

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Research on the impact of growth mindset management of University Counselors in China on career resilience

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## ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore the impact of growth mindset on university counselors' career resilience, as well as the mediating role of perceived social support and the moderating role of belief in social mobility. Employing a questionnaire survey methodology, this research utilized convenience sampling to select counselors from comprehensive undergraduate institutions in Zhejiang Province, China. The Career Resilience Scale, Growth Mindset Scale, Beliefs About Social Mobility Scale, and Perceived Social Support Scale were used as research instruments, with 576 counselors from universities in Zhejiang, China participating in the study. The results showed that growth mindset of university counselors had a significant positive impact on perceived social support and career resilience; perceived social support had a significant positive impact on career resilience; perceived social support played a partial mediating role between university counselors' growth mindset and career resilience; and beliefs about social mobility played a partial mediating role between university counselors' growth mindset and career resilience. This study verified the roles of growth mindset, perceived social support, and beliefs about social mobility in university counselors' career resilience, providing a scientific theoretical basis for universities to enrich management models and maintain the stability of the university counselor team.

**Keywords:** Growth mindset; career resilience; perceived social support; beliefs about social mobility; University Counselors

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Research background

Currently, university counselors, as an indispensable part of the higher education system in universities, bear significant work pressure and heavy responsibilities <sup>[1]</sup>. Career resilience, which refers to the adaptability and recovery capacity in the face of challenges, can help university counselors better cope with work pressure, difficulties, and challenges, thereby improving work efficiency and quality <sup>[2]</sup>. The career resilience of university counsellors is defined as "the ability of individuals to adapt to career challenges while maintaining physical and mental well-being as well as performance" <sup>[3]</sup>. Research on the career resilience of university counselors helps reveal the predicaments and challenges they encounter in their

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career development, and provides them with better guidance and support for career development <sup>[4]</sup>. By enhancing career resilience, university counselors can better achieve their personal career goals and improve their career competitiveness<sup>[5]</sup>.

In recent years, growth mindset and university counselors' career resilience have become prominent research topics in the field of education. Growth mindset refers to an individual's belief in their own abilities and potential, holding that effort and learning can promote personal growth and development <sup>[6]</sup>. University counselors' career resilience refers to counselors' ability to maintain a positive mindset and adaptive capacity when facing challenges and difficulties in their career <sup>[7]</sup>. Growth mindset is also closely associated with individuals' mental health and career resilience <sup>[8]</sup>. However, current research has mainly focused on student populations, while studies on how educators can cultivate and promote growth mindset remain relatively limited <sup>[9]</sup>. Researches on university counselors' career resilience mainly focus on the challenges and pressures they face in their careers, as well as how they cope with and adapt to these difficulties <sup>[10]</sup>. Wang et al. <sup>[11]</sup> found that educators' career resilience is closely associated with aspects such as career development and growth mindset. Educators' career resilience is influenced by the development level of their growth mindset; individuals with a high level of growth mindset are more capable of coping with work pressures and challenges and are more likely to achieve career success <sup>[12]</sup>. However, current research on growth mindset has mainly focused more on the individual level of students, while the impact on the career resilience of educators such as university counselors requires further research <sup>[13]</sup>. Secondly, further research and practice are needed on effective strategies for cultivating and promoting growth mindset to foster counselors' career resilience<sup>[14]</sup>. Currently, counselors are facing multiple pressures, such as the increasing complexity of students' ideological trends, the high incidence of mental health issues, and ambiguity in career paths. Growth mindset management, by strengthening the perception of ability malleability, prompts counselors to regard challenges as opportunities for development. In the intervention of sudden psychological crises, counselors with a growth mindset are more inclined to remedy knowledge gaps through professional training rather than falling into professional frustration. This mindset pattern can reduce job mobility and enhance team stability. Through guiding the formulation of career planning goals, a positive cycle of experience accumulation-ability improvement-professional rank promotion. Growth mindset management is a key tool for university counselors to cope with career challenges and achieve sustainable development. Through the dual pathways of individual cognitive reshaping and organizational support systems, career resilience can be systematically enhanced, ultimately improving the quality of student services and the sense of professional value.

Perceived social support refers to an individual's emotional experience and level of satisfaction with feeling respected, supported, and understood in interactions with the external environment. It is a subjective perception and evaluation that represents the quality of social support <sup>[13]</sup>. Currently, in the field of education, research on the impact of growth mindset on university counselors' perceived social support has been increasing, and relevant literature has examined the interaction between growth mindset and perceived social support <sup>[15]</sup>. Growth mindset refers to a positive mental state and attitude, holding that an individual's abilities and intelligence can be developed and enhanced through effort and learning. In contrast, a fixed mindset holds that an individual's abilities and intelligence are fixed and unchangeable <sup>[16]</sup>. Susanna et al. <sup>[17]</sup> show that educators' growth mindset is closely related to their perception of social support. A growth mindset enables educators to proactively seek social support, as they believe that through interaction and cooperation with others, they can gain more resources and support, thereby enhancing their abilities and competence. Norris et al.<sup>[18]</sup> find that a growth mindset makes educators more optimistic and confident, enabling them to better cope with difficulties and challenges. Educators with a growth mindset believe that

they can overcome difficulties through continuous learning and effort, thus achieving personal and professional growth. Kramaley and Wishart <sup>[19]</sup> argue that a growth mindset makes educators pay more attention to the growth and development of others; they are willing to share their experiences and knowledge to help others achieve their goals and dreams. In summary, growth mindset is of great significance to university counselors' perception of social support. Exploring the relationship between growth mindset and educators' perceived social support can provide better support and guidance for educators.

