



SCHOOL OF  
ECONOMICS AND  
MANAGEMENT

# Fostering a Growth Mindset in Organizations

*A qualitative study of factors and challenges in fostering a growth  
mindset in organizations*

By

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## **Abstract**

Individuals with a growth mindset tend to accomplish more by putting increased effort into learning and development, compared to individuals with a fixed mindset. As uncertainty increases, organizations that promote continuous learning adapt faster than competitors. If an entire organization adopts a growth mindset, employees will be more motivated to learn. Growth mindset has, therefore, received increased attention from research and organizations. However, the question of practically fostering a growth mindset in organizations remains fairly unexplored. Therefore, this study aims to develop an understanding of practitioners' perception of factors that support fostering a growth mindset in organizations and to outline potential challenges for managers when fostering and practically implementing a growth mindset.

A qualitative method and an inductive approach have been chosen, by conducting a case study at Company X including eight semi-structured interviews with managers and employees working with a growth mindset. Following a thematic analysis, seven factors fostering a growth mindset and three potential managerial challenges were identified. The study indicates that factors and potential challenges affect and complement each other, and therefore they are hard to strictly separate. Another finding is that a growth mindset on an individual level lays the foundation for an organization's growth mindset, making the levels difficult to separate. Growth mindset on an organizational level is more than the sum of an individual growth mindset. Given that a growth mindset positively impacts individuals' learning and development, this research contributes with valuable insights of how an organization can foster a growth mindset practically. This awareness helps organizations manage the factors and potential challenges and maximize the possibility of fostering a growth mindset on an organizational level.

**Key words:** Growth Mindset, Leadership, Learning & Development, Management, Organizational Culture

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# 1. Introduction

*The first chapter aims to provide a background to the research, followed by stating the problem formulation and presenting the purpose and research questions of the study. Further, the demarcations and disposition are presented to guide the reader further through the paper.*

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## 1.1 Background

Today's world is complex and characterized by constant change (Berger & Johnston, 2015). It is filled with volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, referred to as VUCA (Kok & van der Heuvel, 2019). De Wachter (2012) claims that the changes happening in society today are as significant as the period between the middle ages and the modern world. In the current digital- and knowledge revolution, people are more globally connected than before. This makes the situation increasingly complex (De Wachter, 2012). Therefore, today's contemporary world is one of the most rapidly evolving periods in history (Kok & van der Heuvel, 2019).

To survive and succeed in this so-called VUCA-environment, businesses are advised to develop an organizational culture that fosters trust and cooperation, according to Kok and van der Heuvel (2019). It is therefore critical to create a collaborative working environment that fosters trust and a mindset that encourages working together to achieve organizational goals and objectives. By doing this, businesses will acquire new growth opportunities, while individuals within the business will gain autonomy and involvement (Kok & van der Heuvel, 2019). As the uncertainty increases and competition intensifies, together with technological advances and changing customer behaviors, organizations must learn and develop more than ever before (Garvin, Edmondson, & Gino, 2019). Organizations that prioritize continuous learning will be better equipped to cope with, and adapt, faster than competitors (Garvin et al. 2019).

Initially coined by Dweck (2016), a growth mindset is the belief that skills and competencies can be developed through work and dedication. In comparison, individuals with a fixed mindset believe that their talent is innate. Individuals with a growth mindset tend to accomplish more by

putting more effort into learning and development (Dweck, 2016). If an entire organization adopts a growth mindset, employees within the organization will feel increasingly motivated and committed to actively seek cooperation and innovation compared to an organization with a fixed mindset (Dweck, 2016).

Several studies have stated a positive relationship between growth mindset amongst students and organizational variables such as openness to change and organizational culture (Hanson, Bangert & Ruff, 2016). Also, developing a beneficial organizational culture is important to successfully reach the business' overall strategy (Johnston, 2017). An organization is reliant on its culture, and it is the responsibility of leaders to ensure that culture-shaping efforts are conducted to meet organizational goals. To be able to change the corporate culture, Johnston (2017) claims that leaders need to change individuals' mindset and encourage them to learn more. This is done by fostering an agile and adaptable growth mindset, which will make the company thrive and outperform companies with a fixed mindset (Johnston, 2017).

## **1.2 Problem Formulation**

Han & Stieha (2020) state that several studies have researched an individual's growth mindset and have compared the benefits of a growth mindset to a fixed mindset. According to Kouzes and Posner (2019), research often investigates traits and characteristics of leaders related to a growth mindset. In particular, Dweck (2006) has investigated the nature, factors, and consequences of having a growth- or a fixed mindset. Individuals adopting a growth mindset tend to put more effort into their learning and development since they believe that they can develop personal qualities and competencies, by dedication and hard work (Dweck, 2016).

Recently there has been a growing interest in researching the growth mindset (Han & Stieha, 2020). Some research has also investigated growth mindset from an organizational perspective with a focus on Human Resource Development (Han & Stieha, 2020). Dweck (2016) states that employees in an organization with high levels of a growth mindset will feel more motivated and committed to developing themselves and the organization. This will, in turn, positively affect the entire organization (Dweck, 2016). We believe that a growth mindset is essential within learning



and development, since individuals with a growth mindset feel motivated to develop themselves. Therefore, an organizational culture with a growth mindset will enhance learning and development initiatives, making the two components connected.

However, limited research has investigated practitioners' perception of factors fostering a growth mindset from a management perspective. Also, limited research has investigated a growth mindset from the perspective of learning and development. Thus, a gap is identified in combining the three topics of growth mindset, learning and development, and leadership. We have also identified a gap regarding how to foster a growth mindset practically in organizations. Growth mindset affects the entire organization, both in creating a culture that helps the company survive and succeed in a VUCA world (Kok & van der Heuvel, 2019) and to improve employees' learning (Hüther, 2016). This leads to competitive advantage, according to Hüther (2016). However, to reach this we believe organizations must understand what factors to consider to practically foster a growth mindset. Therefore, this study will investigate what factors support fostering a growth mindset amongst individuals and within the organization, and potential managerial challenges related to this. To be able to investigate the factors and potential challenges related to this practically, it is suitable to investigate a company actively working with a growth mindset, according to us. Therefore, the research is conducted as a case study at a company working with a growth mindset.

### **1.3 Case Company**

The chosen case company is referred to as Company X, since the company wishes to remain anonymous. According to Company X (personal communication, 9 March 2021), they understand the complexity in the rapidly changing conditions and are in the forefront of communications technology. With a total of 100 000 employees globally, Company X claims to recognize the value of developing individuals to cope with the increased complexity in today's business world. They have integrated the growth mindset into their structure and culture (personal communication, 9 March 2021). Thus, this research was conducted as a case study with Company X to investigate how they work with a growth mindset within their learning and development initiatives and how they support fostering it on an organizational level.

## 1.4 Purpose and Research Questions

The overall purpose of this research is to develop an understanding of practitioners' perception of factors that support fostering a growth mindset in organizations, specifically within learning and development. Further, the purpose is to outline potential challenges for managers when fostering and practically implementing a growth mindset within employees in organizations.

The intention is that our research findings will contribute with practical insights on how to foster a growth mindset in an organization. This in turn, can improve organizations' current practices within learning and development and management.

In order to fulfill this research purpose, the study will address the following questions:

1. *What factors support fostering a growth mindset on an individual and organizational level?*
2. *What are potential challenges for managers, when fostering a growth mindset on an individual and organizational level?*

### 1.4.1 Reflection on the Purpose and Research Questions

The researchers have identified a gap between the three topics of growth mindset, learning and development, and leadership. The development of a growth mindset has to be understood in a context, where we believe learning and development and leadership are two subcomponents. The three topics are included in the literature review. Growth mindset is critical in learning and development, since individuals will feel motivated to learn and develop with a growth mindset.

Moreover, the research questions are divided into factors that support fostering a growth mindset and potential managerial challenges related to this. The researchers chose to focus on these two aspects to provide a clear structure for the reader. Another reason for the split between factors and potential challenges is to be as practical and concrete as possible. Therefore, the first research question addresses the factors that support fostering a growth mindset. The second question, attempts to investigate the opposite aspect of fostering a growth mindset. Managers are essential in changing individuals' mindsets and the organizational culture. Thus, the second question

addresses potential managerial challenges when fostering a growth mindset. The two research questions complement each other to contribute with knowledge about factors that support fostering a growth mindset.

## **1.5 Demarcations**

To fulfill the purpose of this research and due to time limitations, a demarcation of the research scope was needed. There is limited research on growth mindset in general, however it is becoming increasingly popular. Both fixed and growth mindset are mentioned together in the literature review to give the reader a foundational understanding of the concepts. This study aims to focus on factors that support fostering a growth mindset and potential managerial challenges related to this. Therefore, a thorough examination of the origins and history of the mindsets will not be provided. Studies have investigated the growth mindset within children and students and this lies outside of the scope of this research.

The literature review aims to contribute with a theoretical context about growth mindset, leadership and learning and development. The literature review is not an exhaustive review on all literature available, rather, the literature is chosen to provide a background relevant for the purpose of this study. The research is conducted as a case study at one company, in one specific industry, working actively with a growth mindset. Hence, there may be other factors and potential managerial challenges found in other companies and industries which are not investigated. This study aims to investigate potential challenges for managers when fostering a growth mindset on individual and organizational level. The study has a managerial perspective and therefore not an employee's perspective.

## **1.6 Disposition**

The six major sections consist of an introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, discussion and analysis, together with a conclusion. The first chapter (Chapter 1) consists of an introduction, followed with a literature review (Chapter 2) that provides a theoretical context of growth mindset, leadership, and learning and development. The methodology section (Chapter 3) follows, and addresses the research approach, context and design. Further, the chapter

demonstrates how data was collected and analyzed together with limitations and ethical considerations. The chapter aims to provide the reader with a critical reflection on the selected methodological standpoints. Thenceforth, findings (Chapter 4) are presented, with identified themes from the interviews. Further, a discussion and analysis (Chapter 5) of the findings and literature review is presented. Lastly, a conclusion (Chapter 6) is provided with the aim of answering the research questions and fulfilling the purpose. In addition, the chapter covers the study's limitations and future research proposals.

## **2. Literature Review**

*This chapter aims to contribute with an overview of the best available knowledge related to the study. The chapter starts by presenting the contribution of the literature review followed by a reflection on the selected sources. Further, a literature review regarding the concept of growth mindset by explaining the definition and background of the terminology will be provided. Lastly this chapter will demonstrate literature regarding learning and development and leadership when fostering a growth mindset together with a short summary of the best available knowledge.*

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### **2.1 The Aim of the Literature Review**

The literature review aims to provide a theoretical background to the concept of growth mindset, combined with the topics of learning and development, and leadership. It is necessary to create a theoretical understanding before conducting empirical research on the subjects and therefore this part serves as a background. The literature review helps identify the knowledge gap on how organizations can support fostering a growth mindset, both within individuals and in an organization, together with potential managerial challenges related to this in the context of learning and development.

### **2.2 Reflection on Selected Literature**

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), the literature review aids researchers in becoming familiar with relevant information about the issue they are attempting to solve. Further, they claim that textbooks and academic journals are the most valuable sources of information and they provide value for the readers (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Therefore, the literature review focuses on collecting the best available knowledge of relevant topics. In accordance with Sekaran and Bougie (2016), the sources in the literature review aim to consist of textbooks and peer-reviewed academic journals to secure the quality of the selected sources.

The first section of the literature review about growth mindset is mainly based on Dweck's research (Dweck, 1999, 2006, 2014, 2016; Haimovitz & Dweck, 2017). This is because Dweck founded

the terms fixed and growth mindset and has conducted extensive research on the concepts. Also, a majority of other journals regarding fixed and growth mindset cite her work. Basing most of the literature review on the growth mindset on the work of Dweck results in a one-dimensional view of the growth mindset. Additionally, this leads to limited perspectives on growth mindset. However, the concept of the growth mindset is fairly unexplored and modern, making the work of Dweck essential to discuss.

When reviewing the existing literature, the researchers acknowledged that the concept of learning and development is broad and complex. The concept has different models and frameworks to describe learning processes within organizations. The researchers have been provided theories and models within the field of learning and development through their Master in Management, at Lund University School of Economics and Management. In addition, the researchers have found other relevant theories and models through the databases Lub Search and LubCat. The selection of sources has been based on the above mentioned sampling and are relevant to answer the research purpose. As a consequence of the broad existing research on learning and development, the researchers have had to sample and select sources relevant to fulfill the research aim. Consequently, this may exclude other views and perspectives on learning and development. However, it was necessary to make a relevant selection.

Leadership and management are general and broad concepts, and solid research has been conducted on both. The sources about leadership in this literature review are selected to add value to the other topics of growth mindset and learning and development. The term manager and leader will be used interchangeably in this research. Therefore, leadership theories connected to a growth mindset and learning and development have been chosen to focus on in the sampling of sources. Thus, the literature review does not include all possible viewpoints and prior knowledge on leadership and management.

The researchers are aware that there are more viewpoints and sources available, than the material covered in this study. Not all perspectives and theories are included in the literature review due to the limited time frame. The covered material is selected based on its relevance to the research purpose and to answer the research questions. As mentioned, the provided information and

previous research are intended to be relevant together with the other topics discussed and to create value to the study. Thus, the review contains relevant material to provide a theoretical context.

## **2.3 Growth Mindset**

### *2.3.1 Definition of Fixed and Growth Mindset*

A growth mindset is defined as the assumption that a person's skills and abilities can develop through work, experimentation, and dedication (Dweck, 2006). With a growth mindset, individuals are convinced that personal qualities can grow and be cultivated through effort and training. This profoundly impacts future decisions and life paths. Individuals with a growth mindset believe that the limits of a person's capabilities are unknown. Further, it creates motivation and willingness for learning in general (Dweck, 2006). In combination with this, individual output, dyadic relationships, and organizational outcomes have all been studied to be positively impacted by a growth mindset (Han & Stieha, 2020).

