was $N = 98$ and contained a heterogeneous age group ($M = 32$, $SD = 11.7$) of working people with

various occupations from different countries. Preferably, based on power analyses, the sample group for future research should contain at least 200 participants to be able to make more robust statements about the results. The online environment in which this experiment was set did not improve the ecological validity in ways it did not meet the standards of a work environment. In line with this the questionnaire did not focus on work specific tasks, but was applicable for every employee. The ecological validity could be improved by creating a setting where self-regulation is needed in order to achieve goals and customize the questionnaires to the participants employment sectors. Another limitation was the use of negative feedback only, instead of implementing positive feedback as well. During this research participants received negative feedback regardless of whether their answers were correct or not. To implement positive feedback in the control group, it may be possible to make better statements about how people react to negative feedback in comparison to positive feedback and the influence of the moderating role of self-compassion.

Future research

To better understand the influence of mindsets in coping with setbacks in the workplace and to build upon the current research findings, future research should take place in work environments containing work specific components. The setting of this experiment did not meet the requirements of the goal achieving process in terms of self-regulation, because no obtainable goals were set. To be able to make better statements about the differences between mindsets in dealing with setbacks in the long term, conducting a longitudinal experiment is advised. A potential experimental design to measure the influence of mindsets in handling setbacks in the workplace is a journaling study. In the process of goal achieving, participants will be asked to keep track of their expectations and feelings in coping with setbacks in the workplace. Employees work specific mindsets can be measured by questionnaires or they can be primed similarly to the current research design. Implementing a

journaling study might not be applicable to every employee. Some participants might be getting tired or bored by daily reporting, which may lead to underreported feelings and expectations when coping with setbacks. Other participants might become more aware of their feelings when experiencing workplace setbacks, which may lead to over-reporting or implementing coping mechanisms to deal with perceived discrepancies.

This research showed that mindset manipulations seem to be on the weak side. In line with this, the mindset manipulation checks failed to steer participants to act according to their assigned mindset. More research has to be conducted to determine if mindset manipulations and checks are sufficient. To improve the manipulation effect, it may be better to adjust the experiment by making the vignettes more work specific in ways that they are more compatible with one's work domain. Including the organizational mindset may also be beneficial in improving the manipulation effect because it is recognizable and applicable to employees of a specific company. A possibility to control for mindsets in future research could be growth mindset interventions in the workplace. Expected is that people are more prone to identify with growth mindsets in a manipulation setting compared to fixed mindsets. Participants will be divided into a growth mindset group or control group to examine the differences in coping with setbacks in the workplace.

Results showed that older people (ages close to retirement) tended to draw back more from the experiment. Reasons for early withdrawal from the experiment may be the length of the experiment, the amount of text to be read, conducting the tasks, the use of electronic devices to participate, being uncomfortable by getting feedback or difficulty to be manipulated because they are more rigid in ways of dealing with setbacks or are more aware of their behaviour in order to deal with setbacks. According to the consistency theory older people are more likely to behave consistently with earlier behaviour than younger people (Guadagno & Cialdini, 2010). Further analyses have to determine the reason for this

phenomenon. To be able to make better statements about the influence of mindsets in dealing with setbacks, in future research, it is important to collect a wider age range of working people. In future research it has to be more accessible for older participants to participate in the experiment, for example in an offline journal study or mindset intervention without manipulation where they feel comfortable to participate. Finally, more research has to be conducted to better understand the moderating influence of the trait self-compassion on the relationship between mindsets and dealing with setbacks.

Practical and theoretical implications

This research can be seen as a pioneer in manipulating mindsets and forms the basis for future research into mindset manipulations in a professional setting. An implication for future research is producing a reinforced model of Burnette's (2012) SOMA-model integrating Schmitt & Scheibe's (2022) PSAM theory to include the influence of mindsets in the self-regulation process of achieving goals in a professional setting. In order to implement growth mindset interventions in a broader professional setting, it is important to influence the corporate mindset. The top-down impact of management in dealing with setbacks in a growth mindset manner should consist of an overall sustainable environment with supportive leadership providing constructive feedback. Since self-compassion was more effective in dealing with setbacks compared to growth mindset, more research needs to be conducted to determine the influence of self-compassion interventions.

Conclusion

This current study contributed to better understand the differences in mindset in dealing with setbacks in a professional setting. Results showed that primed growth mindset employees opposed to fixed mindset employees handled setbacks better by having higher success expectations. The results did support the expected moderating roll of self-compassion in dealing with setbacks. A message that can be derived from this research this is that

thinking influences your mindset; you have to believe you are good at things instead of just being good at something to achieve goals.