Numerous studies have shown that educators' perceived social support may influence their career resilience. Kalaitzaki et al. <sup>[20]</sup> found that perceived social support from family, colleagues, students, and the community has a positive impact on educators' career resilience. Social support provides emotional, informational, and tangible assistance, enabling educators to better navigate workplace challenges. Chao et al. <sup>[21]</sup> demonstrated that emotional support from family members, colleagues, and students enhances educators' self-esteem and confidence, reduces work-related stress, and improves career resilience and well-being, thereby effectively strengthening their career resilience. Eveleigh et al. <sup>[22]</sup> found through their research that university counselors can obtain more teaching resources and professional knowledge, improve their teaching proficiency and professional capabilities, and enhance their ability to cope with career challenges by communicating and collaborating with colleagues and superiors. Yang<sup>[23]</sup> also found that the quality and quantity of educators' social support networks are equally important in influencing their career resilience. Positive relationships and active interactions between educators and their families, colleagues, students, and communities can strengthen their perception of social support and improve their career resilience.

Furthermore, extant literature indicates that the level of perceived social support among educators plays a mediating role between growth mindset and career resilience. Social support facilitates university counselors in building sound interpersonal networks, providing them with support and resources for career development <sup>[24]</sup>. Within such an extensive social support network, counselors can receive assistance and attentive listening from colleagues, students, parents, and people from various sectors. Through collaborative communication and joint efforts to solve problems, they can expand their own career development space<sup>[25]</sup>. Such interactions and cooperation contribute to counselors strengthening their career goals and sense of mission, as well as enhancing their work performance and influence <sup>[25]</sup>. Nancy and Jingyuan <sup>[26]</sup> argue that social support also, to a certain extent, alleviates the stress and setbacks encountered by university counselors in their careers, and protects their mental health and work enthusiasm. Lee et al.<sup>[27]</sup> point out that by receiving social support, counselors can obtain understanding and support from others, relieve psychological stress, alleviate anxiety and fatigue, and enhance psychological resilience. With sound mental health, counselors are more likely to maintain a positive growth mindset, adapt to various challenges in their careers, and improve their career resilience <sup>[28]</sup>.

Beliefs about social mobility refer to individuals' expectations and beliefs regarding social class mobility <sup>[29]</sup>. Duchi et al.<sup>[30]</sup> found that university counselors' beliefs about social mobility exert a certain impact on their career resilience: the stronger their beliefs in personal social mobility, the greater adaptability and resilience they demonstrate when facing career setbacks and difficulties. Growth mindset, on the other hand, refers to individuals' beliefs about their own abilities and potential, believing that one's abilities can be continuously improved through effort and learning <sup>[6]</sup>. Rammstedt et al. <sup>[31]</sup> showed that university counselors' growth mindset is closely related to their career development and work performance. Against the backdrop of increasingly diverse student needs, university counselors are required to possess a growth mindset, continuously learn and improve themselves to better adapt to students' diverse needs and provide them with effective guidance and support <sup>[9]</sup>. The work context of university counselors is characterized by variability, as they often need to deal with various emergencies and student-related issues. Career resilience enables

counselors to maintain a stable mindset and a proactive attitude in response to challenges within complex and changing work environments, thereby solving problems effectively <sup>[32]</sup>. Beliefs about social mobility refer to individuals' expectations and pursuit of future social status. As key guides for college students in their growth, counselors' beliefs about social mobility will directly influence students' values and career planning <sup>[6]</sup>. By exploring counselors' beliefs about social mobility, they can be guided to establish positive and proactive professional and life perspectives, then promoting the personal development of students. Domain-specific social support refers to assistance and resources derived from professional networks and institutional frameworks. For university counselors, such support can enhance work motivation and confidence, enabling greater focus on student engagement and career advancement while improving adaptability to evolving higher education reforms and heterogeneous student needs <sup>[22]</sup>.

Zhejiang Province is home to numerous prestigious universities, and its community of university counsellors possesses a certain scale and influence <sup>[33]</sup>. Conducting research on university counsellors in Zhejiang Province enables an in-depth understanding of their current work situation, career development paths, and distinctive characteristics, thereby providing insights and references for other regions. This study takes university counselors in Zhejiang Province as the research object, analyzing the current status of growth mindset, perceived social support, beliefs about social mobility, and career resilience, as well as their interrelationships. To a certain extent, it can supplement the corresponding theories. By exploring the mediating and moderating effects of perceived social support and beliefs about social mobility in the relationship between growth mindset and career resilience, this study can further investigate the interaction mechanisms among these four variables, which is of great significance for understanding the career development of educators and enhancing their career resilience in the future.

## **1.2. Significance of the study**

### **(1) Theoretical Significance**

This study aims to explore the impact of growth mindset on the career resilience of university counsellors in Zhejiang Province, China, by introducing perceived social support as a mediating variable and belief in social mobility as a moderating variable, thereby enriching the theoretical model of research on university counsellors' career resilience. Although previous studies have confirmed a significant positive effect of growth mindset on career resilience among university counsellors <sup>[34]</sup>, empirical research in the field of education also generally supports the relationship between growth mindset and students' career resilience <sup>[35]</sup>. Prior studies have further demonstrated that perceived social support plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between growth mindset and career resilience among university counsellors<sup>[36]</sup>, and that perceived social support exerts a significant positive effect on career resilience <sup>[37]</sup>. However, empirical studies focusing on the mediating mechanisms through which growth mindset influences career resilience among Chinese university counsellors remain limited <sup>[38]</sup>.