Fixed mindset is the opposite of a growth mindset. A fixed mindset entails a belief that skills and abilities are innate and are hard to develop (Dweck, 2006). With this mindset, individuals believe that their qualities are static and that everyone is born with a specific amount of intelligence or personality. Oftenly, individuals with a fixed mindset avoid experimenting and prefer conducting assignments in which they are confident. Individuals with a fixed mindset frequently experience that they want to prove themselves to others (Dweck, 2006).

### *2.3.2 Background of Growth Mindset*

According to Dweck (2006), individuals have always thought and acted differently. The underlying reasons for these differences have divided researchers. Some claim that the differences in thoughts and actions are due to physical aspects such as genes, while others claim it is background and experience. Today, researchers have agreed that both nature and nurture are essential when explaining individual differences. Dweck (2006) claims individuals are born with a unique set of genetic endowments, for example, different attitudes and temperaments. However, these are changeable with experience and personal commitment. A person's self-view affects their decisions and actions because they perceive risk and effort differently, Dweck (2006) claims.

The belief that individuals can develop their personal abilities is referred to as implicit theories of Mindset theory (Haimovitz & Dweck, 2017). Previously in mindset theory, individuals adopting the belief that personal traits and abilities are adaptable were referred to as incremental theorists. In comparison to this, those who view personal traits as unchangeable were described as entity theorists (Dweck & Leggett, 1988 in Han & Stieha, 2020). These different views on personal abilities influence individuals' learning processes (Haimovitz & Dweck, 2017). Later on, the concept of incremental and entity theorists advanced into growth and fixed mindset (Dweck, 1999; Dweck, 2006).

Studies have aimed to investigate whether a growth mindset can be inherited. Research varies in whether adults' mindset influences children's degree of fixed or growth mindset. However, Haimovitz and Dweck (2017) claim that adults' mindsets are not directly passed onto children. Instead, the discourse and behavior of adults can impact children's learning by focusing on the learning process or performance. This, in turn, can have an impact on the development of a fixed or growth mindset (Haimovitz & Dweck, 2017).

According to Dweck (2006), it is possible to measure an individual's degree of fixed and growth mindset. Dweck (2006) has developed a self-assessment instrument measuring fixed and growth mindset. The instrument intends to identify the degree of a growth mindset a person possesses, on a spectrum ranging from fixed to growth mindset. However, self-assessment tests are associated with many limitations. For instance, people generally overestimate their abilities and performances, making self-assessment tests' accuracy doubtful. Individuals with a fixed mindset tend to misestimate their abilities and performances to a higher degree than individuals with a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006).

An organization can be seen as an open system since it must deal with a changing environment (Bolman & Deal, 2019). According to Bolman and Deal (2019), organizations are characterized by complexity, surprises, deceptiveness, and ambiguity. Therefore, every organization has to adapt to internal and external factors, for example, the size, culture, strategy, and central processes of a company (Bolman & Deal, 2019). To gain a competitive advantage, organizations are constantly



developing ways to improve employees' learning to boost innovation and teamwork (Hüther, 2016). It is essential to encourage employees to experiment and learn from previous failures to reach a higher level of learning and performance (Hüther, 2016). According to Dweck (2014), it requires effort and hard work for an organization to adopt and build an environment with a growth mindset. An individual's mindset, either growth or fixed, may impact other individuals' behaviors and actions. Therefore individuals' mindsets can lead to team-level outcomes in the workplace and in the entire organization (Han & Stieha, 2020).

Han and Stieha (2020) relate the organizational perspective of growth mindset to building an organizational learning culture and growing collaborative efforts for better overall results. Several studies have demonstrated a connection between organizational effort and growth mindset. This is because the growth mindset facilitates leaders and employees to develop a productive partnership based on meaningful communication and collaborative efforts (Hanson et al. 2016).

Employees value and prioritize different elements of an organization. Dweck (2014), demonstrated that not all employees thrive in an organizational environment with a growth mindset. Some employees prefer a system in which talent is better identified and rewarded accordingly. Moreover, early research indicates that focusing on employees' potential for growth in most organizations can result in substantial benefits (Dweck, 2014). Research has shown several benefits of adopting a growth mindset in an organization. For example, 34 percent of employees are more likely to feel a deep sense of loyalty to the company, 47 percent are more likely to say that their peers are trustworthy, and 65 percent are more likely to say that the company encourages risk-taking (Dweck, 2014, p. 28).

When aiming towards building a work environment with a high degree of growth mindset, on all levels in an organization, a meaningful training program containing of workshops can be a beneficial first step, according to Dweck (2006). These workshops may include exercises aimed to enhance communication skills, mentoring capabilities and foster a growth mindset. Creating an environment where individuals can develop a growth mindset involves presenting skills as learnable. Secondly, the organization has to continuously communicate the value of learning and effort, and not solely rewarding ready-made talent. Lastly, a feedback culture promoting learning

and development has to be implemented to see managers as resources for learning through mentorship and coaching. It is crucial to see the potential in human resources for learning and development initiatives to be fruitful on an organizational level (Dweck, 2006).

## **2.4 Learning and Development**

### *2.4.1 Learning Organization*

Learning is crucial and requires regular effort and practice (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). As organizations are confronted with increased competition, digital advancements, and changes in customer preferences, it is critical for organizations to continuously learn more and develop (Garvin et al. 2019). According to Senge (2006), a learning organization is an organization where people continuously expand their knowledge to create desirable results, are driven by collective aspirations, and where new ways of thinking are encouraged and nurtured. People continuously learn how to learn together (Senge, 2006).

According to Garvin et al. (2019), the concept of a learning organization is becoming increasingly popular. Learning organizations are better at adapting to unpredictable situations compared to competitors (Garvin et al. 2019). However, practically implementing a learning organization has previously been challenging due to difficulties with identifying sequential practical steps in achieving it. The concept has often been aimed towards senior executives instead of departments in which actual learning was crucial. Lastly, tools measuring the amount of learning in an organization have been lacking, making it less feasible (Garvin et al. 2019).

The building blocks for creating a learning organization consist of three factors; a supportive learning environment, concrete learning processes and practices, and, lastly, leadership behavior that reinforces learning (Garvin et al. 2019). More specifically, a supportive learning environment consists of psychological safety, appreciation of differences, openness to new ideas, and time for reflection. It is vital to ensure concrete learning processes and practices to build a learning organization. This is because constructing a learning organization requires effort, concrete activities, collection of information and experimentation. In this, knowledge must be shared and distributed efficiently, both vertically and horizontally in the organization (Garvin et al. 2019).

Lastly, leaders must reinforce and encourage learning by actively listening to employees and initiating dialogue and debate. If leaders signal the importance of continually learning, this will influence the organization, signaling that employees' new ideas and ways of working are valued (Garvin et al. 2019).

According to Crossan, Lane, and White (1999), the organizational learning process can be defined in four steps, the "4Is". Firstly, in the process of intuition individuals recognize patterns due to previous experience. Secondly, the following process consists of interpreting or explaining it through dialogue and actions. The third step consists of integrating, meaning to create a shared understanding amongst individuals to create joint actions. The last step is institutionalizing what has been learned by ensuring routines, defining actions, and bringing learnings from an individual and group level into the organizational level by ensuring organizational mechanisms. Organizational learning also occurs over time and on different levels, making it a dynamic process (Crossan et al. 1999). The "4Is" occur at three levels; individual, group, and organizational. Also, organizational learning comprises of mentally absorbing new knowledge and learnings, *feedforward*, and exploiting past already present knowledge and learnings, *feedback*. In the feed-forward process, the individual brings new ideas and action into the organization, simultaneously as learnings flow from the organization to both group and individual levels. Further, it creates tension between the levels of individual, group, and organizational learnings (Crossan et al. 1999).

#### 2.4.2 Organizational Culture

According to Schein (2010) organizational culture is a complex phenomenon. It is hard to define and classify, but it is a critical element that implies structural stability (Schein, 2010). Organizational culture refers to a collection of shared values, beliefs, and norms considered unique (Schein, 2010). Organizational culture operates at several levels (Schein, 2010) and significantly impacts how an enterprise builds capabilities and how efficiently they are used (Barney, 1986). Additionally, a corporate culture includes behavioral norms that impact how employees act and think (Schein, 2010). The strength of a culture is determined by how long it has existed and how emotionally intense the culture experience has been (Schein, 2010). Organizational culture is hard to change, thus, employees value stability which provides meaning. In addition, an organizational

culture lives on even if some employees in the organization depart. Furthermore, achieving a sense of group identity is an essential aspect of culture (Schein, 2010).

### *2.4.3 Reframing Organizations*

Bolman and Deal (2019) describe that a frame is a mental mode of ideas and beliefs that facilitates an understanding of what is happening in organizations. According to Bolman and Deal (2019) there are four different frames; Structural, Human Resources, Political and Symbolic. Depending on which frame one chooses to see an organization from, different factors arise. Firstly, the structural frame emphasizes rationality, coordination and structure in roles and responsibilities. By putting people into correct roles the risk of distractions is minimized with the aim of maximizing employee performance. Structure serves as a blueprint for expectations and responsibilities. Structuring the organization correctly, supports goal achievement on both individual and collective levels since the organization exists to fulfill goals, increase efficiency, control individual effort (Bolman & Deal, 2019).

Another organizational frame is the Human Resources frame. Here, people are considered the most important organizational asset. This frame lies in the beliefs that organizations exist to serve people's needs and that there is a linkage between the organization and its people. If this linkage is poor, one or both parties will suffer. To aid this, a good fit between human needs and the organizational needs is essential, and will result in meaningfulness for individuals and success for the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2019). The third frame is the Political one, where dynamics and ongoing contests arise between individual- and group interests. This frame accentuates that organizations consist of coalitions between individuals and groups with different interests and beliefs. Bargaining and negotiation are key components to decision making. The most essential decision is how to allocate scarce resources. This makes power a vital asset to acquire (Bolman & Deal, 2019). Lastly, the final frame according to Bolman and Deal (2019) is the Symbolic frame. The main assumption in this frame is that the meaning behind actions are important and that multiple interpretations can be derived from one situation. In this frame, culture is the glue that holds the organization together and aligns people. Symbols, rituals, ceremonies and stories help guide employees towards goal fulfillment. Heroes and heroines may lead the way and inspire people, especially in times of uncertainty (Bolman & Deal, 2019).

## **2.5 Leadership**

### *2.5.1 Growth-Minded Leadership*

In a business environment faced with increasing complexity, leadership and management are necessary for a company's success (Kotter, 2001). Kotter (2001) states that the two elements of leadership and management are complementary. Further, Mintzberg (2011) suggests that managers should be seen as leaders and leaders as managers. Therefore, the term manager and leader will be used interchangeably in this research.

With the ability to believe in human potential and progress, leaders with a growth mindset allow themselves and others to develop. Preferably using the organization and others as a platform for their greatness, these leaders strive to foster development in the broader context, including the business, its employees, and themselves as leaders (Dweck, 2006).

Managers with a growth mindset must be able to invest in the advancement of their employees by acknowledging development, training, and accepting feedback. Individuals are allowed to evolve in a growth mindset environment created by communicating that skills can be acquired and developed. In this process, it is essential to promote managers as resources for learning (Dweck 2006). Dweck (2006) states that instead of hiring managers with the most talent, the organization should hire managers with a growth mindset or managers having the potential to develop a growth mindset. Managers with a growth mindset value the ability to give and receive feedback and strive to develop themselves and their employees continuously (Dweck 2006). Managers can improve their growth mindset by, for example, attending workshops and training sessions (Dweck, 2006). By showing humility in actions, leaders with a growth mindset have a positive effect on the attitude of others. Additionally, it can influence team members' relations and success in tasks (Wang, Owens, Shi & Let, 2018). According to Caniëls, Semeijn, and Renders (2018) leaders are a critical factor in developing engagement amongst employees in organizations.

Leaders must understand and pay attention to their employees' mindsets to motivate and engage them. According to Caniëls et al. (2018) leaders may benefit from understanding the mindset of

their employees and identifying whether it is growth or fixed. Also, leaders can benefit from creating an awareness regarding the consequences of future mismatches between leadership style and employee mindset to build knowledge about opportunities for personal growth and career development (Caniëls et al. 2018).

### *2.5.2 Transformational and Transactional Leadership*

Transformational and transactional leadership are two styles of leadership opposite to each other (Bass & Avolio, 1993). Transactional leadership aims to influence employees by setting goals and clarifying desired outcomes. Transformational leaders focus on empowering employees by encouraging individual skills and increasing employee dedication to organizational goals (Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002).

Transformational leadership is related to a growth mindset in terms of openness. Additionally, transformational leaders may help employees improve their personal development, and employees with a growth mindset are more open to this sort of leadership. However, transformational leadership does not affect individuals with a fixed mindset to the same extent, because they are usually not as open to this type of leadership (Caniëls et al. 2018). Humans are all unique, and transformational leadership is not a one-size-fits-all approach, as it depends on the attitude of each person (Caniëls et al. 2018). In research, it is demonstrated that transformational leadership has a higher level of success when combined with employees who have a developed growth mindset (Caniëls et al. 2018).

## **2.6 Summary of Best Available Knowledge**

The literature review has demonstrated how the topics of growth mindset, learning and development, and leadership have been situated in previous research and the existing literature. The literature review of the best available knowledge aimed to present the topics of this study. It started with defining a growth mindset and provided a background of the concept.

Furthermore, from an individual perspective, a growth mindset is described as the belief that a person's skills and abilities can be developed through hard work, experimentation, and

commitment. A fixed mindset is the opposite of a growth mindset. In an organizational context, there are factors that contribute to building a work environment with a high growth mindset (Dweck, 2006). Learning and development was also introduced, by reviewing literature regarding the concept of learning organizations, organizational culture and reframing organizations. Moreover, a learning organization is one in which people are constantly expanding their knowledge to achieve desired outcomes (Senge, 2006). Lastly, leadership and management were presented, together with growth-minded leadership. Further, transformational and transactional leadership were presented as two styles of leadership connected to growth and fixed mindset. To summarize, the topics of growth mindset, learning and development, and leadership have been presented. Methodological considerations will be discussed in the following chapter.

