

DO REGULATORY FOCUS AND MINDSET AFFECT YOUNG ADULTS' WELL-BEING? THE STUDY OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

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This study examined the relationship between regulatory focus, mindset, and well-being in young adults. Specifically, it aimed to explore whether promotion focus, prevention focus, and growth mindset were linked to higher levels of well-being. The study also investigated how psychological well-being, the pursuit of success, avoidance of failure, and a development-oriented mindset are interconnected. The sample included 332 young adults aged 18-25, who completed questionnaires assessing regulatory focus, mindset, and well-being. The results revealed that promotion focus and growth mindset were positively associated with well-being, while prevention focus was negatively related to it. These findings suggest that individuals who pursue positive outcomes and approach goals tend to experience higher well-being, whereas those focused on avoiding failure might experience lower well-being. Overall, this study highlights the importance of considering individual differences in regulatory focus and mindset when understanding factors that influence young adults' well-being. This information can help tailor interventions to improve mental health.

Key words: *regulatory focus, mindset, well-being, young adulthood*

Introduction

College students face numerous challenges that can impact their well-being. Among the various – psychological and contextual - factors influencing well-being¹ for students

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¹ Chaudhry, S., Tandon, A., Shinde, S., & Bhattacharya, A. (2024). Student psychological well-being in higher education: The role of internal team environment, institutional, friends and family support and academic engagement. PloS one, 19(1), e0297508. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0297508> Ridner, S. L.,

and their academic performance such factors that relate to individual differences in proactive and goal-oriented behavior might have a significant role. Research revealed that proactive behavior and approach-oriented goals are significant factors for psychological or subjective well-being². Such behavior based on motivation; particularly goal-directed behavior is explained by approach-avoidance motivation. Since cognitive theories developed, many motivational theories explain motivation with linkage to cognition and/or mindset. Recently, the theory of growth mindset became very influential in explaining the success³. A growth mindset, characterized by the belief in the malleability of abilities and intelligence, has been associated with better mental health outcomes, which means that having a growth mindset enables students to perceive challenges as a chance to enhance their skills, associated with a positive attitude towards learning and enhances students' motivation in academic settings⁴. Similarly, promotion focus, which emphasizes pursuing positive outcomes and aspirations, and prevention focus, which centers on avoiding negative outcomes and fulfilling responsibilities, are also linked to well-being⁵.

This study aims to explore how promotion-prevention focus and growth mindset relate to well-being among college students aged 18-25 in universities in Yerevan, Armenia. Particularly, it seeks to explore whether individuals with a promotion focus, characterized by a desire for growth and achievement, experience higher levels of well-being compared to those with a prevention focus, characterized by a focus on avoiding negative outcomes and maintaining security. It seeks to explore also whether individuals with a growth mindset, characterized by the belief in personal growth and development through effort and learning, exhibit higher levels of well-being compared to those with a fixed mindset, characterized by the belief in stable traits and limited potential for change.

Promotion-prevention focus, growth-fixed mindset and well-being

Regulatory Focus Theory (RFT) builds upon the fundamental concept that individuals are driven to seek pleasure and avoid pain, by providing a new perspective on what motivates people. RFT distinguishes between two self-regulation systems: promotion and prevention. A person with a promotion-oriented mindset is primarily focused on achieving success in an achievement situation and is more concerned with winning than losing. They are highly committed to their goals and strive to satisfy their own ideals, hopes, and wishes. They also prioritize growth and self-actualization needs. On the other

Newton, K. S., Staten, R. R., Crawford, T. N., & Hall, L. A. (2016). Predictors of well-being among college students. *Journal of American college health: J of ACH*, 64(2), pp. 116–124. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2015.1085057>

²Kaplan, A., & Maehr, M. L. (1999). Achievement Goals and Student Well-Being. *Contemporary educational psychology*, 24(4), pp. 330–358. <https://doi.org/10.1006/ceps.1999.0993>

Oishi, S. (2000). Goals as cornerstones of subjective well-being: Linking individuals and cultures. In E. Diener & E. M. Suh (Eds.), *Culture and subjective well-being*, pp. 87–112. The MIT Press.

Tamir, M., & Diener, E. (2008). Approach-avoidance goals and well-being: One size does not fit all. In A. J. Elliot (Ed.), *Handbook of approach and avoidance motivation*, pp. 415–428. Psychology Press

³Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. Random House.

⁴Kapasi, A., & Pei, J. (2022). Mindset Theory and School Psychology. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology*, 37(1), 57–74. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08295735211053961>

⁵Chen, J., Hui, E., & Wang, Z. (2015). More promotion-focused, more happy? Regulatory focus, post-purchase evaluations and regret in the real estate market. *Urban Studies*, 54(1), pp. 251–268. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098015619320>

hand, a person with a prevention-oriented mindset is more concerned with avoiding failure and mistakes in achievement situations. They are careful and precise in their approach and prioritize fulfilling obligations and meeting others' expectations⁶.