Furthermore, this study reveals that counsellors with stronger growth mindsets demonstrate higher levels of career resilience, and that perceived social support mediates the relationship between growth mindset and innovative behaviour <sup>[39]</sup>. The findings further enrich the understanding of the link between growth mindset and career resilience within the context of Chinese higher education, offering additional empirical evidence for the application of social cognitive theory to career resilience research. Self-Determination Theory (SDT), widely applied in education, work, sports, and psychotherapy, provides valuable guidance for stimulating intrinsic motivation and promoting individuals' healthy development and positive performance <sup>[40]</sup>. Its three basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—

offer a theoretical lens to explain how university counsellors can meet these needs through a growth mindset, thereby enhancing their career resilience <sup>[41]</sup>.

## (2) Practical Significance

This study examines how the growth mindset of university counsellors in China can promote career resilience through perceived social support and belief in social mobility, providing practical implications for improving counsellor training models <sup>[42]</sup>. Growth mindset and perceived social support are identified as key factors influencing the development of career resilience among university counsellors <sup>[43]</sup>. To further strengthen counsellors' career resilience, universities must prioritise the cultivation and enhancement of counsellors' growth mindset while actively alleviating their social pressures and improving their perceived social support<sup>[44]</sup>.

Higher education institutions should foster a supportive working environment, optimise talent development models, and improve welfare systems to positively influence counsellors' resilience <sup>[45]</sup>. Additionally, universities should emphasise enhancing counsellors' perceived social support, encouraging them to express their aspirations and take action to realise them<sup>[35]</sup>. Based on the findings of this study, fostering growth mindset and improving perceived social support among counsellors can lead to the development of more positive and effective career resilience <sup>[46]</sup>. Therefore, this research contributes to strengthening career resilience among university counsellors and offers practical insights for optimising talent development strategies in higher education.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Self-Determination theory

Ryan and Deci <sup>[47]</sup> proposed the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which focuses on the extent to which an individual's behaviour is self-motivated or self-determined. The theory posits that individuals must consistently satisfy three fundamental psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—throughout their lives in order to achieve personal growth, well-being, and higher levels of performance <sup>[48]</sup>. SDT asserts that intrinsic motivation serves as a critical driving force for individuals' sustained engagement and progress <sup>[49]</sup>. Within the career development of university counsellors, an understanding of their intrinsic motivation can enable them to better navigate career-related challenges and to pursue work that is both meaningful and fulfilling <sup>[27]</sup>. SDT emphasises individuals' agency and sense of control over their actions. By enhancing their autonomy and self-efficacy, university counsellors can more effectively cope with the challenges inherent in their professional careers, maintaining a positive mindset and adaptability <sup>[50]</sup>. The theory further argues that the satisfaction of the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness fosters psychological resilience, equipping counsellors to better manage work-related stress and adversity <sup>[51]</sup>.

The three core psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness outlined in SDT provide a framework for understanding how university counsellors can leverage a growth mindset to fulfil these needs, thereby strengthening their career resilience <sup>[41]</sup>. SDT offers a comprehensive and systematic approach to examining the mechanisms through which a growth mindset influences career resilience, elucidating the roles of social support and beliefs in social mobility, and providing a deeper theoretical foundation alongside practical recommendations for promoting the professional development and resilience of university counsellors.

## **2.2. The relationship between growth mindset and career resilience among University Counselors**

Cai et al. <sup>[33]</sup> point out that university counselors encounter diverse challenges and pressures in their daily work, such as handling student issues, communicating and coordinating with teachers, and participating in school management. Counselors with a growth mindset tend to view challenges as opportunities for growth rather than obstacles <sup>[42]</sup>. They proactively seek solutions to problems and learn from failures; such strong adaptability and stress resistance enable them to better cope with various changes and pressures in work, thereby enhancing their career resilience <sup>[42]</sup>. A growth mindset motivates counselors to continuously enhance their professional expertise and self-awareness<sup>[52]</sup>. Counselors possessing this mindset proactively engage in training programs and acquire new knowledge and skills, thereby adapting to evolving educational environments and heterogeneous student needs<sup>[53]</sup>. Kim et al. <sup>[54]</sup> contend that this process simultaneously strengthens professional competence and clarifies career trajectories. Consequently, a progressive cycle emerges within their professional development, ultimately reinforcing career resilience.

A growth mindset enables university counselors to confront difficulties and setbacks with greater proactivity <sup>[42]</sup>. Counselors with a growth mindset are more likely to perceive challenges as opportunities for learning and development rather than endpoints of failure. They extract experience from adversities; continually modulating and refining their methodologies and strategies. This cultivates enhanced stress resilience and adaptive capabilities, thereby fortifying career resilience<sup>[4]</sup>. Furthermore, a growth mindset stimulates counselors' drive for continuous reflective practice and self-improvement. Counselors recognize that growth is a continuous process that requires constant self-challenge and improvement <sup>[5]</sup>. Papavassiliou et al. <sup>[5]</sup> argue that through continuous self-reflection and professional development, counselors can continuously enhance their literacy and skills, gradually achieve their career goals, and strengthen their sense of control and adaptability in career development. Based on this, this study proposes Hypothesis H1:

H1: Growth mindset among university counselors in Zhejiang, China exerts a significantly positive impact on career resilience.