### **3. Methodology**

*An overview of the research methodology is presented in this chapter. The chapter presents the research approach, followed by the research design and research context. Further, the data collection methods are described, together with the data analysis method. Lastly, a reflection upon the limitations and ethical considerations are presented.*

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#### **3.1 Research Approach**

An inductive approach starts from observing specific phenomena and, on that basis, arrives towards a general conclusion and the aim is to look for patterns freely (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Thus, an inductive approach is preferably used in combination with qualitative data collection (see section 3.2 for more details). Inductive reasoning is a flexible approach that allows changes as the research progresses (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009) which allows the researchers to be open in the research process. Further, it facilitates the recognition of patterns observed in the data collected that can be analyzed with the help of previous research. Therefore, the researchers made a thought-through decision that this approach is suitable for this study when aiming to investigate one case company, in line with the qualitative method.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

This research is conducted in a qualitative approach, aligned with the researchers' choice of an inductive method. In a qualitative approach, researchers analyze the material focusing on the meaning expressed through words and analyzing the content using conceptualizations (Saunders, et al. 2009). The intention of qualitative research, especially interview studies, is to be transparent and flexible with the informants (Alvesson, 2011). A qualitative approach focuses on gathering data from the informants' points of view, which involves their words and interactions with the environment (Saunders et al. 2009). A qualitative method was chosen in this study to understand how a growth mindset is used in practice in a business context. This approach enabled the researchers to take part in informants' experiences and acknowledge the complexity in the given research situation, according to Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019). The informants' perspectives will



help the researcher to gain an understanding of factors that support fostering a growth mindset and managerial challenges related to this. In line with this, Bell et al. (2019) claim that a qualitative method often results in a more prosperous collection of data since the researchers are engaged in collecting it.

### *3.2.1 Case Study*

This research is conducted as a case study. This can be defined as conducting empirical research about a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life setting and from multiple angles and is a commonly used approach in business and social science (Yin, 2009). Further, a case study can be conducted by several data collecting methods (Yin, 2009), and it can provide both qualitative and quantitative data to analyze further (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). According to Yin (2009), a case study is a suitable method for understanding complex social phenomena by observing and investigating the characteristics of real-world events. The study aims to develop an understanding of practitioners' perceptions of factors that support fostering a growth mindset in organizations and potential managerial challenges related to this. Therefore, studying the concept of growth mindset in a real-world context is necessary. Yin (2009) recommends conducting a simple and straightforward type of case study, which the researchers aim to do by studying one company working with a growth mindset.

All research methods are connected to risks and misconceptions that need to be considered (Yin, 2009). One common misconception regarding case studies is that they are connected with high degrees of biases because the researchers affect the direction of the collected data, findings, and conclusions. However, according to Yin (2009), the risk of biases is present in other research methods as well, yet this is often forgotten. In this study, the researchers intend to aid the risk of biases by having an awareness of it. Being two researchers conducting this study provides two different perspectives of the case which in turn also decreases the risk of biases. Additionally, the research participants will be able to read through the collected material and approve it, preventing inaccurate interpretations of the material. This, together with following Yin's (2009) procedural steps will hopefully aid these risks.

A second misconception about case studies is the difficulties of generalizing the findings from one case study into other fields and areas (Yin, 2009). According to Yin (2009), the answer to this misconception is that case studies are generalizable theoretically, but not to entire populations or the universe. The goal of case studies are to generalize theories, *analytical generalizations* and not to reach *statistical generalizations* by measuring the frequencies. More information on how to reduce the risk of generalizability is provided in section 3.5.1.

Thirdly, case studies are time-consuming (Yin, 2009), however, this case study will be conducted in the given timeframe of ten weeks. Lastly, case studies have been downgraded as methods since they, according to critics, try to prove causal relationships (Yin, 2009). The risks mentioned above with case studies can be overcome by conducting the case study in a structured manner and following the procedures; *plan, design, prepare, collect, analyze and share*, mentioned in Yin (2009). This ensures that correct procedural steps have been taken to secure the quality of the case study. The researchers are aware of the risks mentioned above. However, this is still an appropriate approach since the benefits outweigh the disadvantages and risks. A unique advantage with case studies is that they deal with a wide range of evidence, varying from documents, interviews, and observations, and include more evidence than many other research methods (Yin, 2009). Moreover, case studies provide answers to how and why specific phenomena occur, which is hard to find answers to in other research methods (Yin, 2009). In line with this reasoning, a case study is a relevant approach for this research because it provides practical insights that other approaches cannot provide to the same extent.

The intention of having a case study in one company is to create a better understanding of factors that support fostering a growth mindset practically. This will help to fulfill the purpose of the study, which is to identify factors that support fostering a growth mindset in an organization and potential managerial challenges related to this. The chosen company for the case study is thoroughly selected based on working actively with a growth mindset, and therefore the case study is valuable.

### **3.3 Research Context**

#### *3.3.1 Selection of Company*

The study was conducted through a case study at Company X, also referred to as the case company. According to Company X, they are a market-leading company within the telecommunication industry (personal communication, 9 March 2021) and have a belief in a growth mindset within the core values (personal communication, 9 March 2021). Moreover, Company X states that they are a company working with a growth mindset (personal communication, 9 March 2021) and therefore it is a suitable company to conduct the case study in. To gain practical insights and to fulfill the purpose of understanding practitioners' perception of factors that support fostering a growth mindset in organizations, it is essential to investigate a case that actively works with a growth mindset.

#### *3.3.2 Information about the Selected Company*

According to Company X (personal communication, 9 March 2021), they are a world leader in communications technology, with 100 000 employees worldwide. Company X has four main business areas: Network, Digital Services, Managed Services, and Technology & New Businesses (personal communication, 9 March 2021). Each of these business areas are divided into several service areas, specializing in different types of operations within the general business area it is categorized within (personal communication, 9 March 2021).

The culture at Company X is characterized by the core values of professionalism, respect and perseverance (personal communication, 9 March 2021). According to Company X (personal communication, 9 March 2021) they enable personal growth by being transparent in expectations between the organization and employees. Further, Company X is committed to providing personal feedback and measurable objectives with guidance from leaders and collaboration with team members. They state that their leaders aim to create inspiration and encourage the overall company culture and ensure performance. Moreover, leaders are responsible for business practices and actively living the culture at Company X (personal communication, 9 March 2021).

Company X (personal communication, 9 March 2021) claims that they provide a structure for personal and professional development opportunities within programs, initiatives, and training. As the industry leader Company X has multiple resources to support each employee's personal and professional growth, according to Company X (personal communication, 9 March 2021). When it comes to the Growth Mindset, Company X claims to believe that the future belongs to learners with a belief in the growth mindset (personal communication, 9 March 2021).

Company X strives to be a company open for constant change with a culture that supports adaptation. This is critical to keep their leadership position in technology (personal communication, 9 March 2021). Therefore, Company X has in recent years decided to focus even more on people to improve the overall business. Thus, they have started a cultural transformation project consisting of for example webinars, projects, and events (personal communication, 9 March 2021). The project is the company's largest cross-company culture transformation (personal communication, 9 March 2021). According to Company X (personal communication, 9 March 2021), it is a project aimed at offering a high-impact way for employees to focus on the company's journey, both as individuals and as a company to chart a better path forward. Company X's cultural transformation project consists of five focal areas. Two of the focal areas are cooperation and collaboration as well as a speak-up environment. According to the case company, one enabler in the focal area of fact-based and courageous decisions, is to adopt a growth mindset. This is also present throughout the whole cultural transformation project (personal communication, 9 March 2021). Company X (personal communication, 9 March 2021) states that the intention is that the focal areas will pervade the everyday work of employees at all levels. This aims to increase enthusiasm to collaborate and achieve cultural goals.

A growth mindset is related to the learning and development of employees, according to Company X (personal communication, 9 March 2021). Hence, the learning and development unit is one of the responsible departments for driving this cultural transformation. However, since the aim is to reach all employees on various levels, the leaders in the organization are responsible for practically implementing it amongst their employees and ways of working (personal communication, 9 March 2021). Company X (personal communication, 9 March 2021) states that the cultural transformation project has already had a significant impact on the company's engagement and employee

satisfaction scores. Preliminary results have shown that the cultural transformation project has provided a clear direction for the organization, as well as increased the trust towards leaders (personal communication, 9 March 2021).

### **3.4 Data Collection Methods**

Data collection methods are divided into primary and secondary data (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Qualitative interviews with employees at Company X are collected as a part of the primary data. Secondary data refers to data from literature studies and published information (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016) and will be gathered as a supplement to the interviews and offer background knowledge about the topic.

#### *3.4.1 Sampling of Case Study Company*

It is important that the collected data represents the entire population intended to be investigated. Further, a sample entails an element or subgroup of the population with the purpose of generalization conclusion towards the entire population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Strategic sampling is a sampling approach targeting individuals and organizations with relevant experiences and knowledge related to the subject of interest to researchers in the study (Alvehus, 2013).

The primary data for the research was collected together with Company X in connection to the thesis' research questions. The company was chosen because it is familiar with the growth mindset terminology, in accordance with Alvehus' (2013) strategic sampling method. The company was decided upon by reaching out to several companies, working with a growth mindset, through the professional social media platform LinkedIn. According to Yin (2009) it is essential to clearly identify the unit of analysis in a case study. The unit of analysis can consist of for example individuals, small groups or organizations. To reduce the risk of choosing an incorrect unit to analyze, Yin (2009) suggests discussing the chosen case and the questions aimed to be answered by investigating the case. Thereby, both researchers discussed the research questions and choice of case company thoroughly before deciding on the specific case company. The unit of analysis must be clearly defined, according to Yin (2009), therefore the unit of analysis is presented below.

Company X is organized into four main business areas (personal communication, 9 March 2021). The researchers chose to focus on one specific service area within one business area to investigate. The specific business area and service area were chosen following the strategic sampling approach (Alvehus, 2013) since they contribute with experiences and knowledge relevant to the study.

According to Company X, the entire company promotes a growth mindset. The specific service area was chosen based on the experiences in a growth mindset, availability, size, the number of people that could be reached out to at different levels. It was important that the researchers could return to the informants with questions during the research process. Further, focusing on one service area enabled the researchers to explore the topics deeper, gather multiple perspectives, and gain even more dynamic insights and knowledge of the topics.

#### *3.4.2 Sampling of Informants*

The primary data was collected through interviews with employees at Company X. Individuals who had experiences and understanding of the growth mindset and consciously worked with the mindset were relevant to the study. A strategic sampling approach (Alvehus, 2013) was chosen in the sampling of informants to focus on individuals and organizations with specific experiences and expertise related to the research question. Before agreeing on a partnership with the organization, it was critical to confirm that the potential organization and informants actively worked with a growth mindset. This secured the sampling approach.

In total, eight employees at Company X were interviewed. It was an equal split between the genders. The informants operated at different levels and positions within the organization, which contributed to multiple perceptions of factors fostering a growth mindset. All informants work in connection to the same specific service area. The managers, regardless of levels and types of managers, are referred to as managers to secure their confidentiality. Moreover, to secure the confidentiality of the informants, pseudonyms are used when demonstrating the collected data.

The informants are listed in *Table 1*.

Informants	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Role	HR manager	Service area manager	HR manager	HR consultant	Strategy manager	HR manager	Engineer in the Service area	Service area manager
Position	Manager	Manager	Manager	Employee	Manager	Manager	Employee	Employee and manager

*Table 1: Overview of the informants based on their role and position.*

The final number of informants was decided upon in a joint agreement between the contact person at Company X and the researchers. The intention of selecting the final number of informants was to reach thematic saturation (see section 3.5 for more details). All informants were sampled and selected to cover various responsibilities, roles, and levels within one business area in Company X. The aim of including employees in the sampling, is to investigate employees' perception of managerial challenge.

Based on the strategic sampling approach requirement, all informants were familiar with the term growth mindset in their professional role. Further, all informants were involved in learning and development initiatives within the case company. Three of the informants worked directly within the selected service area. The other five worked closely connected to the service area, in functions supporting the service area on a high level. Further, to ensure a diverse sample of informants, diversity was considered by choosing an equal number of both genders and ensuring a wide range of nationalities amongst the informants.

The informants were approached by email and requested to participate in the research as voluntary informants. The email request was sent from the contact person on behalf of the researchers. The researchers are aware of the potential of biases, since the email was sent from the contact person. This could potentially affect the interview answers, due to their relationship with the contact person and their different roles. To aid this bias, the researchers provided a presentation of themselves

and the study's purpose in the email. After the introductory email, the researchers communicated directly with the informants without the involvement of the contact person.

### *3.4.3 Semi-structured Interviews*

This research is based on semi-structured interviews since the researchers aimed to have an open approach towards the informants and take part in each informant's perspective. Semi-structured interviews allow the researchers to explore the participants' viewpoints on, for example, perceptions, interpretations, and descriptions of the same subject, to gain multiple perspectives (Kvale, 2008). In accordance with Kvale (2008), a semi-structured guide (See Appendix 1) was designed with a clear starting point for each informant, allowing each topic to differ based on the informants' responses and varied follow-up questions tailored to the situation.

The interviews range from 30-60 minutes, depending on the informants' availability. The time duration of the interviews was justified because the researchers could return to the informants throughout the process. Before conducting semi-structured interviews, an interview guide was composed to have an open dialogue with the informants while still ensuring fulfillment of the research objectives.

Due to the ongoing global Covid-19 pandemic, with current restrictions (WHO, 2021), interviews were conducted online, using the digital platform Teams. Also, this digital approach was strengthened since the informants are located across the world. Further, according to Bell et al.'s (2019) statements, it also simplified the informants' participation in the study.