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Appendix A

Figure A1.
Q-Q plot normality self-compassion and fixed mindset
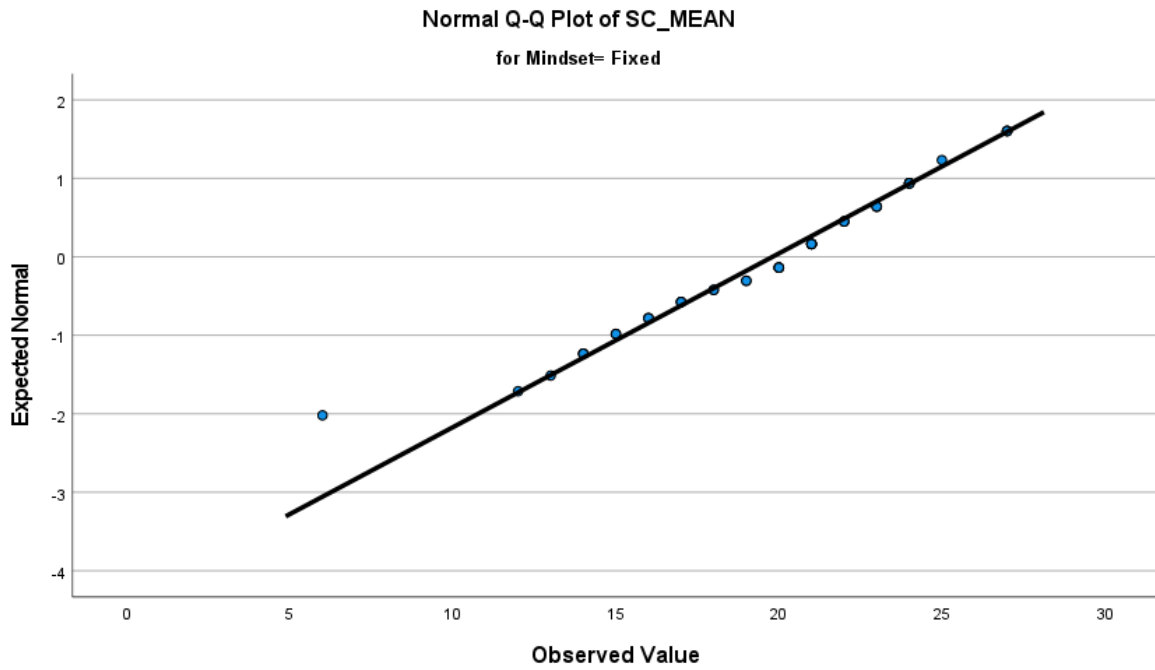
Figure A2.
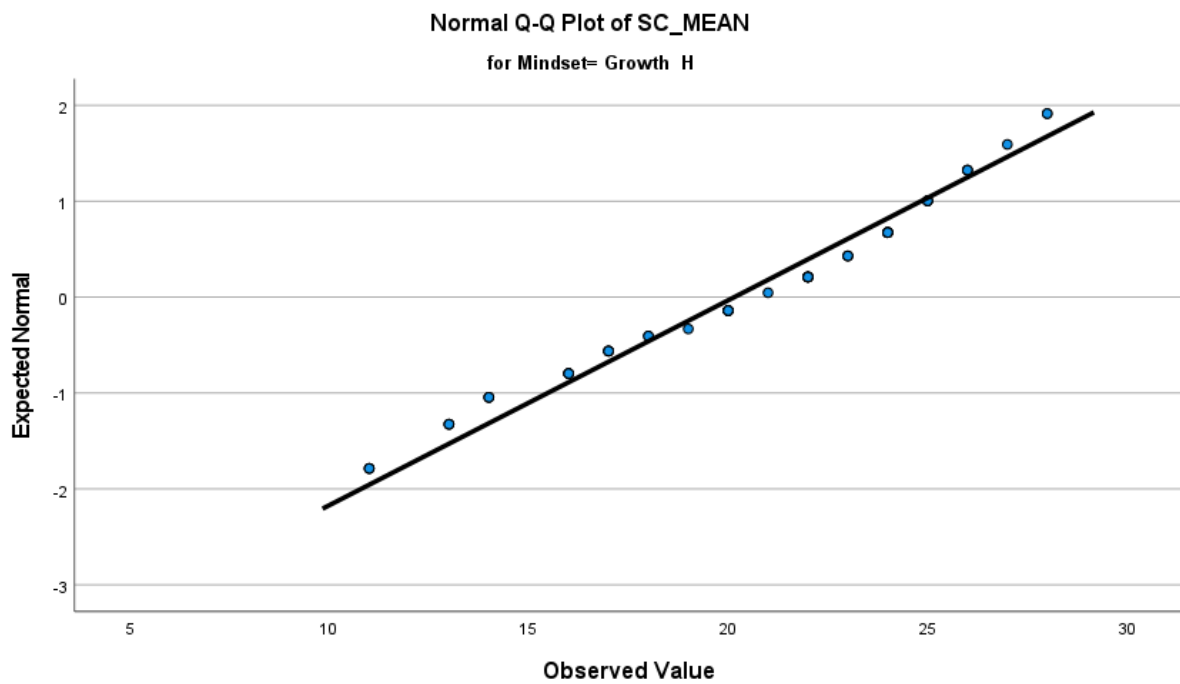*Q-Q plot normality self-compassion and growth mindset*