## **2.3. The relationship between University Counselors' growth mindset and perceived social support**

University counselors' adoption of a growth mindset helps enhance their ability to perceive social support <sup>[42]</sup>. Bai and Wang<sup>[42]</sup> argue that a growth mindset enables university counselors to foster heightened attention to others' development, stimulating their social support awareness. Liu et al. <sup>[43]</sup> point out that through the process of continuous learning and growth, counselors can constantly improve their professional knowledge and counseling skills, thereby better discerning and grasping students' needs; in this process, their level of perceived social support is also continuously enhanced. Choi et al. <sup>[44]</sup> note in their research that a growth mindset can cultivate employees' flexible thinking and problem-solving abilities, enabling them to face complex social support issues with greater flexibility and openness. Zhang et al. <sup>[46]</sup> argue that when confronting potential challenges and difficulties, counselors can proactively explore novel approaches to problem-solving, obtain diverse and personalized support, and create a better growth environment for student development. Moone <sup>[55]</sup> suggests that a growth mindset helps university counselors develop self-regulatory abilities and psychological resilience, enabling them to maintain a positive attitude and emotions at work, continuously summarize experiences from setbacks and difficulties, adjust strategies, and better adapt to various pressures and challenges in their careers. Rammstedt et al.<sup>[31]</sup> indicate that a positive mindset and psychological qualities not only enhance counselors' capacity to support students effectively but also strengthen their own ability to perceive social support.

Hu et al. <sup>[53]</sup> argue that individuals with a growth mindset cultivate greater openness and inclusiveness, enhancing their receptivity to others' perspectives and support. This open mindset promotes good communication between counselors and colleagues, students, and parents, making it easier for them to perceive and recognize social support from others<sup>[53]</sup>. A growth mindset makes counselors more optimistic when confronting adversities, predisposing them to reframe challenges as opportunities rather than impediments <sup>[56]</sup>. Klingbyle and Chung-Yan <sup>[13]</sup> suggest that a positive mindset enables counselors to better identify assistance and resources within the social support system, thereby better recognizing and utilizing such support. Therefore, this study proposes Hypothesis H2:

H2: The growth mindset of university counselors in Zhejiang Province, China has a significant positive impact on perceived social support.

#### **2.4. The relationship between University Counselors' perceived social support and career resilience**

Iancu and Lanteigne <sup>[25]</sup> note that counselors can also receive nourishment from positive emotions through the support and care of others. This helps them maintain a positive and optimistic mindset to cope with challenges and pressures in their careers <sup>[24]</sup>. Perceived social support can further catalyze counselors' career advancement and developmental growth <sup>[57]</sup>. When counselors authentically perceive social support and recognition, they will exhibit more motivation and confidence to pioneer novel pedagogical approaches, technologies, and concepts, thereby enhancing their professional competence and influence. Meanwhile, through communication and interaction with colleagues and others, counselors gain cross-disciplinary insights and feedback, driving continuous learning and competency enhancement <sup>[58]</sup>.

Furthermore, perceived social support helps enhance university counselors' adaptability and stress resistance <sup>[1]</sup>. Jackson<sup>[1]</sup> indicates that when facing difficulties and challenges, receiving support and understanding from others mitigates counselors' sense of isolation, bolstering their confidence and courage to withstand pressures. With the help of social support, counselors can address problems and overcome difficulties more effectively, becoming more resilient and strong, thereby improving their career resilience <sup>[59]</sup>. Therefore, this study proposes Hypothesis H3:

H3: The perceived social support of university counselors in Zhejiang Province, China has a significant positive impact on career resilience.

#### **2.5. The interrelationship among University Counselors' perceived social support, growth mindset, and career resilience**

Social support provides conduits for university counselors to access information and resources, helping them continuously learn and grow, thereby cultivating a growth mindset <sup>[58]</sup>. Jackson <sup>[1]</sup> maintains that through communication and interaction with others, counselors can acquire novel insights, perspectives, and experiences, stimulate their own learning motivation, and expand their cognitive boundaries. Jihane et al. <sup>[60]</sup> suggest that the acquisition of such knowledge and information lays the foundation for cognitive transformation and receptiveness to innovative concepts, facilitating the development of a growth mindset. Social support can provide encouragement, support, and recognition, strengthening university counselors' motivation to persist and explore<sup>[59]</sup>. When counselors encounter difficulties and challenges in their work, receiving support and recognition from others can inspire their courage and confidence, encouraging them to keep moving forward<sup>[58]</sup>. Positive feedback and support help counselors maintain a positive work attitude, persist in self-improvement and career development, and enhance their career resilience<sup>[58]</sup>.