Both researchers were present during the interviews. The interviews started with an introduction including the agenda, purpose and ethical consideration (See Appendix 1). During the interviews, the two researchers decided to adopt two different roles, note-taking and actively conversing with the informant. The roles were altered every second time. Thus, both researchers conducted an equal amount of interviews each. The purpose of having one of the researchers verbally actively participating in the conversation was for the informants to feel comfortable and to simplify the conversation. Lastly, the informants were informed about the possibility to take part in a summarizing extract of the transcriptions.



#### *3.4.4 Company Material*

Secondary data was collected from company material to gather reliable and official information about the organization's operations, activities, and other factors of relevance for the study in accordance with Bowen (2009). On Company X's official website, relevant public information was collected and documentation from their learning and development department. Internal information was provided alongside this information to comprehend the organization's functions and relevance for the study. The company information helped the researchers develop an understanding of Company X as a company, including its structure, culture, and internal abbreviations. As a result, the secondary data supplemented the primary data, allowing the researchers to better view the company's work with a growth mindset and will of relevance in the discussion and analysis. The company material is described in section 3.3.2.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

After completing the initial data collection, the next step was to analyze the data. Data analysis in qualitative research aims to draw relevant conclusions from a large volume of collected data (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The collected data was analyzed using a thematic research approach. All data was structured to allow the researchers to more accurately interpret the interview and present exact quotations (Alvesson, 2011). Furthermore, using a thematic research approach (Alvesson, 2011) includes constantly identifying recurrent tendencies in the collected data. The thematic research approach aims to summarize meaningful content and see patterns in the data (Alvesson, 2011). According to Yin (2009) it is not easy to analyze data from a case study. Therefore, it is beneficial to conduct the data analysis in a strategic way, following a general strategy. However, Yin (2009) also mentioned that no method can be mechanically utilized.

The intention with the study's data analysis was to reach thematic saturation. According to Guest, Namey, and Chen (2020), thematic saturation can be described as the point at which the researchers cannot find additional patterns or themes in the collected data. This is a commonly used concept within qualitative research, specifically in inductive methods (Guest et al. 2020). The data analysis followed a theme identification method (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Ryan and Bernard (2003) provide

a guideline on how to identify themes in qualitative empirical data. Analyzing a text comprises of several steps, starting with 1) exploring overall themes and subcategories to these themes, 2) narrowing the themes down by filtering and selecting the essential themes, 3) structuring the themes into hierarchies and lastly 4) associating the themes to theory (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The researchers have customized the third step. The data analysis follows with a third step of associating the filtered themes with the research questions and renaming them. See Chapter 4, for an in-depth description of the themes identified in this study. The fourth step of associating the findings with theory, is further described in Chapter 5.

### *3.5.1 Validity and Generalizability*

According to Yin (2009) critics often highlight challenges with ensuring validity in case studies. To ensure the study's validity, we structured the interview questions with open-ended questions. Further, this is accompanied by follow-up questions to ensure that the researchers interpreted the informants' answers correctly, intending to minimize possibilities for misinterpretation. Sekaran and Bougie (2016) suggest that one can develop validity within qualitative research by two methods; endorsing generalizations by counts of incidents and ensuring representativeness. The researchers aim to achieve this by recognizing frequently occurring patterns in the collected data, following a thematic analysis method by Ryan and Bernard (2003). Also, in accordance with Yin (2009) internal validity is aimed to be achieved in this study by identifying patterns in the collected data. Further, we ensure representativeness by interviewing several participants in various positions and levels within the case company.

Sekaran and Bougie (2016) claim that not many studies can be generalized to different contexts, situations, or companies. The researched issue is often investigated in one specific organization and setting. Thus, the findings could be generalized to other identical situations, but the probability of this is limited. Restricted generalizability does not however, affect the scientific value of the research according to Sekaran and Bougie (2016). Therefore, the generalizability of this study might be restricted since it is conducted in one specific company and context. However, it can still bring scientific value by providing valuable insights and perspectives. This is also strengthened by Yin (2009) who emphasizes that case studies intend to reach analytical generalization, meaning the researchers aim to generalize a set of findings to theory. The intent with case studies is not to

reach statistical generalizations, meaning to relate the findings to the broader universe (Yin, 2009). Hence, this study can still contribute with valuable insights, since the findings are associated with theory. Also, by practically investigating factors that support fostering a growth mindset and potential managerial challenges related to this, new practical insight of value will be gained.

### *3.5.2 Reliability*

According to Yin (2009) reliability aims to ensure that later researchers following the same procedures will identify the same findings and conclusions. Yin (2009) emphasizes that this entails conducting the same case over again, not to replicate the procedures on other cases. The aim of securing reliability is to avoid errors and biases (Yin, 2009). A method to ensure reliability is to conduct a case study protocol and create a case study database, according to Yin (2009). The case study in this research is conducted mainly through semi-structured interviews. The interview guide is provided in Appendix 1. Further, since this is a single case study, the researchers did not see the need to develop a case study database. Instead, the researchers have aimed to describe the procedures carried out in this study carefully, which can secure reliability.

Kvale (2008) claims that a problem in reliability may occur during the researchers' transcription and data processing stages. Further, the researchers are aware of the risk of subjectivity in the transcriptions of the interviews. To avoid this bias, all informants were offered a summarizing extract of the transcribed data to look through and approve. The informants were also allowed to suggest modifications to the transcriptions. This ensured that the researchers had not interpreted the findings inaccurately and mitigated the risk of researchers' subjectivity in the interpretations.

## **3.6 Limitations**

### *3.6.1 Strategic Sampling*

According to Alvehus (2013), a risk when executing a strategic sampling approach is that the study may lack valuable perspectives from people not participating in the research. By exclusively contacting individuals working with a growth mindset within the organization, the study may lack other perspectives. For example, it would be interesting to research the perception of growth mindset amongst individuals with limited knowledge and experience. Further, by only executing

the research in one company and one single service area within this company, other perspectives relevant for the research might be unnoticed. Also, by explicitly investigating one service area within one organization, statistical generalization cannot be secured. Nonetheless, to fulfill the aim of this research and considering the time limitation, a strategic sampling approach was a relevant approach according to the researchers.

### *3.6.2 Qualitative Research*

A risk when conducting qualitative research in a case study, is that the case is chosen to confirm an already preconceived standpoint. This risk is high since the researchers have to understand the topic before conducting the case study (Yin, 2009). However, this bias can be overcome by being open to contrary findings and including contrary findings when presenting the result (Yin, 2009). The researchers aim to secure this by presenting all themes throughout the thematic analysis of the collected data. The aim is to give a representative presentation of the findings, striving for as much objectivity as possible. The researchers needed to build an understanding of the subject beforehand. Also, the use of a semi-structured interview guide ensured that relevant topics were touched upon and allowed for openness and flexibility to steer the conversation towards relevant topics occurring during the interview.

### *3.6.3 Virtual Interviews*

All interviews were conducted virtually instead of face-to-face due to the current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sekaran and Bougie (2016) argue that virtual interviews make it challenging to notice and understand non-verbal cues. The risk of the informants unexpectedly terminating the conversation is present, possibly giving inaccurate or incomplete information. Also, the researchers attempted to make the informants feel comfortable by using informal yet professional language. Conducting the interviews virtually enabled the informants to participate in the research from all over the world. Also, due to the COVID-19 restrictions (WHO, 2021) the researchers could not conduct other data collection methods, for example observations.

### *3.6.4 Limited Time Frame*

The limited time frame of ten weeks restricted the scope of the research, potentially affecting the quality of the study. With more time, other perspectives relevant and interesting for the study could

have been considered. However, being two researchers conducting the study enabled an efficient completion of the research within the given time frame.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), ethical considerations must be taken into account when collecting primary data. Ethical considerations are present in the entire research process, by emphasizing the informants' confidentiality and security in the data collection process. According to Bryman and Bell (2015), ethical principles are divided into four categories: harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy, and deception. Firstly, to avoid harm to participants and deception, the researchers collected informed consent from all informants. They participated voluntarily. During all interviews, consent to audio-record was established. The informants had the right to withdraw and end the interview at any time, without facing any consequences (See Appendix 1). The informants had the right to take part in a summarizing interview transcript and could request changes. The collected data was handled confidentially throughout the whole research process securing the informants' privacy by not exposing personal information such as identity nor job title.

Additionally, the collected data and confidential information were deleted after completing the research to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the informants. The research was conducted solely out of good faith. Deception was avoided through transparency towards the informants by letting them take part in the purpose of the study, clarifying rights and confidentiality and collecting informed consent.

## 4. Findings

*This chapter aims to provide an overview of the main findings of the gathered data from the conducted interviews. The chapter starts with a presentation of how the data was collected and conducted. The chapter consists of two subcategories based on the study's research questions.*

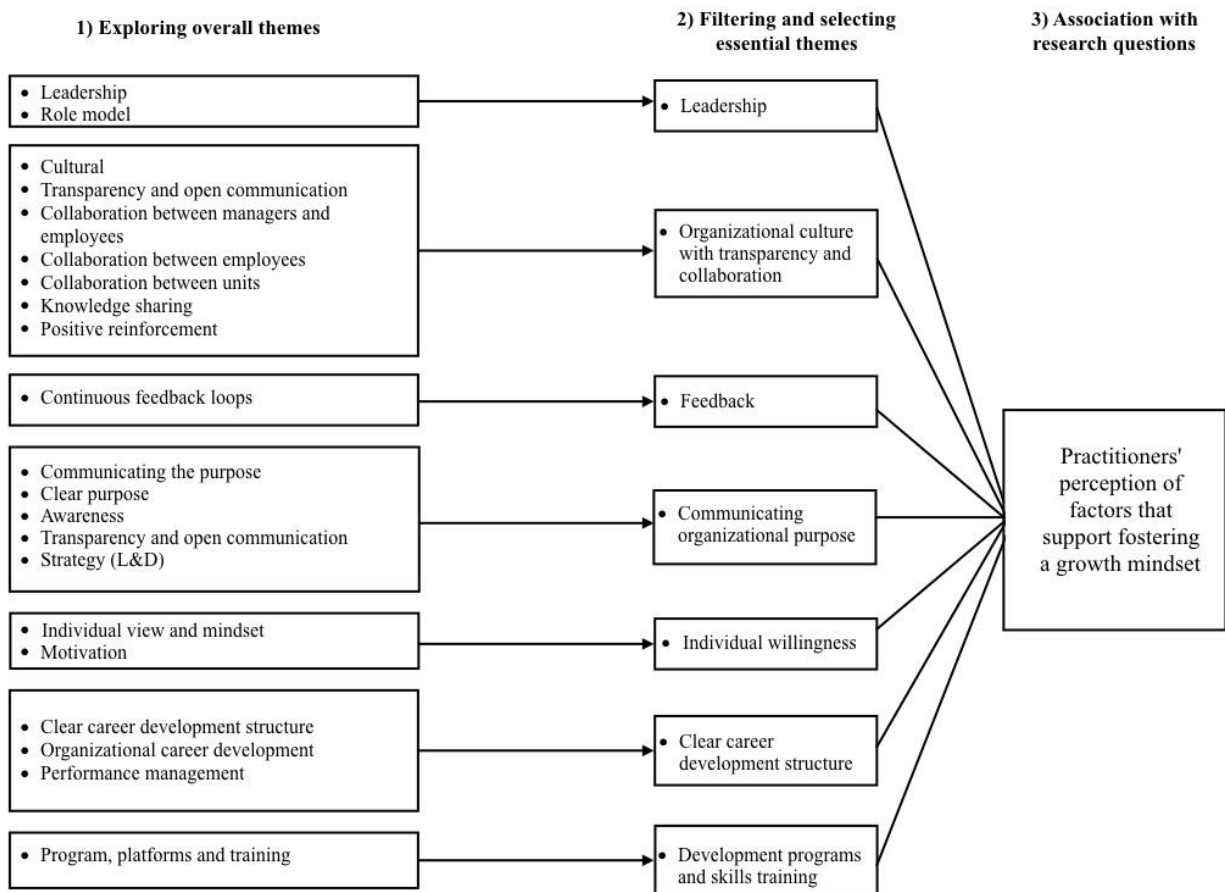
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The collected data was thematically analyzed following the sequential steps mentioned by Ryan and Bernard (2003). See section 3.5 for more details about the steps. According to Ryan and Bernard (2003), themes are preferably identified by repetition, metaphors and analogies, transitions, similarities, differences, and linguistic connectors. A color coordination structure was utilized to simplify identifying themes in the collected data.

The first step occurred following Ryan and Bernard's (2003) guidelines to identify themes. Ryan and Bernard (2003) claim that it is beneficial to identify as many themes as possible in this first stage. An overview of the identified themes is presented in *Figure 1*, which initially included 27 explored themes. The researchers perceived some themes as easier to identify than others. For example, the theme of leadership was repeatedly mentioned by all informants and making this theme easy to identify. The intention was to reach thematic saturation (see section 3.5 for more details), described as constantly identifying recurrent tendencies from the informants (Alvesson, 2011). After eight interviews, no new themes were identified, thus thematic saturation was reached.

Secondly, the themes were filtered and divided into ten essential themes, based on grouping similar themes together. Worth mentioning is that all themes in the previous step were filtered down into the ten themes. This step also included renaming the themes. The themes were renamed to properly reflect the content in each. For example, *Culture* was renamed into *Continuous improvements in uncertain times* because it consisted of cultural challenges in uncertain times. Therefore, the renaming was suitable to reflect the content in the theme.

Each theme is discussed in the following sections *4.1 Practitioners' perception of factors that support fostering a growth mindset* and *4.2 Practitioners' perception of potential challenges for managers when fostering a growth mindset*. The researchers intend to give an honest, equitable and objective picture of what was demonstrated during the interviews. The third step was to associate the themes with the research questions, into factors that support fostering a growth mindset and potential managerial challenges related to this. See section 1.2, to follow the researchers' reflection upon the research questions. The last step of associating the findings with literature will be provided in the next chapter. Summaries from the informants' answers during the interviews are presented in section 4.1 and 4.2. Quotes are provided to highlight important statements, expressed by the informants. Some quotes were easy to identify whilst others were more difficult. Some quotations have been attached with [...] to indicate modifications. The quotes have been modified and rewritten, to ease comprehension of them. The findings are presented in 4.1 and 4.2.