Figure A3.
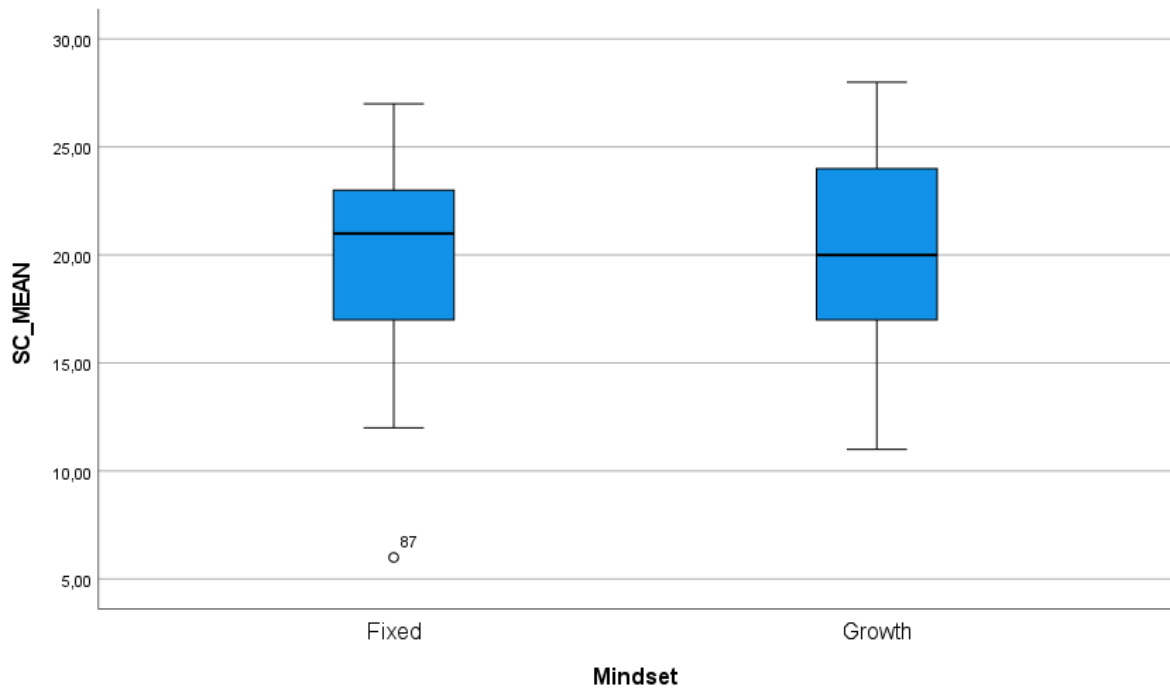*Boxplot self-compassion divided by fixed mindset and growth mindset*