Social support facilitates the establishment of robust interpersonal networks for university counselors, providing essential support and resources for their career development<sup>[24]</sup>. Within this extensive social

support network, counselors can receive assistance and attentive listening from colleagues, students, parents, and people from various sectors. Through collaboration and communication, they jointly strive to solve problems and expand their own career development horizons<sup>[25]</sup>. Such interactions and collaborations help counselors further consolidate their career goals and sense of mission, as well as enhance their work performance and influence<sup>[25]</sup>. Nancy and Jingyuan <sup>[26]</sup> argue that social support also alleviates, to a certain extent, the stress and setbacks encountered by university counselors in their careers, thereby safeguarding their psychological well-being and work engagement. Lee et al. <sup>[61]</sup> point out that through receiving social support, counselors can obtain understanding and support from others, relieve psychological stress, mitigate anxiety and fatigue, and enhance psychological resilience. With sound mental health, counselors are more likely to maintain a positive growth mindset, adapt to various challenges in their careers, and improve their career resilience<sup>[28]</sup>. Therefore, this study proposes Hypothesis H4:

H4: Perceived social support has a mediating effect between the growth mindset and career resilience of university counselors in Zhejiang Province, China.

## **2.6. The interrelationship among University Counselors' beliefs about social mobility, growth mindset, and career resilience**

Lin et al. <sup>[29]</sup> point out that counselors with beliefs about social mobility usually hold positive perceptions of the potential and possibilities for their personal career development. This intrinsic motivation drives proactive pursuit of career objectives while fostering optimistic attitudes toward challenges and adversities. Schwarz and Warum<sup>[62]</sup> argue that such a positive mindset can stimulate their resilience when confronting occupational setbacks. Wang et al. <sup>[63]</sup> found that counselors with beliefs about social mobility tend to cope more effectively with various challenges in their careers; they believe that as long as they work hard, they can improve their career status through learning and growth. Beliefs about social mobility demonstrate a significant correlation with self-efficacy <sup>[64]</sup>. When counselors maintain conviction that professional mobility can be achieved through sustained effort, their self-efficacy becomes substantially enhanced<sup>[3]</sup>. Self-efficacy is a key component of career resilience, empowering them to maintain a positive attitude when facing difficulties, strive to find solutions, and not give up easily <sup>[65]</sup>.

Beliefs about social mobility stimulate university counselors' self-motivation and goal orientation, reinforcing their conviction that personal development and professional success can be attained through sustained effort, which prompts counselors to set clear career goals and strive for them <sup>[66]</sup>. Zhi-Fang and Jing-Han <sup>[67]</sup> argue that in the process of pursuing personal development, counselors engage in continuous learning and development, constantly seek opportunities to improve themselves, enhance their professional competence and abilities, strengthen their resilience against setbacks and adaptability to adversity, thereby cultivating more mature and robust career resilience. Furthermore, beliefs about social mobility help break through traditional thinking patterns and broaden university counselors' horizons and ways of thinking <sup>[68]</sup>. Counselors who believe that they can change their social status and destiny through their own struggles and efforts dare to challenge inherent concepts and constraints, and are more willing to accept new things and different perspectives<sup>[69]</sup>. Therefore, this study proposes Hypothesis H5:

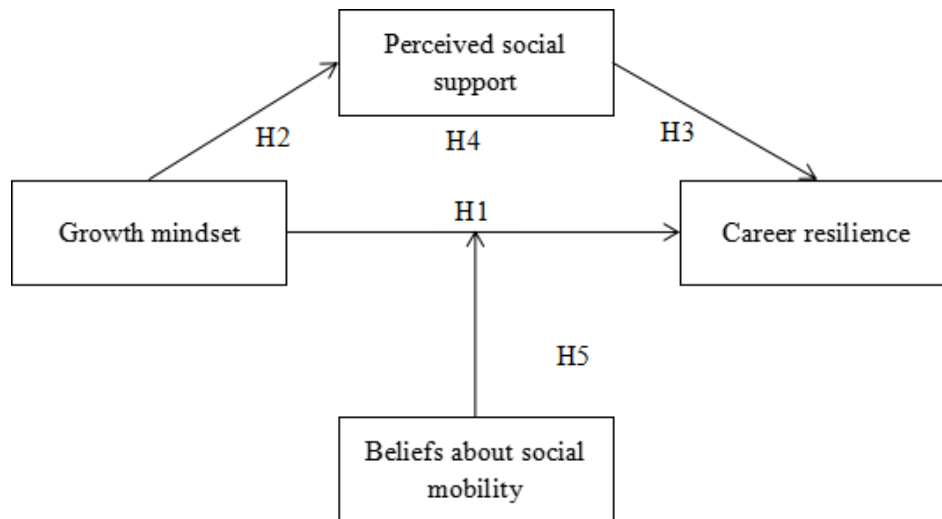
H5: Beliefs about social mobility play a positive moderating role between the growth mindset and career resilience of university counselors in Zhejiang Province, China.



### 3. Research methods and design

#### 3.1 Research framework

This study examines university counselors in Zhejiang, China, with growth mindset as the independent variable, career resilience as the dependent variable, perceived social support as the mediating variable, and beliefs about social mobility as the moderating variable. See Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Research framework

#### 3.2. Research samples

This study takes counselors from 4 undergraduate universities in Zhejiang Province, China as the research object, using convenience sampling for sampling. Counselors in these 4 undergraduate institutions all encounter significant work pressure, and their career resilience is particularly prominent compared to those in other universities. A total of 600 questionnaires were recovered in this study. After deleting invalid questionnaires with excessively short response time or obviously unreasonable answers, 576 valid questionnaires were retained, with an effective recovery rate of 94.100%. In terms of gender distribution, 272 were male, accounting for 47.22% of the total, and 304 were female, accounting for 52.78%. Regarding working years, 131 respondents (24.740%) had less than 1 year of work experience, 200 (34.720%) had 1–3 years, 144 (25.010%) had 4–6 years, and 101 (17.530%) had more than 7 years.