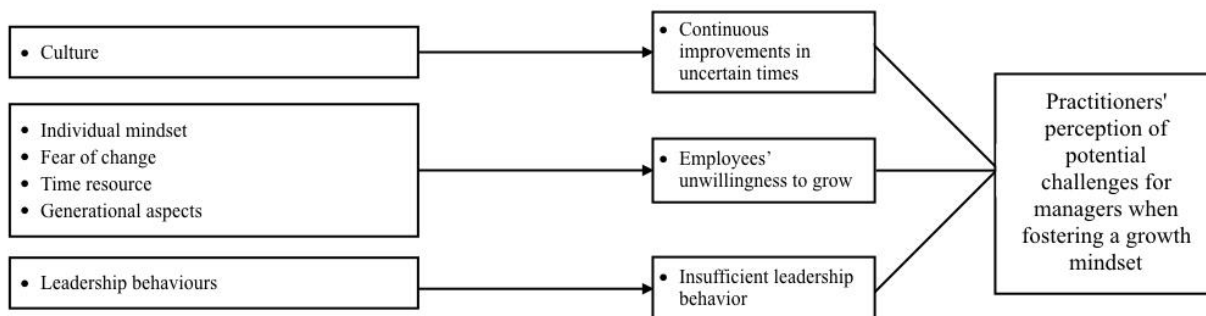


Figure 1: Overview of the identified themes

## 4.1 Practitioners' Perception of Factors that Support Fostering a Growth Mindset

This first section summarizes the findings from the empirical data collection and employees' perceptions of factors fostering a growth mindset. Moreover, this section addresses the study's first research question to find factors that foster a growth mindset on individual and organizational level. The first presented theme is *Leadership* (4.1.1). A majority of the informants highlighted the importance of role models and leadership to foster a growth mindset within the organization and individuals. Further, *Organizational culture with transparency and collaboration* (4.1.2) is presented as a theme. Several informants agreed that *Individual willingness* (4.1.3) and *Communicating organizational purpose* (4.1.4) affect fostering a growth mindset. This is followed by a presentation of the themes *Clear career development structure* (4.1.5), and *Development programs and skills training* (4.1.6). Lastly, the theme of *Feedback* (4.1.7) is presented. In addition, several interviews also brought up potential challenges when cultivating a growth mindset (see section 4.2 for more details).

### 4.1.1 Leadership

According to the informants, a common factor when fostering a growth mindset is dependent on leadership. Leadership was discussed in all eight interviews several times. In general, the informants expressed that the mindset of leaders affects the development of teams and individuals. A common opinion was that the mindset of leaders dribbled down into the organization and that



cultural transformations started from the leaders, which later cascaded down into the organization. B expressed that:

[...] There are lots of leadership training and all the leadership structure is based on cascading principles and values that are common across the company. [...] I think successful companies like Company X and many others are based on a good definition of their purpose and strong core values and principles that are cascaded, and shared across the majority of the company. The role of the leader is to ensure that it is cascaded, right? [B]

Additionally, several informants expressed the importance of encouraging and letting people grow. H explained that individuals must feel that they grow each year. According to A, the importance of influencing employee's mindset is reflected in the Company X culture. B mentioned that the leadership structure in Company X is based on values and cascading principles. Moreover, B explained the leadership mindset as "I think, having that leadership mindset, that your role is to enable your teammates to do their best as individuals".

Some of the informants expressed the responsibilities of being a leader. Several informants connected the manager's role to the development of employees, both in career and mindset. F emphasized that the case company set expectations on their leaders and that leaders have to stand by the company's decisions. E expressed that the manager's responsibility is to take care of the employee's career and to shape people, motivate and deliver results.

A common topic in all eight interviews was the importance for a manager to act as a role model. Both G and H highlighted the importance of leading by example, and D mentioned that leaders have to show the way. The quotes below demonstrate two aspects of role modeling:

I think it's about, you know, providing those good examples. And I think it's actually also about role modeling. So if someone sees, like, wow, this person moved from that place to this place, it's possible. [...] In this organization, particularly because it's so large, we have so much potential and so many possibilities. [...] And I do think that does give inspiration to people [A].

So the growth mindset within the learning and development function is not just pushing people to learn, but you will learn and you will become an example for other people to follow. So it's a practice what you preach approach [D].

B mentioned that motivation is an inner force where the company's goal is to help the employees to find their contribution in the organization to go that extra mile. Therefore, B believed inspirational talks by leaders are short-lived.

#### *4.1.2 Organizational Culture with Transparency and Collaboration*

When asked about the case company's culture, seven out of eight interviews answered that the culture is strong and healthy. E mentioned that the learning culture is very good, and D described it as part of a strong community spirit, which is connected to a growth mindset. The environment is characterized by openness where people feel free to express themselves, according to C. Further, H claimed that it is a speak-up environment at Company X.

A shared agreement is that *Company X's cultural transformation project* is a positive movement for the culture. According to A and F, the project is described as a cultural transformation encouraging a growth mindset. A growth mindset is aligned with having positive reinforcements, according to the informants. The quote below illustrates one aspect of positive reinforcement:

Positive reinforcement, so something our leadership, especially our CEO [...] has really fostered within the organization is transparency and open communication. And that has actually helped build up this entire culture and growth mindset, we are very transparent about what is it. [...] Walk the talk is something that he believes in and that gets cascaded further in the leadership. These positive reinforcements help an individual to sustain that positive perception, which is very important when you are trying to establish a growth mindset [D].

Although a vast majority of informants were positive towards Company X's culture, B highlighted that cultural transformations require a lot of energy, which is a challenge. Despite this, B had an

overall positive perception of the culture. According to F, the cultural transformation helps create a common language in the company, especially for those who are not used to speaking about culture. For instance, F, expressed it below as:

So what's quite nice to see is that when it becomes a common language, there is nothing awkward about saying certain words that can be perceived as soft. It's actually the other way around. So it's actually very easy for anyone in the team to bring up a certain cultural aspects such as empathy, for example, where you can start talking about it more openly than what you have done in the past. Company X has an amazing culture, and I think it has grown for 140 years. [...] Company X's cultural transformation project it's absolutely brilliant, it has made people start talking about certain behaviors that you sometimes need to address [F].

Some of the informants also expressed the culture as open and transparent. The openness helped the individuals to speak up, according to D. Further, E, highlighted that transparency is the key element in the culture. Apart from transparency and openness, G underlined that the environment is characterized by knowledge sharing. G mentioned that the case company has knowledge-sharing sessions one or two times per week, with different topics to share experiences. According to H, employees value time to share experiences and to have the chance to develop both themselves and others.

Five out of eight informants expressed the importance of collaboration. Collaboration was expressed in several contexts between units, employees, and managers. According to A, Company X has check-in conversations between managers and employees to ensure how things are going and that results and deliveries are on time. Further, C expressed that the collaboration helps show appreciation, ask questions and be open to each other. The case company has implemented a platform helping employees understand their individual unit's goals and strategies, according to C. Further, C mentioned that the collaboration aims to provide a growth mindset to other people where they can share competencies with the ones that currently do not have it.

Two informants expressed collaboration between units in the company as important. D expressed that employees with different areas of expertise together collaborate to target challenges, ambitions, and actions. According to C, the goal is to foster a collaboration where individuals learn from each other and grow.

#### *4.1.3 Individual Willingness*

Another common theme was the importance of individual mindset and taking responsibility for one's own mindset and development. This was mentioned in six of the eight interviews. The informants agreed that individuals are themselves responsible for their development, and this is underlined by A saying that:

[...] you are the CEO of your own career. So we are all CEOs of our careers. So we all, everyone has that responsibility, which again, it's a lot on the individual. It's like, you need to do that, you have that responsibility. And I kind of feel that it is also [...] in the spirit of a growth mindset, right? It's like, okay, I own it, it's my mindset [A].

B conveyed that motivation is an innerforce and the energy each individual puts forward to accomplish something. G stated that if a person wants to learn, there are many opportunities for it in the case company. According to G, there are pages and repositories available, but it is up to the individual to actually learn.

E highlighted the importance for people to want to develop themselves to reach their career goals and that development requires dedication and time. According to E, this development needs to be aligned with the goals of the business, by stating that:

[...] in terms of this growth mindset it is how can we develop the willingness of our people to develop themselves, according to what the business needs. But also to develop themselves to satisfy their growth aspirations or their career aspirations [E].

#### *4.1.4 Communicating Organizational Purpose*

Another theme mentioned by five of eight informants was the importance of having a clear purpose and communicating this to foster a growth mindset. C explained that it is vital for managers to communicate the organizational purpose to employees:

And so, it's a question of making sure that the managers do a very good and clear job of explaining what the purpose is, what we're trying to attain, what we're trying to reach. And then of course, then what are the benefits [...] from the employees' perspective [C].

Further, D stated that it is essential to align the organizational purpose with the purpose of the individual. This statement was also mentioned by B, saying that:

[...] but you need to find a way to drill down that purpose to something that is close to each one of the individual organizations, within the company, and within the individuals within those units. So I think that is a major challenge. How do you translate and connect the dots from the individual purpose to the company or organization where you work. [...] To me, it's very important to find that sweet spot. Where do you find your individual purpose, cooperating, collaborating, and vice versa, right? Gaining from the purpose of the organization that you work for [B].

Related to this is the importance of creating an awareness of the term growth mindset and understanding the impact of it, A claimed. According to A, awareness is an excellent first tool in fostering a growth mindset amongst employees by first acknowledging that there are different types of mindsets.

E claimed that the communicated purpose and strategy going forward has to be understood by employees to motivate them. E, F and G conveyed that the learning and development strategy is about upskilling and reskilling employees, connected to the purpose and that this is essential.

#### *4.1.5 Clear Career Development Structure*

Another essential factor when fostering a growth mindset was career development. Several informants expressed the importance of having a clear career development plan within the company, both for individuals and teams. One manager highlighted the importance of "developing themselves to satisfy their growth aspirations or their career aspirations " [E] and "how much longevity or career opportunities we can provide to the individual that whatever efforts they are doing, is going to be paid off" [E].

In addition, some informants connected the career development at Company X towards fostering a growth mindset. H described that it is important for employees to feel that they are growing, and in this process a career plan is a critical step forward. Another informant mentioned that it is critical to promote a growth mindset: "It's really important that the organization has a structure to promote, whatever growth mindset is, the organization needs to enable that" [E]. Therefore, the growth mindset was aligned in the structure as mentioned by E: "I think the elements to create this growth mindset is always providing the means, having organizational structure that gives a possibility, making it clear and transparent and simple".

E also highlighted the importance of providing a clear job role structure that fosters development and growth. It is critical to provide a structure for the employees to be aware of and understand the development plan for each role within the different stages as well as competencies that are required to develop. The case company provides a clear job structure, to enable an understanding of the requirements to grow in their role, for example taking responsibility for different assignments or projects, E explained.

Two out of eight informants also expressed the value of performance management. Further, A explained the importance of providing individual performance management to point out goals and targets to focus on and communicate development plans. Additionally, A stated that Company X has a formal evaluation at the end of the year for each employee and manager. Questions regarding goal fulfillment and amount of impact created are discussed according to A, while C stated that the evaluation includes questions like:

Does that person have those competencies, all the competency competencies required? Would they have that experience? If not, let's put a program in place to allow you to grow into that particular position [C].

In addition to the goals, Company X also evaluates the impact that each individual has created but also what impact it would have on the business to lose one individual, C claimed.

Finally, the perception of how the company works with job roles is mentioned by several informants. For example, E mentioned that a clear job structure and communicating this to employees is one foundation to fostering a growth mindset, from an organizational perspective.

#### *4.1.6 Development Programs and Skills Training*

Seven out of eight informants mentioned different training and programs within Company X as a factor to foster growth and development. A described that an intention behind these trainings and programs is to openly converse about concepts to enable everybody in the organization to perform at their best. A continued stating that the case company focuses a lot on educating and upskilling and stresses that it is vital that the training have an impact.

Four informants mentioned that a lot of training is targeting leaders in the organization. According to B, the purpose behind the leadership structure is based on cascading principles and values across the company. B highlights that programs will help speeding up and introducing transformations. A agreed and stated that the leadership training programs are there to help equip leaders.

However, a lot of the training also targets employees and consists of similar content as the leadership training but from a different angle, A claimed. F highlighted the importance of employees conducting training and programs because these lead to assessments and certifications, which in turn impacts the organization's success:

Well, at the end of the day it is because we have an engineer somewhere, seven layers down in the organization who's actually attending these types of courses and getting assessed and

certified. So yes, those individual contributions are definitely part of our customer success [F].

H explained that s/he believes that it is not only important to grow ourselves, but also to develop leaders. Leaders are managing people directly and therefore, it is important to have programs for people who are leading every day. Continuously, H, stated that training targeting different levels and positions is important.

The programs and training consist of courses, repositories, pages, and competency frameworks, amongst other things, collected in different learning databases, G described. D shared this view, by stating that the common portal helps facilitate information exchange and leverage best practices. It also facilitates a flexible learning approach, where people can plan their learning and growth journey, C stated.

An important factor with the learning platform, programs, and training is that they are accessible and easy to use for everyone, and that everyone has mobile accessibility to them, according to C and F. This is linked to ensuring democratization of the growth mindset, which both F and C mentioned. For instance, C, described it as:

[...] I think that this is something that we're going on right now [...], the democratization of the whole growth mindset. So that means that you set [...] an overall goal, and then people have that liberty or that flexibility, to be able to plan their growth at their own pace. [...]. That really allows people to have access to learning and development from anywhere, from any device. And they will find a lot of the things that will allow them to really grow. It's open, it's free for them to use, there are certain things that have to be paid, but that's [...] then approved by the manager, but most of it is access to a huge amount and wealth of information [C].