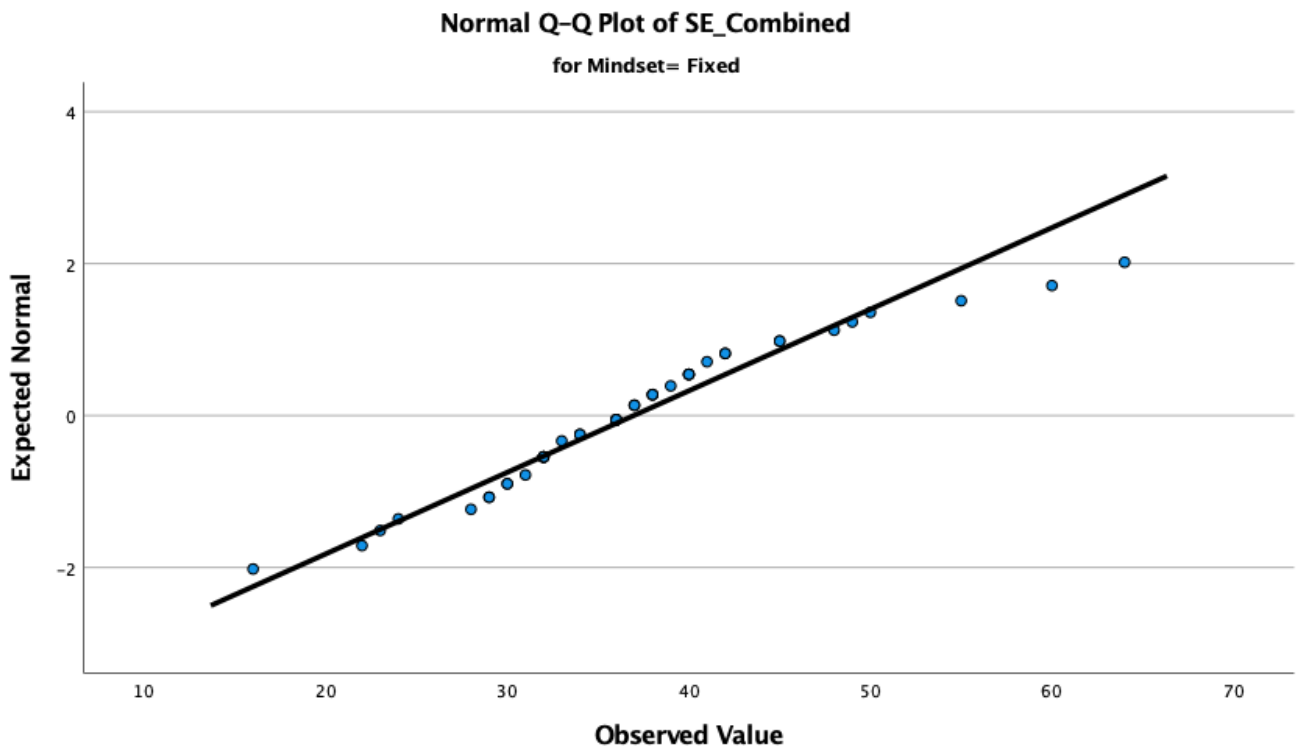**Figure A4.**
Q-Q plot normality self-efficacy and fixed mindset

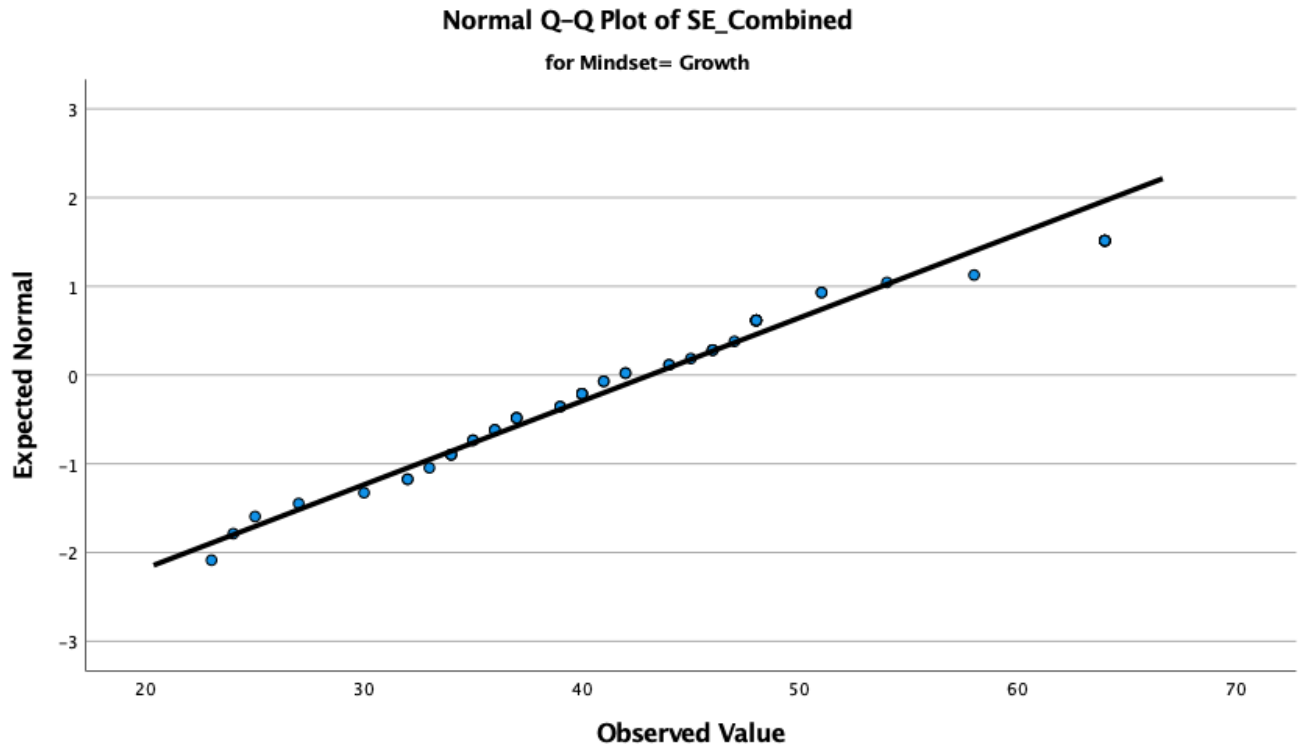**Figure A5.**
Q-Q plot normality self-efficacy and growth mindset