#### 3.3. The measurement process

The questionnaire survey started on September 15, 2024, and was completed on October 30, 2024. To ensure the authenticity of respondents' answers, this study explicitly stated at the beginning that the questionnaire was solely for data collection and testing, with relevant assurances that no privacy of respondents would be disclosed. This study adopted the form of online questionnaires, which were distributed through various social media platforms. The use of online questionnaires helps ensure respondents' anonymity and privacy, thereby enhancing data integrity and validity.

#### 3.4. Research instruments

This study adopted the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MPSS) developed by Zimet et al.<sup>[70]</sup> to measure the quality of perceived social support among university counselors with enhanced precision. The scale is divided into three dimensions: family support (items 1–4), friend support (items 5–8), and support from significant others (items 9–12), consisting of 12 items in total with 4 items in each dimension. It uses a 5-point Likert scale, where a higher total score indicates that the individual perceives more social support. The overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the Perceived Social Support Scale is .900. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for family support is .828, for friend support is .837, and for support from significant others is .842. The  $\chi^2/\text{df}$  is 1.226, which is less than the reference value of 5; RMR = .036 and SRMR = .0213, both less than the reference value of .080; RMSEA = .020, less than the reference value of .100; GFI, CFI, NFI, TLI, and IFI all exceed the reference value of .900; AGFI = .973, greater than the reference value of .800. All fit indices of the Perceived Social Support Scale meet the testing criteria, confirming the measurement model's robust goodness-of-fit.

This study adopts the Growth Thinking Scale developed by Dweck<sup>[71]</sup>. The scale consists of 20 items, where items 1–10 measure an individual's growth mindset, and items 11–20 measure an individual's fixed mindset, which are separated during data analysis. The scale uses a 5-point Likert scoring method, with 1 representing the lowest level of agreement and 5 representing the highest level of agreement, with incremental increases in between. When calculating the total growth mindset score, the scores of fixed mindset items are reverse-scored, and then the sum of scores of all items (including both growth mindset items and fixed mindset items) is calculated. A higher total score indicates that the individual is more inclined to a growth mindset pattern. The overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the Growth Thinking Scale is .945. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for individuals' growth mindset is .923, and that for individuals' fixed mindset is .924. The  $\chi^2/\text{df}$  is 1.451, which is less than the reference value of 5; RMR = .041 and SRMR = .0239, both less than the reference value of .080; RMSEA = .028, less than the reference value of .100; GFI, CFI, NFI, TLI, and IFI all exceed the reference value of .900; AGFI = .973, greater than the reference value of .800. All fit indices of the Growth Thinking Scale meet the testing criteria, indicating that the model has a good fit.

This study adopted the 6-item scale independently developed in the study by Browman et al.<sup>[72]</sup> for assessment. The scale includes three items measuring strong beliefs about social mobility (e.g., "Regardless of who you are, you can significantly change your status") and three reverse-scored items measuring weak beliefs in social mobility (e.g., "You can do different things, but you cannot truly change your position in society"). This scale is a 5-point Likert scale. The overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the Social Mobility Beliefs Scale is .884. The  $\chi^2/\text{df}$  is 1.351, which is less than the reference value of 5; RMR = .024 and SRMR = .0138, both less than the reference value of .080; RMSEA = .025, less than the reference value of .100; GFI, CFI, NFI, TLI, and IFI all exceed the reference value of .900; AGFI = .973, greater than the reference value of .800. All fit indices of the Social Mobility Beliefs Scale meet the testing criteria, confirming robust goodness-of-fit for the measurement model.

This study adopted the 5-item Career Resilience Scale developed by London and Bray<sup>[73]</sup>. It is a 5-point scale, where a higher score indicates a stronger career resilience of the individual. The overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the Career Resilience Scale is .861. The  $\chi^2/\text{df}$  is .395, which is less than the reference value of 5; RMR = .011 and SRMR = .0067, both less than the reference value of .080; RMSEA = .000, less than the reference value of .100; GFI, CFI, NFI, TLI, and IFI all exceed the reference value of .900; AGFI = .996, greater than the reference value of .800. All fit indices of the Career Resilience Scale meet the testing criteria, indicating that the model has a good fit.

### 3.5. Data analysis methods

This study used AMOS to conduct confirmatory factor analysis, and SPSS to perform test of common method variance, descriptive statistical analysis, and correlation analysis. Finally, AMOS was employed to construct a structural equation model for verifying mediating and moderating effects, and Bootstrap was used to re-test the mediating effect.

## 4. Research results

### 4.1. Common method bias analysis

This study adopted Harman's single-factor test to examine the common bias issues of research variables. The results showed that the variance explanation rate of the first unrotated factor was 37.073%, which is lower than the critical value of 50%, indicating that there is no significant common variance issue<sup>[74]</sup>.

### 4.2. Correlation analysis

As shown in Table 1, the descriptive statistics and correlation analysis of each variable are presented. The data indicate that perceived social support ( $M=3.157$ ,  $SD=.900$ ), growth mindset ( $M=3.187$ ,  $SD=.918$ ), beliefs about social mobility ( $M=3.457$ ,  $SD=1.041$ ), and career resilience ( $M=3.187$ ,  $SD=1.042$ ) all fall at an upper middle level. Additionally, the results of Pearson correlation analysis show that the correlations among university counselors' perceived social support, growth mindset, beliefs about social mobility, and career resilience all reach statistical significance ( $p < .001$ ), with correlation coefficients ranging from .172 to .610. All correlation coefficients are lower than .700, indicating no collinearity issue. The square root of AVE was used to test discriminant validity. The AVE value of any two variables individually is greater than the correlation coefficient between the two variables, which meets the criteria for discriminant validity<sup>[75]</sup>.