#### *4.1.7 Feedback*

A majority of the informants mentioned giving clear and continuous feedback as a factor that supports fostering a growth mindset. A highlighted that it is important to reflect upon how people



talk about feedback in the organization but also how to give feedback. F mentioned that Company X has an employee survey coming up, where they can keep an eye out on the organization.

Most of the informants mentioned that feedback is essential in the case company. Both managers and employees highlighted the importance of both critical and positive feedback to improve the overall business. For example, the employee G, expressed that his/her closest manager was open towards all kinds of feedback and that feedback is used to provide the best services and solutions to customers. From a managerial perspective, many managers expressed that they are open for feedback and H stated that s/he always asks employees for their opinion. Similarly, C agreed that a conversation between employees and managers is essential, both in terms of direct communication and in providing surveys. Furthermore, the feedback conversation is essential in the development of the individuals to remind the individual about continuous growth, as:

So that's where those conversations are very important, and they take place because managers need it, and you know, tends to want to remind the employee that, again, growth is very important and stagnating is obviously not, is not very helpful [C].

This statement aligned with A's view that feedback is a key element in the organization. Feedback is well incorporated in surveys in the company. Several of the informants mentioned an employee engagement survey, where each employee can give continuous feedback to its managers. In addition, A expressed that the people-function in the company follow up the survey and always listens to the feedback:

So where we have those managers who have low scores, we will actually go back, we will have discussions, we will see, okay, how can we help equip this manager? [A].

## 4.2 Practitioners' Perception of Potential Challenges for Managers when Fostering a Growth Mindset

The second section summarizes the findings from the collected data related to potential challenges when fostering a growth mindset, both on individual and organizational levels. This section aims to discuss potential challenges related to the study's second research question. Worth mentioning is that all factors that support fostering a growth mindset (see section 4.1 for more details) can turn into challenges if not appropriately addressed. This section aims to demonstrate three main themes identified in the conducted interviews, *Continuous improvements in uncertain times* (4.2.1), *Insufficient leadership behavior* (4.2.2) and *Employees' unwillingness to grow* (4.2.3).

### 4.2.1 Continuous Improvements in Uncertain Times

Six out of the eight informants expressed cultural dimensions as a challenge when fostering a growth mindset in uncertain times. The context of culture depended on the informants' views, and it varied in the answers. B expressed that there is a continuous room for improvement, regarding the challenge of attracting new talent and enabling their new talents to blend in with the already existing ones. Additionally, it is a challenge to consistently evolve and find new solutions. Moreover, B provided a metaphor of the improvement: "It is like an escalator. What you try to do is to climb, at least at the same pace that the escalator is coming down". It is critical, in a matrix organization like Company X, to keep the interaction going with the different stakeholders, C claimed. According to C, it is becoming increasingly complicated to keep track of everything and everyone. One challenge is illustrated below:

So, room for improvement, I think. [...] it's a lot of being open for new practices in the market. I think it's the biggest challenge for companies like Company X that are very long lived. And when you compare Company X with platform companies [...] they were born with a different mindset. They were born in a different cultural environment.[...] For companies like Company X, to be competitive, you need to find the balance between holding on to your core values, but also challenging them, and adapting them to the reality of the market of theirs and your competition. [B]

This statement is aligned with F, stating that the evolving VUCA world is characterized by uncertainty with no black and white answers. According to H, the challenge is to know what is required from Company X, to continue to grow. For instance, F expressed a challenge as:

[...] When it comes to people, we are in such a huge transformation. In the current context we are living in a VUCA world, a lot of uncertainty and the pandemic has definitely not helped. It has actually added to the uncertainty about what's to come. And I think everything we do when it comes to connecting with the business and working with the business is about change and being in constant change. And the challenge that you have there is that people very often want to close the books, right? [F]

Moreover, F claimed that the case company has many areas of improvements, for instance to start to connect the dots even further. F provides an example of “dots” in making learning a part of the performance processes, making the learning skills into practice, and connecting the combination benefits towards learning. Another challenge, stated by G, was the aspects of cultural differences. It involves participants worldwide in *Company X's cultural transformation project*, and G described that the cultural differences could be a barrier and provide complications for some of the activities.

#### *4.2.2 Insufficient Leadership Behavior*

When asked about the leadership at Company X, multiple informants commented on different aspects that occurred as a challenge. Two of the informants, one manager and one employee, expressed thoughts about the language and attitudes of managers. A highlighted that s/he perceived it as hard to know how the language is being received because s/he believes that leaders' micro behaviours make a big difference. From an employee's perspective, D believed that it is the attitude that matters: "If a manager is himself or herself not convinced about the entire concept, so it is the attitude of the manager that actually can make or break that individual" [D].

Aside from the language, one of the informants claimed that a challenge is the attention of leaders. For instance:

Sometimes even our line managers are so busy doing their things, they are not even paying much attention to their teams. So, we need to have a place where this information arises, so that we can see it [E].

Additionally, most of the informants agreed that leadership is essential in the company. In particular, F described the challenges occurring in management is that employees will leave bad managers. F elaborated on the statements saying that the biggest challenge for leaders today is to dare to say that they do not know the answers to all questions. Finally, F illustrated this by taking the pandemic as an example:

I think the biggest challenge is to equip leaders in being able to be inspiring enough and being able to say that we don't have a clear answer. But the most important thing is that you also need to set out the direction [F].

This statement illustrated the role of being a leader and the responsibility that comes with it. For instance, F described that leaders have a great responsibility to constantly explain the company's strategy and make it relevant for employees. F also referred to leadership behavior as setting out the direction and being able to translate and explain it.

H, highlighted that an increased number of people reporting to a manager aggravates the possibility of finding motivational triggers, applicable to all employees. Moreover, H expressed that motivation is an essential aspect of being a leader in the sense that leaders should motivate employees to grow each day, regardless of how long the employees have worked in the same organization. In addition to the motivation, D expressed the importance of providing a clear growth plan for employees and making sure that people trust the plan, otherwise, it is a factor that transforms into a leadership challenge.

#### *4.2.3 Employees' Unwillingness to Grow*

Six out of eight informants answered that one of the significant challenges when fostering a growth mindset is related to individual factors, as demonstrated by C:

Well, the biggest challenge is obviously if the person is not willing to grow, and is very set in the things that they are doing. So that is the most important part and with growth comes change. [C]

C mentioned that an individual challenge related to a growth mindset is fear of change and that development sometimes can be interpreted as a complete change, because managers ask employees to do other things and to be open to it. Following this, A conveyed that it is not easy to change someone's mindset. B emphasized that it is difficult to know how to tap into employees' very personal willingness to contribute with their energy to the organization, without using buzzwords. B mentioned that "working the extra mile" can be considered a buzzword, but that it is hard to understand what it really means.

Both C and D agreed that it is challenging to change someone's mindset. According to C, it is probably one of the biggest challenges to change an employee's mindset if the person does not want to do or does not feel the need to grow. D explained that learning is not something that one can force upon an individual.

Two informants believed that fostering a growth mindset could be related to generational aspects. E expressed that the majority of the younger workforce tend to have more of an interest in the growth mindset, and that it is an age or generational aspect. An individual that is close to retirement may not necessarily look for growth, according to E. G shared this view and actively works towards engaging the older workforce to embrace a growth mindset by working on how they collaborate inside the company.

It is also challenging to transmit an individual's growth mindset into an organization and this is highlighted in H's answer. S/he described the critical aspect of discussing each individual's plan and executing the plan. Further, H, believe people will transmit their mindset into an organizational level, when individuals know that someone is interested in their development and growth, by having a plan and executing it. F mentioned the issues that come along with too much freedom and responsibility and that too much information can become overwhelming. F provided an example of:

So, you know, there are many companies who can go out and say that just reinvent yourself and be your own CEO. But then, you know, there's a lot of people who are just feeling overwhelmed and have no clue where to go [F].

C, mentioned that information and areas of improvement could be overwhelming, and it helps to break it down into easy and understandable components. According to C, a solution is to provide bits of growth mindset to encourage and create an interest in it to overcome the feeling of overwhelming.

Two informants, both working within the service area, conveyed that the time aspect also influences the hardship with fostering a growth mindset within individuals in the organization:

I think the major risk is that at the end, at our level, we are working in different projects. So depending on the amount of jobs or stress and deadlines that you have in your own project, maybe this mindset change is more complicated to be adopted or to be applied in your project. So it's clear that we will need to have, like a spare time or something, or dedicated hours per week to embrace on dedicating them to learn more or directly apply these mindset changes to our job [G].

G highlighted that all the material needed to foster a growth mindset is available, but the time resource is spare, making it hard to prioritize the mindset shift. G's manager H, shared this view and conveyed that employees face a lot of stress in their daily work which makes it difficult for them to grow. Also, H mentioned that the daily work of employees takes time, making it hard to find time to grow.

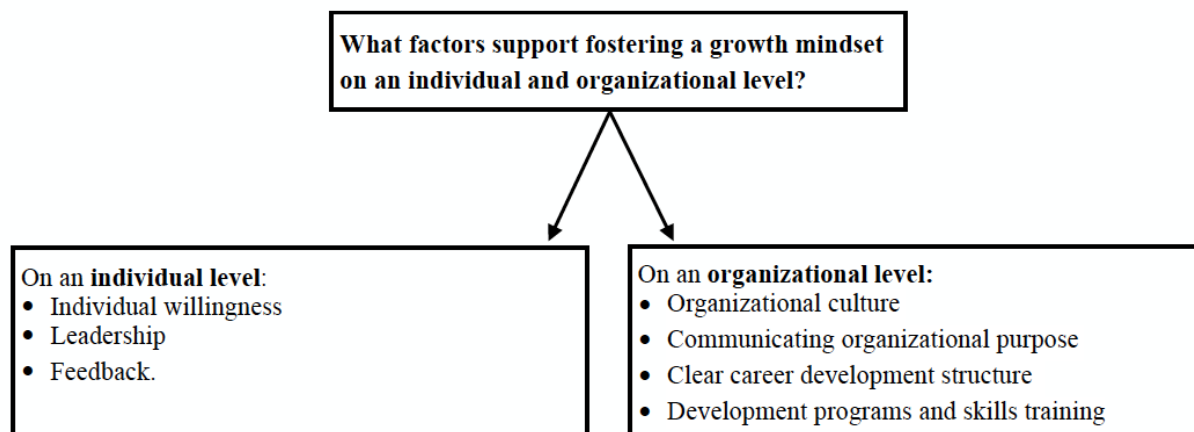
## 5. Discussion and Analysis

*In the fifth chapter, the main findings are discussed related to the literature review. The aim with the chapter is to address the study's purpose and to discuss the research questions. The chapter consists of a critical reflection regarding the separation of potential challenges and factors as well as the individual and organizational perspectives.*

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### 5.1 What Factors Support Fostering a Growth Mindset on an Individual and Organizational Level?

To provide a structure for the reader, the chapter follows the study's research questions (see section 5.1 and 5.2). This part highlights what factors support fostering a growth mindset on individual and organizational levels. See *Figure 2*.



*Figure 2: Conceptual overview of the findings related to research question one.*

#### 5.1.1 Individual Level

On an individual level, three factors that support fostering a growth mindset are; *Individual willingness*, *Leadership* and *Feedback*.

Firstly, a majority of informants shared the idea that individuals take responsibility for their mindset and development, *Individual willingness*. This is in line with previous research in the mindset theory (Dweck, 1999; Dweck & Leggett, 1988 in Han & Stieha, 2020) that indicates that

an individual's qualities can grow through personal dedication (Dweck, 2006; Haimovitz & Dweck, 2017). On an individual level, both the empirical findings and previous research (Dweck, 2006; Han & Stieha, 2020) are aligned regarding that each individual is responsible for his or her own mindset and has abilities to change mindset through work. One informant, B, stated that motivation is an inner force and the energy individuals put in to perform an action which according to us is in line with individuals own willingness to grow. We believe individuals are motivated by different objectives, which impacts if, and to what extent individuals want to put in the effort to grow. This can be linked to Dweck's (2014) statement that individuals value different factors in organizations. Because of these different preferences, Dweck (2014) claims that not all individuals thrive in an organization with a growth mindset. This is based in that individuals first have to understand themselves, to be able to communicate what they need from the organization to develop. Organizations would benefit from ensuring that individuals understand that it is up to themselves to find the willingness to develop and grow. In addition to this, the mindset of an individual employee can impact others behaviors and actions, according to Han & Stieha (2020). This can in turn influence the whole organization (Han & Stieha, 2020). Therefore, individual willingness is one factor that supports fostering a growth mindset.

Secondly, all informants highlighted *Leadership* as a factor important to acknowledge in fostering a growth mindset. Worth mentioning is that the term manager and leader is used interchangeably in line with Kotter's (2001) and Mintzberg's (2011) research. The informants mentioned that the mindset of leaders can truly affect an individual's mindset on learning and development. The informants also mentioned that a leader can influence individuals and teams to grow. A, highlighted that the leader's responsibility of influencing people's mindset is present in the culture at Company X. Dweck (2006) claims that a growth minded leader can make an impact, by believing in developing themselves and others which will in turn develop the overall business. Therefore, both the literature and the empirical findings are in agreement regarding the importance of leadership in fostering a growth mindset. Caniëls et al. (2018) mention that leadership is a critical factor to create engagement amongst employees. In combination with this, a few informants mentioned the responsibility it entails being a leader, by vouching for developing employees' careers and mindsets. E expressed that leaders must nurture the career of employees but also influence people, their motivation and simultaneously deliver organizational results. Also,



F stated that Company X set high expectations on their leaders to achieve this. This is also stated in the company material (personal communication, 9 March 2021) saying that leaders are responsible for implementing driving cultural transformation. Because of this, we believe that leaders have a significant responsibility over their employees' mindsets and career aspirations. Further, Caniëls et al. (2018) claim that leaders have to pay attention to individual employees. This is congruent with the statement of D, stressing the importance of positive reinforcement from leaders when fostering a growth mindset. We believe this positive reinforcement has to be well-incorporated in the organization, to truly make leaders utilize it. Therefore, this will have a positive impact on employees trying to adopt a growth mindset.