Regulatory foci affect student well-being: research has shown that individuals with a promotion focus during goal pursuit reported higher subjective well-being (SWB) compared to those with a prevention focus, and that possessing higher levels of self-control does not necessarily lead to greater SWB⁷. Examining regulatory focus in relation to well-being can shed light on the impact of goal pursuit and decision-making processes on young adults' subjective well-being. By exploring whether young adults with a promotion focus experience higher levels of well-being compared to those with a prevention focus, this study can contribute to a deeper understanding of how different motivational orientations influence well-being outcomes⁸. Furthermore, investigating the relationship between regulatory focus and well-being can inform interventions and strategies aimed at promoting positive mental health and well-being among young adults.

Mindset refers to our overall attitude and perspective towards ourselves, others, and the world around us⁹. Mindset theory emphasizes the beliefs and attitudes individuals hold about their personal abilities and potential for growth¹⁰. Two primary mindsets have been identified: the growth mindset, characterized by the belief in personal growth and development through effort and learning, and the fixed mindset, characterized by the belief in stable traits and limited potential for change. Examining the influence of mindset on young adults' well-being provides insights into how their beliefs about themselves and their potential impact their overall well-being¹¹. In educational settings, research has shown that individuals who had a growth mindset (as opposed to a fixed mindset) demonstrated higher levels of well-being and performed better academically, and that well-being played a mediating role in the link between growth mindset and performance, and that the positive impact of growth mindset on academic grades was more pronounced among younger students¹². This study aims to explore whether young adults with a

⁶ Higgins, E. T. (1997). Beyond Pleasure and Pain. *American Psychologist*, 52, 1280-1300. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.52.12.1280>

Higgins, E. T. (1998). Promotion and prevention: Regulatory focus as a motivational principle. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 30, pp. 1-46. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601\(08\)60381-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60381-0)

⁷ Ouyang, Y., Zhu, Y., Fan, W., Tan, Q., & Zhong, Y. (2015). People higher in self-control do not necessarily experience more happiness: Regulatory focus also affects subjective well-being. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 86, pp. 406-411. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2015.06.044>

⁸ Luo, N., Xin, X., Li, H., & Yu, X. (2021). Regulatory Focus, Boundaryless Mindset, and Creativity Among Chinese College Students: A Trait Activation Perspective. *Frontiers in psychology*, 12, 670394. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.670394>

⁹ Elliott E. S., Dweck C. S. (1988). Goals: An approach to motivation and achievement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54(1), pp. 5-12. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.54.1.5>

¹⁰ Joshua Aronson, Carrie B. Fried, Catherine Good(2002), Reducing the Effects of Stereotype Threat on African American College Students by Shaping Theories of Intelligence, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, Volume 38, Issue 2, pp. 113-125, <https://doi.org/10.1006/jesp.2001.1491>.

¹¹ Kern, M. L., Waters, L. E., Adler, A., & White, M. A. (2015). A multidimensional approach to measuring well-being in students: Application of the PERMA framework. *The journal of positive psychology*, 10(3), pp. 262-271. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2014.936962>

¹² Alvarado, N. B. O., Ontiveros, M. R., & Gaytán, E. A. A. (2019). Do Mindsets Shape Students' Well-Being and Performance? *The Journal of Psychology*, 153:8, pp 843-859. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223980.2019.1631141>

growth mindset exhibit higher levels of well-being compared to those with a fixed mindset, thereby contributing to the understanding of how mindset can shape well-being outcomes in this population. Understanding individuals' motivational orientations and mindsets would ultimately help promote well-being among young adults more effectively¹³.

Current research

First, we will investigate the relation between regulatory focus and well-being. Based on a literature review, our first hypothesis is that prevention focus will positively associate with psychological well-being, whereas promotion focus will negatively associate with psychological well-being. Then, we investigated the relation between mindset and psychological well-being. The participants consisted of 332 college students aged 18-25 recruited from universities in Yerevan, Armenia. The distribution of participants by gender consists of 30% males and 70% females. The data was collected from March to June 2021. Participants completed measures assessing their mindset, promotion focus, prevention focus, and well-being, including two self-report measures: (1) the Mindset Scale¹⁴, which assesses individuals' beliefs about the malleability of their abilities and potential; (2) the Promotion-Prevention Focus Inventor¹⁵, which assesses individuals' motivational orientation towards achieving positive outcomes (promotion focus) or avoiding negative outcomes (prevention focus). Participants completed the measures and submitted them to the researcher. Correlation analysis for the variables is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Correlation Analysis between Variables