**Table 1.** Correlation Analysis Table

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Perceived Social Support	Growth Mindset	Beliefs About Social Mobility	Career Resilience
Perceived Social Support	3.157	.900	.756			
Growth Mindset	3.187	.918	.610***	.740		
Beliefs About Social Mobility	3.457	1.041	.235***	.202***	.748	
Career Resilience	3.187	1.042	.662***	.637***	.172***	.743

**Note 1:** \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Note 2:** The diagonal elements represent the square roots of AVE for each construct, and the elements below the diagonal represent the Pearson correlation coefficients for each construct.

### 4.3. Testing of direct effects and mediating effects

#### (1) The Impact of Growth Mindset on Career Resilience

The growth mindset of university counselors exerts a significant positive influence on career resilience ( $B = .720$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that counselors with stronger growth mindsets exhibit higher levels of career resilience. Consequently, Hypothesis H1 was supported.

**Table 2.** Regression analysis of growth mindset on career resilience

Dependent Variable: Career Resilience					
Model	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Constant	.884***	.121		7.300	.000
Growth Mindset	.720***	.042	.637	17.292	.000

Note 1: \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

## (2) The Impact of Growth Mindset on Perceived Social Support

The growth mindset of university counselors exerts a significant positive influence on perceived social support ( $B = .740$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that counselors with stronger growth mindsets demonstrate higher levels of perceived social support. Thus, research hypothesis H2 is supported.

**Table 3.** Regression analysis of growth mindset on perceived social support

Dependent Variable: Perceived Social Support					
Model	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Constant	1.398***	.095		14.705	.000
Growth Mindset	.740***	0.027	.637	27.126	.000

Note 1: \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

## (3) The Impact of Perceived Social Support on Career Resilience

The perceived social support of university counselors exerts a significant positive influence on career resilience ( $B = .490$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that counselors with higher levels of perceived social support exhibit greater career resilience. Thus, research hypothesis H3 is supported.

**Table 4.** Regression Analysis of Perceived Social Support on Career Resilience

Dependent Variable: Career Resilience					
Model	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Constant	1.398***	.095		14.705	.000
Perceived Social Support	.490***	.060	.637	8.101	.000

Note 1: \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

## (4) The Mediating Role of Perceived Social Support

This study used Model 4 of the SPSS PROCESS macro to examine the mediating effect of perceived social support in the relationship between university counselors' growth mindset and their career resilience. The results showed that, in Model 1, the growth mindset of university counselors had a significant positive impact on career resilience ( $B = .720$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that the stronger the growth mindset of university counselors, the higher their career resilience. In Model 2, the growth mindset of university counselors demonstrated a significant positive influence on perceived social support ( $B = .740$ ,  $p < .001$ ), suggesting that perceived social support varies with the level of growth mindset. When perceived social support was incorporated as a mediating variable in Model 3, the results showed that the growth mindset of university counselors still exerted a significant positive effect on career resilience ( $B = .357$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and perceived social support had a significant positive impact on career resilience ( $B = .490$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Therefore, perceived social support mediated the relationship between university counselors' growth mindset and their career resilience.

**Table 5.** Analysis table of the mediation model for perceived social support

Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
Career Resilience			Perceived Social Support			Career Resilience		
B	SE	t	B	SE	t	B	SE	t

Growth Mindset	.720***	.042	17.292	.740***	.027	27.126	.357***	.060	5.989
Perceived Social Support							.490***	.060	8.101
Adjusted R2	0.408			0.659			.468		
F	133.158***			370.806***			127.555***		

**Note 1:** \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

To further examine the mediating effect of perceived social support, this study employed the Bootstrap method, a valid and accurate approach for testing mediation [53]. Following the recommendation by Lei et al. [66], the number of Bootstrap samples was set to 2000, and the confidence level was set at 95%. The test results showed that the indirect effect was (.362, 95% CI [.193, .451]); the direct effect was (.357, 95% CI [.240, .474]); and the total effect was (.720, 95% CI [.638, .801]). These results indicated that the partial mediating effect of perceived social support between growth mindset and career resilience was revalidated, and research hypothesis H4 was supported.

**Table 6.** Bootstrap Test Table for the Mediating Effect of Perceived Social Support

Path Relationship	Estimate	95% CI	
		Inferior Limit	Superior Limit
Direct Effect: Growth Mindset=>Career Resilience	.357	.240	.474
Indirect Effect: Growth Mindset=>Perceived Social Support=>Career Resilience	.362	.193	.451
Total Effect: Growth Mindset=>Career Resilience	.720	.638	.801

**Note 1:** \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; The Random Sampling of Bootstrap was conducted 2,000 times.

### (5) Moderating Role of Beliefs about Social Mobility

This study primarily employed hierarchical regression analysis to examine the moderating role of beliefs about social mobility. Initially, the independent variable (growth mindset) and the moderating variable (beliefs about social mobility) were centralized, and the interaction term was computed. The moderation model was tested using the SPSS PROCESS macro developed by Hong [10]. In Model 1, growth mindset significantly and positively predicted career resilience ( $B = .720$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and the interaction between growth mindset and beliefs about social mobility also exerted a significant predictive effect on career resilience ( $B = .346$ ,  $p < .001$ ). These findings suggest that beliefs about social mobility play a positive moderating role in the relationship between growth mindset and career resilience. Therefore, research hypothesis H5 is supported.