All informants highlighted the importance for leaders to act as role models. G and H emphasized that a manager has to lead by example. Thus, role modelling a growth mindset will give inspiration to others, impacting employee behaviour. Related to this, Wang et al. (2018) claim leaders with a growth mindset can positively affect the attitude of others which impact the group dynamics and later on affect the success of tasks. Bolman and Deal (2019) talk about heroes and heroines within the Symbolic frame of viewing organizations. In this frame, the meaning behind actions matter and symbols help individuals align in an organization. According to us, the informants' statements of role modelling can be connected to the concepts of heroes and heroines. Heroes and heroines inspire people by leading the way, which is what the informants have expressed as role modelling. Instead of only communicating about a growth mindset, leaders need to adopt it and believe in it. Thereby, they will inspire employees to do the same. If this happens, principles from a leadership level will cascade down into the lower levels in the organization, which is what B agrees to with the statement: “[...] there are lots of leadership training and, and all the leadership structure is based on cascading principles and values that are common across the company.” [B]. This can in turn be linked to the transformational leadership style where leaders aim to empower and encourage employees to grow (Dvir et al. 2002). Also, according to (Caniëls et al. 2018) this type of leadership is related to growth mindset, because individuals with a growth mindset are open towards an encouraging leadership style. In addition, this leadership style supports personal development. As one informant mentioned, it is crucial that leaders let their employees grow, which we believe can be accomplished through role-modelling a growth mindset. On the other hand, Company X has developed a clear career structure (further discussed in section 5.1.2), which

aligns with Dvir et al.'s (2002) statement of a transactional leadership style. It seems important for managers to set goals and clarify outcomes that are aligned with the transactional leadership (Dvir et al. 2002). However, managers also aim to empower and inspire individuals, which is in line with what transformational leadership aims to accomplish. Because the literature argues that transformational leadership is connected to growth mindset, an opposite interpretation could be that transactional leadership is not connected to a growth mindset to the same extent. This is because transformational and transactional leadership are the opposite to each other according to Bass & Avolio (1993). However, the empirical findings show that employees and leaders agree that leadership plays an important part in developing a growth mindset amongst employees.

A third factor that supports fostering a growth mindset on an individual level is *Feedback*. The informants consent that feedback is a factor that supports fostering a growth mindset. Informants highlight the importance of reflecting about how to give feedback. This is in line with Crossan et al. (1999) claiming that *feedback* exploits past, already present knowledge and learnings. The empirical data states the importance of how to give feedback in line with *feedforward*, of how to absorb new knowledge and learnings (Crossan et al. 1999). Previous research indicated that feedback is aligned with the development of managers to build a work environment with a high degree of growth mindset (Dweck, 2006). Dweck (2006) claims that a feedback culture prompts learning, aiming to see managers as a resource for learning through mentorship and coaching. The informants also emphasized the importance of feedback from managers to employees, and conversely. Therefore, both literature and the findings are aligned in that feedback is important.

Dweck (2006) indicates that managers with growth mindsets develop their employees by acknowledging feedback, which is in line with the informants' points of view. According to Dweck (2006) a feedback culture advocates learning and in this, managers can help employees learn through mentorship and coaching. Some informants see feedback as continuous communication, while others highlight the yearly employee engagement survey where employees provide feedback to their managers. Therefore, the literature and informants' perception are aligned in saying that feedback is important. However, the format where feedback occurs varies between mentorship, surveys and communication.

### 5.1.2 Organizational Level

On an organizational level, factors that may support fostering a growth mindset are; *Organizational culture, Communicating organizational purpose, Clear career development structure and Development programs and skills training.*

One factor that supports fostering a growth mindset on an organizational level was *Organizational culture*, according to a majority of the informants. Therefore, this needs to be considered. Five informants mentioned that the culture at Company X is collaborative and that collaboration occurs on many different levels; between employees, units and between managers and employees. Further, this is aligned with the company material (personal communication, 9 March 2021) stating that cooperation and collaboration are one of the focal areas in *Company X's cultural transformation project*. This can be linked to the 4I's in learning processes, where Crossan et al. (1999) argue that learning occurs in several steps and levels in an organization. According to them, learning occurs on an individual, group and organizational level which can be aligned to the collaborative cultural efforts occurring in the company. This is also why the intention with *Company X's cultural transformation project* is to be present in the daily work, on all levels (personal communication, 9 March 2021). The informants described that knowledge sharing is a big part of the collaborative culture, which also aligns with Crossan et al. (1999) where individuals are allowed to bring new ideas into the organization through feed forward. On the other hand, learnings from the organization are also allowed to adjourn from the organization towards individual and group levels which is enabled through collaboration. As C mentioned, the collaboration between employees, units and between management and employees aims to influence people towards adopting a growth mindset. This is also in line with Hanson et al. (2016) statement that a growth mindset facilitates leaders and employees to develop a productive partnership based on meaningful collaborative efforts. In addition, this also relates to Han and Sietha's (2020) research showing that collaborative efforts and a culture where organizational learning is in focus can create better organizational results. As the informants mentioned, the collaboration between managers and employees can lay a foundation for communicating appreciation and transparency regarding goals and objectives.

The culture was also described as open and transparent, where employees are encouraged to speak up according to some informants. This is aligned with the company material (personal communication, 9 March 2021) that describes one of the focal areas in *Company X's cultural transformation project* as fostering a speak up environment. E highlighted that transparency was a key component in the organization's culture. This might be linked to the learning organizational building blocks. Two of the building blocks of creating a learning organization is according to Garvin et al. (2019) openness to new ideas and appreciation of differences. Further, to create a learning organization new ways of thinking must be encouraged and nurtured (Senge, 2006). A learning organization filled with a growth mindset could therefore, according to us, be created by nurturing and encouraging this in the organizational culture.

Garvin et al. (2019) claim it is essential that knowledge flows vertically and horizontally within the organization. This is something Company X aims to achieve by having regular knowledge sharing sessions, as G described. H argued that these sessions facilitate time to develop both themselves and others. C argued that collaboration fosters learning from each other, which in turn makes people grow. This is what the cultural transformation project, *Company X's cultural transformation project* is aiming to achieve, by encouraging transparency and collaboration and fostering a growth mindset affecting both individuals, groups and the organization. Also, the cultural transformation project helps to create a common language in the organization, F stated. Further, it impacts those who already spoke this language before but also those who are not used to it. This can be linked to the Symbolic frame (Bolman & Deal, 2019), by creating a common language people are guided towards the same direction. In that sense, *Company X's cultural transformation project* becomes a symbol for the cultural transformation where a growth mindset is present. Creating a common language and a joint culture of growth mindset holds employees together making this cultural transformation project a symbol for a cultural transformation. Moreover, we believe that creating a common language through culture is an action taken at an organizational level which desires to impact individuals in fostering a growth mindset. By incorporating growth mindset into the organizational culture, a joint group identity within the organization will be formed, in accordance with the statement of Schein (2010). According to Schein (2010) this group identity will last even if some employees depart. In addition, the culture impacts how a company builds capabilities and how efficiently they are used (Barney, 1986). If

an organization then manages to develop a growth mindset culture, growth mindset will pervade the entire organization. Then, a growth mindset on an organizational level will be more than solely the sum of individual growth mindsets. Therefore, it is important that the organization encourages a mindset shift to accomplish a growth mindset on an organizational level.

A second factor that supports fostering a growth mindset is *Communicating the organizational purpose*. Several informants expressed that having a clear purpose and communicating this to employees is essential when fostering a growth mindset. It is important that the organization clearly communicates the beliefs, values and norms that underpin the culture, we argue. We believe that communication of a clear purpose can be connected to Shein's (2010) definition of an organizational culture, as a unique collection of shared values, beliefs and norms. Schein (2010) claims a corporate culture signals what behavioural norms are accepted in the organization, which influences behaviour and actions of employees. Therefore, if an organization clearly communicates the purpose, beliefs and values of a growth mindset this is likely to positively influence the actions of employees. This in turn, could increase the possibilities of adopting a growth mindset amongst employees. Additionally, the organization needs to communicate the purpose and value of learning according to Dweck (2006). This will also signal that a growth mindset is valuable in the organization, making it more probable to foster a growth mindset on an organizational level.

Moreover, communicating the purpose can be connected to the research by Crossan et al. (1999), indicating that organizational learning can be defined through shared understanding. A shared understanding amongst employees helps to create a common action (Crossan et al. 1999). Further, this may be linked with having a clear purpose to create an awareness of a growth mindset on an individual level. This is aligned with A's statement that an excellent first tool in fostering a growth mindset is to acknowledge that there are different types of mindsets. The importance of communicating a clear purpose is aligned in both literature and empirical data, indicating that it is likely to be a factor in fostering a growth mindset at the organizational level.

Thirdly, from an organizational perspective, it is important to provide the means for development and growth, one informant explained. Several informants agreed that it is essential to have a *Clear*

*career development plan* within the company, both on individual and team-levels connected to fostering a growth mindset. H mentioned that employees must feel that they are growing. This can be connected to Garvin et al. 's (2019) building blocks for a learning organization where a supportive learning environment, concrete learning processes and practices and leadership behavior are important. Since building a learning organization requires effort and information, a clear career development structure may function as a way to make this information flow easier. E highlighted that it is crucial that the organizational structure promotes growth and development. This also aligns with the company material (personal communication, 9 March 2021) stating that the organization aims to enable growth by transparency in expectations between the company and employees. This is what the clear career development structure provides.

Accordingly, this structure can be linked to Bolman and Deal's (2019) Structural frame, since the aim is to put people in clear roles, make expectations transparent and control individual effort to achieve goals. By having a clear career development plan as well as clear job roles, expectations on each role are being apparent. This makes it easier for the individual employee to understand what the next career step can be, and what it takes to get there. If the organization provides a clear structure and coordination efforts for fostering a growth mindset, this will probably help an individual to foster a growth mindset and allow for individual growth to occur. Therefore, we believe it is essential that the organization enables individuals to grow, both in terms of cultural efforts but also structurally, which in turn will help individuals to develop themselves.

Lastly, a factor that may support fostering a growth mindset is *Development programs and skills training*. Another shared statement is that previous research (Dweck, 2006) and seven out of eight informants argued that development programs and skill training are positively connected to a growth mindset. This is aligned with company material (personal communication, 9 March 2021) that states to provide personal and professional development through programs, initiatives and training. Research claims that training programs overall can be a beneficial first step when building a work environment with a high degree of growth mindset (Dweck, 2006). The informants explained that training enables everybody in the organization to perform at their best, not to mention that it occurs as a relevant first step in motivating people. The workshops include exercises aimed to enhance communication skills and foster a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006), that are in

line with the informants' statements of programs consisting of courses that facilitate individuals' growth journey.

Four informants state that training is targeting leaders which is in line with Dweck's (2006) statement indicating that managers are able to improve their growth mindset with training sessions. Previous literature (Dweck, 2006; Caniëls et al. 2018) and findings correlate in that leaders are essential when developing others. Leaders help to create engagement amongst employees (Caniëls et al. 2018), that may be connected with B's statement that leadership is based on cascading principles and values. We believe that a reason for the alignment in focusing on leadership training is similar to B explaining that leaders that manage people directly require training to grow themselves. According to us, targeting the leaders is a strategy to impact employees' mindset. Workshops include exercises to enhance communication skills, mentoring capabilities, and fostering a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006). In accordance with the literature, we believe that it is crucial to facilitate individual training sessions that include mentorship between all levels and roles to encourage sharing ideas and knowledge. This is important, since these might help individuals create an awareness of a growth mindset but also provide tools on how to foster it. However, ultimately, it is up to each individual to be responsible for their training to develop further.

## **5.2 What are Potential Challenges for Managers, when Fostering a Growth Mindset on an Individual and Organizational Level?**

### *5.2.1 Individual and Organizational Level*

Potential challenges for managers when fostering a growth mindset consists of three factors: *Continuous improvements in uncertain times*, *Insufficient leadership behavior* and *Employees' unwillingness to grow*. Further, the factors are applicable on both individual and organizational levels.

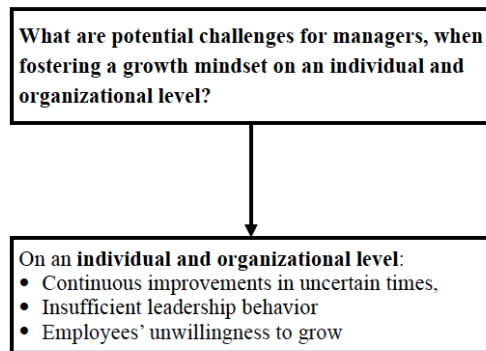


Figure 3: Conceptual overview of the findings related to research question two.

Firstly, it is critical for organizations to continuously learn more and develop as they are confronted with digital advancement and increased competition, with the challenge of *Continuous improvements in uncertain times*. The literature emphasizes that learning organizations are better than competitors at adjusting to unexpected circumstances (Garvin et al. 2019). Both the previous literature and empirical findings state that we live in a world with uncertainty. This is also aligned with the company material (personal communication, 9 March 2021) stating that it is critical to be a company that supports constant change. Garvin et al. (2019) claims that it is challenging to implement a learning organization due to difficulties in identifying sequential practical steps in achieving it, and tools measuring it have been lacking. Further, C, states that in a matrix organization, as Company X, it is becoming even more complicated to keep track of everything and everyone. We believe that to survive in today's VUCA world, the requirements on organizations today have increased. However, there is no precise blueprint of how to survive in uncertain times, and therefore both literature and informants' perceive this as a challenge.