Normal Q–Q Plot of SE_Combined
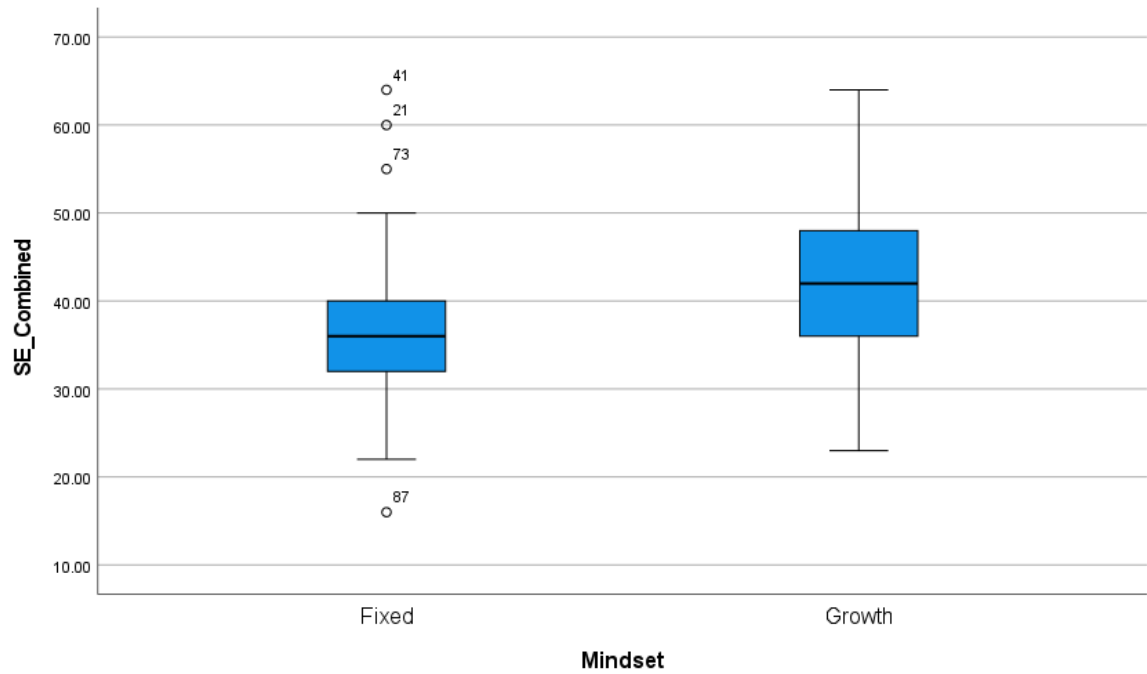
for Mindset= Growth

Figure A6.
Boxplot self-efficacy divided by fixed mindset and growth mindset

Appendix B

Figure B1.
Q-Q plot self-efficacy

Dependent Variable: SE_Combined

Model: Intercept + IV + SC_MEAN + SC_MEAN