**Table 7.** Analysis table of the moderation model

Variable	Model 1				Model 2				Model 3			
	B	SE	t	p	B	SE	t	p	B	SE	t	p
Growth Mindset	.720***	.042	17.292	.000	.710***	.042	16.831	.000	.679***	.039	17.611	.000
Beliefs about Social Mobility					.042	.033	1.275	.164	.036	.030	1.197	.204
Growth Mindset * Beliefs about									.346***	.032	1.840	.000

Social Mobility			
F	133.158***	10.384***	12.192***
R <sup>2</sup>	.411	.413	.513

## 5. Research conclusions

This study aimed to explore the influence of growth mindset on university counselors' career resilience in Zhejiang, China, as well as the mediating role of perceived social support and the moderating role of beliefs about social mobility. To attain the research objectives, convenience sampling was adopted to select 576 counselors from universities in Zhejiang, China as the formal sample. The Growth Mindset Scale, Perceived Social Support Scale, Beliefs about Social Mobility Scale, and Career Resilience Scale were used to distribute formal questionnaires to the research subjects. SPSS and AMOS were employed to conduct statistical analyses of the data in this study. After analyzing the research results, the conclusions of this study are drawn as follows: Primarily, growth mindset and perceived social support among university counselors in Zhejiang, China, have a significant positive impact on their career resilience. Second, growth mindset has a significant positive influence on perceived social support. In addition, perceived social support plays a mediating role between growth mindset and career resilience. And finally, beliefs about social mobility exert a moderating effect between growth mindset and career resilience. The research conclusions confirm the research hypotheses. Therefore, this study deeply reveals the relationship between growth mindset and career resilience. Implementing growth mindset-oriented management in universities in Zhejiang, China, enhancing counselors' perceived social support, and improving counselors' overall beliefs about social mobility are conducive to strengthening counselors' career resilience. Thus, universities in Zhejiang, China should attach importance to the selection of leadership styles, improve the management system for counselors' growth mindset, and strengthen communication with counselors in aspects such as teaching, research, and salary within the universities. In this way, counselors' overall beliefs about social mobility can be enhanced, and their career resilience can be promoted.

This study proposes the following research recommendations: Integrate Growth Mindset into the Entire Career Development Cycle of Counselors, design "laddered training curriculum" to reinforce the understanding of "ability plasticity" through immersive pedagogical methods such as case discussions and role-playing<sup>[32]</sup>. Establish a "challenging task list" to encourage counselors to take on cross-disciplinary responsibilities and validate the effectiveness of mindset transformation through practice<sup>[24]</sup>. Develop a "growth-oriented communication template" to convert negative statements into positive action guidelines, such as transforming "student resistance" into "optimizing communication strategies" and conduct workshops to Supplement non-violent communication techniques<sup>[13]</sup>. Implement a "self-reflective log" system, requiring counselors to document "growth-oriented breakthrough" weekly to strengthen the internalization of the growth mindset.

Second, establish a "dual-track promotion + project-based incentive" mechanism, set up separate indicators for counselors' professional title evaluation, and establish an "Innovation in Education Project Incubation Fund" to prioritize resource allocation for teams that adopt new methods to improve the effectiveness of ideological and political education<sup>[25]</sup>; form cross-departmental collaboration groups to build a three-level support network of "university-institution-class" and regularly carry out stress management workshops<sup>[28]</sup>; organize "cross-industry exchange forums" to invite corporate HR personnel,

primary and secondary school teachers, etc., to share career experiences and expand counselors' cognitive boundaries of career value; implement a "counselor mentorship system" where senior counselors guide new recruits to establish career development files and regularly plan career growth paths.

Third, analyze typical growth trajectories of different career paths, such as further education, administrative promotion, career transition of teaching roles, based on big data, and develop a "career mobility simulation system" to assist counselors in setting "laddered development goals" [9]; publish regularly an white paper on counselors' career development to showcase the mobility paths and success factors of outstanding cases, thereby enhancing professional confidence; organize "career networking workshops" to teach effective use of platforms like LinkedIn and encourage participation in national counselor forums; establish an "alumni mentor database" to invite former outstanding counselors to share cross-disciplinary development experiences, creating a demonstration effect for career mobility [2].

## 6. Research limitations and future research directions

This study investigated the relationships among university counsellors' growth mindset, perceived social support, belief in social mobility, and career resilience, and on this basis, proposed recommendations to guide future research on the growth mindset and career resilience of university counsellors. The research sample was limited to four general universities in Zhejiang Province, a region with relatively advanced economic development in China. Given that universities in different regions vary in terms of funding sources, management models, and ideological perspectives, the geographical diversity of this study's sample is relatively narrow. While the findings are valid within the selected sample, their generalisability to a broader context requires further empirical validation.

Moreover, the study employed only a questionnaire survey to collect data, which may limit the depth and richness of the findings. Future research could adopt more diversified methods for data collection. For example, a longitudinal study could be conducted to examine the dynamics of career resilience and growth mindset among university counsellors over time. Additionally, qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviews, could be used to explore the underlying factors influencing career resilience, thereby enhancing the comprehensiveness and robustness of the research.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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