As learning organizations are better at adapting to unpredictable situations than competitors (Garvin et al. 2019), we perceive it as critical to strive towards becoming a learning organization. However, Garvin et al. (2019), states that it is hard to implement a learning organization practically. The informants expressed that it is critical to strive towards continuous learning and developing. Most informants agree that this is becoming harder in uncertain times. According to Bolman and Deal (2019), organizations are characterized by complexity, surprises, deceptiveness, and ambiguity, which align with the informant's perception of working with uncertainty. Organizations are constantly developing (Hüther, 2016), and there is a continuous room for



improvement, according to B. To gain a competitive advantage, we believe that companies need to develop ways to improve employees' learning to boost innovation and teamwork, which aligns with B's statements to consistently evolve and find new solutions.

Building blocks for creating a learning organization consist of a supportive learning environment and concrete learning processes and practices (Garvin et al. 2019). A supportive learning environment consists of openness to new ideas. B agreed that this is important, but highlighted that it is challenging to constantly evolve and find new solutions. The challenge is that people often want to close the books and aim to find answers. On an organizational level, the company can construct a learning organization that requires effort, concrete activities, and experimentation (Garvin et al. 2019) to adapt to unpredictable situations. However, we think it is up to each person to accept that there is no right and wrong answer on an individual's level. On the other hand, managers in organizations still need to facilitate concrete activities and allow experimentation to become a learning organization, even in uncertain times.

Secondly, a potential challenge for managers when fostering a growth mindset on individual and organizational levels is *Insufficient leadership behavior*. As mentioned (see section 5.1.1 for more details), previous research and informants' perceptions are aligned in that leadership is critical in an organization when fostering a growth mindset. Leaders need to pay attention to their employees' mindset to create motivation and engagement according to Caniëls et al. (2018). This is in line with E and D' statements that attention and micro behaviours are critical in leadership. However, the informants emphasized that it is a challenge for leaders to pay enough attention to their employees. One reason for this is that the leaders are occupied with other tasks and responsibilities.

As Caniëls et al. (2018) claims, it is important for leaders to understand their employees's mindset in order to motivate them. Also, it is beneficial for leaders to have the ability to identify whether a person's mindset is fixed or growth. Therefore, we believe that it is necessary to conduct training for leaders, where this ability is improved. We believe that it is a suitable tool, to focus on training leaders to understand the employees' personal motivational triggers, to be able to adapt their leadership style to each person. However, the time aspects might still occur as a challenge for managers to foster a growth mindset. One informant, F, claims that the biggest challenge for

leaders today is to dare to say that they do not know the answers to all questions. A challenge regarding leadership is stated by H, claiming that an increased number of employees reporting to a manager complicates the possibility of identifying personal motivational triggers. One reason could be that the leader must adapt leadership style towards each individual employee, and this requires more adaptation as the number of employees increases. Furthermore, this impacts the ability of understanding individual employees and, as a result, motivate them appropriately. This is in line with previous research that showed that it is essential for leaders to understand their employees' mindset to motivate their employees (Caniëls et al. 2018). As a result, leaders must understand each employee's mindset to encourage them, and the more individuals' mindsets to understand, the more difficult it becomes to identify what motivates each one.

A third theme that occurred as a challenge for managers when fostering a growth mindset in the findings was *Employees' unwillingness to grow*. As mentioned above (in section 5.1.1) growth mindset is a highly individual mindset, therefore motivation and development must come from within. There are many aspects that make this difficult. As mentioned previously by Garvin et al. (2019) one building block in developing a learning organization is time for reflection. When asking the informants about potential challenges related to fostering a growth mindset, two informants said time. According to us, an interesting aspect is that both informants that mentioned time as a challenge, work within the investigated service area in the organization. The issue of time was however not mentioned by any of the informants working in supporting functions. As the informants describe it, they do not have sufficient time to truly work towards adopting a growth mindset, since they have other tasks and deadlines to adhere to. G expressed that project deadlines take a lot of time, making it difficult to actively find time to reflect and develop a growth mindset, both within themselves and in others. Further, G highlighted that the organization has made all necessary material accessible, but time is scarce. This in turn, makes it difficult for employees to prioritize mindset shifts before other daily deadlines according to H. Because of this, individuals who do not get enough time to reflect (Garvin et al. 2019) will face challenges in fostering a growth mindset. It is a manager's responsibility to guide employees towards cultivating a growth mindset. As a result, if employees do not have adequate time, this creates difficulties for their manager to foster a growth mindset on an individual level. Thus, making this a managerial challenge.

Since mindset is highly individual (discussed in section 5.1.1), it is essential that the individual has the willingness to change mindset in order for a mindset shift to occur. Six of eight informants mentioned individual factors as a challenge when managers fosters a growth mindset amongst employees. It was for example mentioned by C, that one of the biggest challenges is if a person is unwilling to grow. As G highlighted above, the material needed to grow is provided by the organization but in the end, the decision to grow can only be made by the individual herself. This is because a growth mindset is a set of individual beliefs and assumptions about one self and one's abilities (Dweck, 2006). Two informants believed that individual willingness or possibility to foster a growth mindset could be dependent on generational factors. However, we would argue that the reasons behind individual unwillingness to grow cannot be simplified only to age or generation. Partly, because evidence for this has not been found in the literature but also because there are many other aspects, as discussed, that can hinder growth and development.

It is crucial that the organization enables individuals to grow, as mentioned by several informants and literature (Dweck, 2006) by providing leadership encouraging growth, a clear career development plan and transparency amongst many other things. However, as Dweck (2006) states, growth mindset is a personal set of beliefs about one self. This makes it nearly impossible for outsiders to change an individual's mindset if the person lacks the willingness to grow. Despite this, we believe that it is important that organizations continuously keep providing the means and structures to grow. This in turn, will make it slightly easier for individuals to foster a growth mindset, compared to if the organization did not encourage this mindset transformation.

### **5.3 Critical Discussion regarding Factors and Potential Challenges & Individual and Organizational Levels**

When conducting this research, reviewing literature and analyzing the empirical findings, it has become clear that factors that support fostering a growth mindset are hard to distinctly separate from potential managerial challenges. This is because potentially some factors can turn into challenges if not addressed properly. For example, *Leadership* was identified as a factor that supports fostering a growth mindset, whilst *Insufficient leadership behaviour* was identified as a potential managerial challenge. Thereby, leadership has occurred as both a factor fostering a

growth mindset but also a challenge related to this. One could argue that it is different sides of the same coin. Also, by acknowledging the factors and actively working towards successfully implementing them, some challenges can potentially be prevented. By creating an awareness regarding the challenges for managers when fostering a growth mindset, the risk of facing them can potentially be minimized. We believe that it is important to be aware of the challenges, because these can hinder organizations' efforts of working with the factors fostering a growth mindset. Therefore, the factors and challenges are difficult to strictly separate from each other. They are connected as described above. The factors and potential challenges interact and complement one another in fostering a growth mindset.

The purpose of this study was to investigate what factors support fostering a growth mindset on individual and organizational levels as well as potential managerial challenges related to fostering a growth mindset on individual and organizational levels. However, it has become apparent to us that these two levels are difficult to divide. This is because individual efforts somewhat lay the foundation for organizational ones, as mentioned by Han & Stieha (2020) that an individual's mindset can influence others' behaviour and actions. Thus, an individual's mindset might positively or negatively impact others, hence affecting team-level outcomes as well as impacting the entire organization. On the contrary, if the organization has certain structures and cultures in place to foster a growth mindset, this is an action taken from an organizational perspective. However, the aim of this is most likely to affect individual employees and to tap into their individual mindset. Because of this, it is both difficult and not always necessary to separate individual and organizational factors. Additionally, as Crossan et al. (1999) highlight that learning is a dynamic process and occurs on many different levels; individual, group and organizational, perhaps making the boundaries between them fluid. Therefore, learning how to adopt a growth mindset might be the same. In that sense, it is difficult to separate the two perspectives, since they are connected to each other. Hence, both perspectives are important and can not be separated.

Moreover, some factors occurred in a majority of the interviews, for example leadership. Other themes occurred less. However, the researchers have not ranked the identified factors that support fostering a growth mindset. This lies outside of the scope of this research, and will not affect the value of the study. Therefore, all identified factors are described and discussed, without

hierarchically organizing them. We would like to emphasize that the factors that support fostering a growth mindset, presented above, are highlighted as *potential* factors. Thereby, this does not mean that these factors, *automatically* will yield a growth mindset, on individual or organizational levels. However, these factors have been identified as important factors that support fostering a growth mindset in the case study conducted in this research. Therefore, it is essential for organizations to acknowledge the factors and actively work with these to foster a growth mindset, especially within learning and development.

## 6. Conclusions

*In this final chapter, a summary of the main findings will be presented, together with practical insights. Further, this section presents limitations to the study and future research suggestions.*

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### 6.1 Conclusion of Main Findings

This study aims to develop an understanding of practitioners' perception of factors that support fostering a growth mindset and outline potential challenges for managers when fostering and practically implementing a growth mindset in organizations. To conclude, our work led us to identify seven factors and three potential challenges. On an individual level, the factors were: *Individual willingness, Leadership, and Feedback*. On an organizational level, the factors were: *Organizational culture, Communicating organizational purpose, Clear career development structure, and Development programs and skills training*. When fostering a growth mindset on both individual and organizational levels, three potential challenges for managers were found: *Continuous improvements in uncertain times, Insufficient leadership behavior, and Employees' unwillingness to grow*.

During the process of conducting this research, it became clear that it was difficult to divide factors that support fostering a growth mindset from potential managerial challenges. This is because they are more intertwined than we initially thought. Therefore, we conclude that the factors and potential challenges affect and complement each other and must be viewed in relation to each other. It is critical for organizations to acknowledge the factors and actively work with these to foster a growth mindset, especially within learning and development. Moreover, it was difficult to separate individual and organizational levels. This is because fostering a growth mindset on an individual level lays a foundation for an organizational growth mindset. However, a growth mindset on an organizational level is more than solely the sum of individual growth mindsets.

It is worth mentioning that the conclusions formed in this research are based on a case study conducted at one company working with a growth mindset. Therefore, the intention is not to reach statistical generalization. However, by practically investigating factors that support fostering a

growth mindset at a company working with this and associating the findings to reviewed theory, our conclusions are analytically generalizable. Therefore, the conclusions are theoretically and practically valuable for organizations striving to foster a growth mindset.

In order for organizations to capitalize on the benefits of adopting a growth mindset, we believe organizations must know what factors that practically foster a growth mindset. Given that a growth mindset positively impacts individuals' learning and development, this research contributes valuable insights into how organizations can foster a growth mindset practically. Therefore, the conclusions aim to fill the identified research gap. Furthermore, the study also contributes to a raised awareness regarding potential challenges for managers. This awareness aims to help organizations manage the potential challenges and thus, maximize the possibility of fostering a growth mindset on an organizational level.

## **6.2 Limitations and Further Research Suggestions**

During this research, some limitations were acknowledged. A limitation of this study is that the factors and potential challenges identified have not been ranked into any specific order since this was not the purpose of this research. The most critical ones could be identified and prioritized by ranking the factors and potential challenges while striving to foster a growth mindset. This could be beneficial for organizations with limited resources. Also, it would simplify the procedure of fostering a growth mindset by knowing what factor to start with. Another limitation is that the factors and challenges identified are hard to categorize into individual and organizational levels distinctively. This makes the practical implementation less concrete than we initially intended.

Future research suggestions are to investigate factors and potential challenges related to a fixed mindset and target both perspectives of a fixed and growth mindset. Also, it would be interesting to examine potential challenges with practically implementing a growth mindset not only from a managerial perspective but also from an employee or organizational perspective. As mentioned above, the conclusions found in this research are based on a case study with one company working with a growth mindset. We suggest conducting a multiple approach case study on several companies in different sectors and industries to gain more perspectives for future research. Lastly,

further research is recommended to investigate how to measure the degree of a growth mindset within individuals and organizations. This, together with the suggestions provided above, will hopefully yield a broader understanding of how to practically implement a growth mindset, factors that support fostering a growth mindset, and potential managerial challenges related to a growth mindset.



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# Appendix

## Appendix 1: Interview guide

- Begin with thanking the informant for his/her time and participation in the research
- Inform about the outline of the interview and expected time frame
- Introduce ourselves, the program and interests in the topics and our roles in the interview
- Repeat the research purpose

## Ethics

First, we want to inform you that you have the right to refuse to answer any questions and/or to withdraw from the interview at any time, without any consequences.

*Confidentiality:* In the research we aim to ensure your confidentiality by not disclosing your identity nor your job title. However, we are wondering if we are allowed to describe your job role in the research?

*Quotes and transcription:* Are we allowed to extract quotes from the interview?

We also want to inform you that a transcript of the interview will be conducted and retained for the researchers only and no information will be saved after the research is completed.

*Audio recording:* Do you consent with us audio recording the interview? The purpose of the recording is to be able to analyse the material thoroughly, without missing critical information. The audio recording will be deleted after the end of the thesis.

## I. Background of participants

1. Could you describe your current role and responsibilities at Company X?
2. How long have you been working in your current role, as a X, and at Company X?
3. Manager: how many employees reporting to you have in your role as a manager?

## II. Growth mindset within learning and development and leadership

4. We have understood that Company X works with a framework X, could you please tell me about that?
5. Could you please tell me about how and if the cultural project is connected to a Growth mindset?
6. How do you work with a growth mindset in your role as X?
7. Do you have any thoughts on how to transfer an individual growth mindset to an organizational level? Do you have any concrete examples?
8. If I say Learning and development, what is the first thing that comes to your mind?
  - Who is responsible for learning and development initiatives?
9. Do you see any areas of improvement within learning and development, either Growth mindset or the cultural project? Any specific examples?
  - Do you have any suggestions for improvement?
10. How can a manager at Company X support fostering a growth mindset on an individual level? Or on an organizational level?
11. Do you perceive any potential challenges, as a manager, when fostering and practically implementing a growth mindset within employees in organizations? Do you have any concrete examples?
  - Do you have any practical tools to create motivation and a willingness to learn?

### **III. Conclusion**

Is there anything you would like to add?

- Thank the informant for participating.
- Inform that the participant can take part of the result if wished for.
- Questions?