	Mindset	Promotion	Prevention	Wellbeing
Mindset	1	.152**	-.135*	.267**
Promotion	.152**	1	.301**	.384**
Prevention			1	-.066
Wellbeing				1
<i>P** < 0.01, P* < 0.05</i>				

The data analysis revealed the following correlations:

1. Mindset and Well-being: The correlation analysis revealed a positive correlation between mindset and well-being ($r = .267, p < .01$). This finding indicates that individuals with a growth mindset tend to experience higher levels of well-being. This association suggests that individuals who believe in personal growth, development, and the potential for change are more likely to have better overall well-being.

2. Promotion Focus and Well-being: The analysis showed a positive correlation between promotion focus and well-being ($r = .384, p < .01$). This finding suggests that individuals who are oriented towards pursuing goals related to growth, accomplishments,

¹³ Medlicott, E., Phillips, A., Crane, C., Hinze, V., Taylor, L., Tickell, A., Montero-Marin, J., & Kuyken, W. (2021). The Mental Health and Wellbeing of University Students: Acceptability, Effectiveness, and Mechanisms of a Mindfulness-Based Course. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 18(11), 6023. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18116023>

¹⁴ Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. Random House

¹⁵ Higgins, E. T. (1998). Promotion and prevention: Regulatory focus as a motivational principle. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 30, 1–46. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601\(08\)60381-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60381-0)

and gains are more likely to experience higher levels of well-being.

3. **Prevention Focus and Well-being:** The analysis did not reveal a significant correlation between prevention focus and well-being. There is a negative relationship between prevention focus and well-being. This suggests that individuals' focus on avoiding negative outcomes and maintaining security may not have a strong direct influence on their well-being.

4. **Mindset and Prevention/Promotion focus:** The analysis shows a positive correlation between mindset and promotion focus, and a negative correlation between mindset and prevention focus.

Overall, these findings provide insights into the relationships between mindset, regulatory focus, and well-being among the participants. The positive correlation between mindset and promotion focus suggests that individuals with a growth mindset tend to be more motivated to pursue growth-oriented goals. Additionally, the positive correlation between mindset and well-being highlights the importance of believing in personal growth and development for experiencing higher levels of well-being. On the other hand, the negative correlation between mindset and prevention focus suggests that individuals with a growth mindset are less inclined to focus on avoiding negative outcomes and maintaining security. Furthermore, the positive correlation between promotion foci and well-being indicates that actively pursuing growth and accomplishments is associated with higher levels of well-being.

It is important to note that these findings are based on the statistical analysis of the available data. Further research using larger and more diverse samples is needed to establish the generalizability of these relationships. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the data limits the ability to establish causality. Future studies could employ longitudinal designs to examine how these variables unfold over time and their impact on well-being outcomes.

Discussion and conclusion

The results of this study suggest that mindset and promotion focus are significant predictors of well-being among college students aged 18-25 in Armenia. The results suggest that mindset is related to well-being among college students aged 18-25. Individuals with a stronger promotion focus reported higher levels of well-being. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that individuals motivated by positive outcomes tend to experience higher levels of well-being¹⁶, and the impact of promotion focus on well-being was found to be significant, whereas the impact of prevention focus on well-being was not significant¹⁷. Additionally, the results suggest that individuals with a growth mindset are more likely to be motivated by positive outcomes (i.e., promotion focus) and to strive to avoid negative outcomes (i.e., prevention focus). These findings contribute to our understanding of the complex relationships between mindset, motivation, and well-being among college students.

¹⁶ Sheldon, K. M., & Elliot, A. J. (1999). Goal striving, need satisfaction, and longitudinal well-being: The self-concordance model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76, 482-497. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.76.3.482>

¹⁷ Ouyang, Y., Zhu, Y., Fan, W., Tan, Q., & Zhong, Y. (2015). People higher in self-control do not necessarily experience more happiness: Regulatory focus also affects subjective well-being. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 86, 406-411. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2015.06.044>

The study provides insights into the complex relationships between mindset, motivation, and well-being among college students. The findings may have implications for interventions aimed at promoting well-being among college students, such as encouraging a growth mindset and promoting positive outcomes. The study also highlights the importance of considering different motivational orientations when examining the relationship between mindset and well-being¹⁸ [8,10]. Limitations of this study include the use of self-report measures, which may be subject to response biases, and the cross-sectional design, which precludes causal inferences. Future research could address these limitations by using objective measures and longitudinal designs, and by examining other potential predictors of well-being among college students.

Conclusion

Overall, addressing the limitations and implementing these suggestions can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of mindset and regulatory focus among young adults in Armenia, while also informing interventions and policies that promote their well-being and success. By examining the relationship between regulatory focus and well-being, this study can contribute to a deeper understanding of how motivational orientations shape young adults' subjective well-being. By investigating the relationship between mindset and well-being, this study can provide insights into the role of beliefs about personal abilities and potential in shaping young adults' overall well-being. The findings from the correlation analysis can help understand the interrelationships between these variables, provide insights into the mindset and motivational tendencies of young adults in Armenia, and potentially contribute to the existing literature on mindset and motivation.

ԺԵՅՈՒ ՍՈՆԳ, ԱՍՏԴԻԿ ՍԵՐՈԲՅԱՆ – Ինքնակարգավորման ֆոկուսի և զարգացմանը միտված մտածելակերպի ազդեցությունը երիտասարդների բարեկեցության վրա: Հոգեբանական բարեկեցության անհատական տարբերությունների ուսումնասիրություն – Ուսումնասիրության նպատակն է բացահայտել, թե ինչպես են փոխկապակցված մի կողմից՝ հոգեբանական բարեկեցությունը և հաջողության ձգտումն ու անհաջողությունից խուսափումը, իսկ մյուս կողմից՝ հոգեբանական բարեկեցությունն ու զարգացմանը միտված մտածելակերպը: Հեղինակների վարկածն է, որ հոգեբանական բարեկեցությունը դրականորեն է կապվում հաջողության ձգտման հետ: Ընտրանքը կազմված է 18-25 տարեկան 353 երիտասարդներից, ովքեր լրացրել են ինքնակարգավորման ֆոկուսը, զարգացմանն ուղղված մտածելակերպն ու հոգեբանական բարեկեցությունը չափող հարցարանները: Արդյունքները ցույց են տվել, որ հաջողության ձգտումն ու զարգացմանն ուղղված մտածելակերպը դրականորեն են կապված հոգեբանական բարեկեցության հետ, մինչդեռ անհաջողությունից խուսափումը նշանակալիորեն փոխկապված չէ հոգեբանական բարեկեցության հետ: Այսպիսով, այն երիտասարդները, ովքեր դրական արդյունքների և զարգացմանն

¹⁸ Elliott E. S., Dweck C. S. (1988). Goals: An approach to motivation and achievement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54(1), 5–12. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.54.1.5>

Higgins, E. T. (1998). Promotion and prevention: Regulatory focus as a motivational principle. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 30, 1–46. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601\(08\)60381-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60381-0).

ուղղված նպատակների հակումներ են հետամտում, ավելի հավանական է, որ կունենան հոգեբանական բարեկեցության ավելի բարձր մակարդակ: Հետագա ուսումնասիրություններում հարկավոր է ընդլայնել ընտրանքը՝ կատարելով համեմատություններ, որոնք առնչություններ կունենան սոցիալ-ժողովրդագրական և հոգեբանական բարեկեցության համար էական սոցիալ-հոգեբանական այլ գործոնների հետ:

Բանալի բառեր – *ինքնակարգավորման ֆոկուս, հաջողության ձգտում, անհաջողությունից խուսափում, զարգացմանը միտված մտածելակերպ, հոգեբանական բարեկեցություն, երիտասարդություն*

ЖЭЮ СОНГ, АСТХИК СЕРОБЯН – *Влияют ли фокус саморегуляции и ориентированное на рост тип мышления на благополучие молодежи? Изучение индивидуальных различий психологического благополучия.* – Целью данного исследования является изучение индивидуальных различий психологического благополучия студентов, обусловленных закономерностями саморегуляции поведения и развития мышления. В частности, исследование направлено на то, чтобы выявить, как взаимосвязаны психологическое благополучие и стремление к успеху и избегание неудач, с одной стороны, и психологическое благополучие и установка на рост, с другой стороны. Наша выборка состояла из 353 молодых людей в возрасте от 18 до 25 лет, которые заполнили опросники, измеряющие фокус саморегуляции, мышление, направленное на рост, и психологическое благополучие. Результаты показали, что стремление к успеху и установка на рост положительно связаны с психологическим благополучием, в то время как избегание неудач не имеет существенной корреляции с психологическим благополучием. Таким образом, молодежь, которая склонна стремиться к положительным результатам и целям развития, с большей вероятностью будет иметь более высокий уровень психологического благополучия. В будущих исследованиях мы считаем важным расширить выборку за счет проведения сравнений по социально-демографическим факторам и добавления других социально-психологических факторов, важных для психологического благополучия.

Ключевые слова: *фокус саморегуляции, стремление к успеху и избегание неудач, установка на рост, психологическое благополучие, молодость*