

The Relationship between Teachers' Academic Optimism Culture and Student Achievement in Junior High Schools in Tehran

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between teachers' academic optimism and student achievement at Junior High Schools in Tehran in School Year of 2017-2018. The research was performed through the descriptive method (correlation). Statistical population of the research consisted of all Junior High school teachers in Tehran, about 2610 teachers. According to Morgan's Table, the sample size for the study consisted of 335 teachers (150=Females and 185=Males) who were selected by simple random sampling. Data gathering tools for measuring academic optimism was a standard questionnaire (Hoy, 2010) with a reliability coefficient of 0.86 and to measure student achievement structures were the average score of the students that had in class. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation, and Spearman correlation coefficients and regression analysis. The results showed that all three components of the condition of the culture of academic optimism (self-efficacy, academic emphasis, and trust) were rated as relatively unfavorable views of teachers (low). The condition of the academic optimism of teachers with an associate degree, bachelors and master is alike and low. There were no significant differences among male and female teachers. Another result showed that there was a significant relationship between teachers' academic optimism and student achievement. There was a significant positive relationship between each of the components of the culture of Hoy's Theory (sense of self-efficacy, teacher's trust, and academic emphasis of Teachers of English) and student achievement.

Keywords: Academic Emphasis, Academic Optimism, Self-Efficacy, Student Achievement, Teacher Trust

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Introduction

Effective teaching and learning is the result of the complex group and psychological processes. However, the precise organizational factors and psychological mechanisms behind these processes are still under investigation. Identifying the means to improve students' learning outcomes remains the subject of continuous academic inquiry and a key objective of government and international bodies (Maxwell et al. 2017); because of education matters.

Education specialists have paid attention to student achievement for years (Guay and Vallerand, 1997). The student achievement is connected with educable and controllable components such as cognitive and ecological factors more than uncontrollable elements such as intelligence and memory as it was noted in the research in many years ago (Strickland, and Galimbal, 2000). The studies showed that the motivational orientation had an essential role in the student performance (Ryan, and Grolnick, 1991). Learning is important in understanding of causality for success and failure in schools (Dweck & Elliot, 1983; Harter & Connell, 1984; Ryan, and Grolnick, 1987). Development of social psychological theories has been raised about the development of motivational orientation and focused on the role of environmental factors (Ginsbourg, and Bronstein, 1993). One of the critical elements in the success or failure of student achievement is the cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects of teachers who

interact directly with students in different courses that they have to search their theoretical foundations in the field of psychology.

Positive psychology, by analyzing sentiment (especially positive thinking), properties and agencies (customs and traditions), identifies the conditions in which individuals develop and flourish in it. Such an environment is the same that most of the educators like to form the classroom in it. There is a focus on the opportunities, the ability to react, altruism and trust in a classroom within specific characteristics of optimism. When we observe the classroom environment, we can notice that positive teachers focus on the positive qualities of students, as well as the positive characteristics of classrooms, schools, and communities (Pagares, 2001). New construction of the culture of academic optimism that adapted (was transferred) from positive psychology assumes a positive belief in teachers. Because the student achievement is essential in schools, the teachers can focus on teaching and learning (academic emphasis), with their trust in partnership of parents and students (confidence in parents and their students), with faith in their capacity and efficiency (sense of self-efficacy) to overcome difficulties and failure, and with effort and persistence (Woolfolk Hoy, 2008). Academic optimism is a collective set of beliefs about strengths and capabilities in schools that paints a rich picture of a human agency in which optimism is the overarching theme that unites

efficacy and trust with the academic emphasis. A school culture imbued with such beliefs has a sense of the possible. Efficacy provides the idea that the faculty can make a positive difference in student learning; teachers believe in themselves. Faculty trust in students and parents reflects the belief that teachers, parents, and students can cooperate to improve learning, that is, the faculty believes in its students. Academic emphasis is the enacted behavior prompted by these beliefs, that is, the faculty focus on student success in academics. Thus, a school with high academic optimism defines a culture in which the faculty believes that it can make a difference, that students can learn, and academic performance can be achieved (Hoy, Tarter, and Woolfolk Hoy, 2006b). These three aspects of collective optimism interact with each other (see Figure 5.3). For example,

faculty trust in parents and students facilitates a sense of collective efficacy, but collective efficacy reinforces the trust.

Similarly, when the faculty trusts parents, teachers believe they can insist on higher academic standards without fearing that parents will undermine them, and emphasis on high academic standards, in turn, reinforces the faculty trust in parents and students. Finally, when the faculty as a whole believes it can organize and execute actions needed to have a positive effect on student achievement, they will stress student achievement, and academic emphasis will, in turn, reinforce a strong sense of collective efficacy. In brief, all the dimensions of academic optimism are in transactional relationships with each other and interact to create a culture of academic optimism in the school workplace (Hoy & Miskel, 2013).

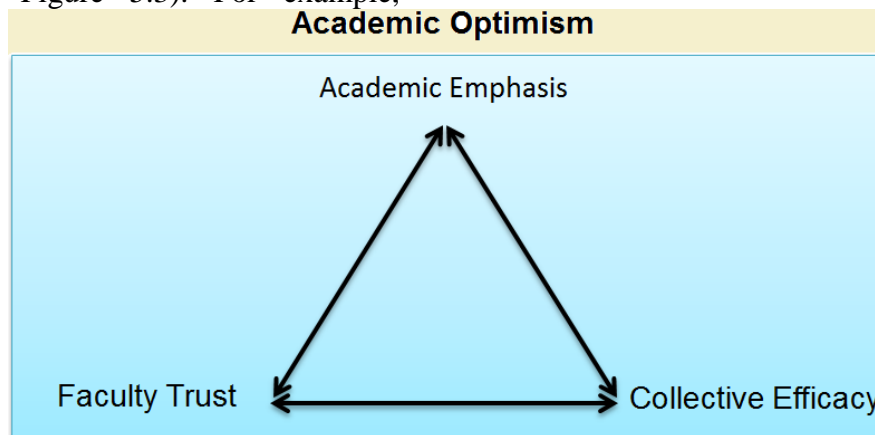


Figure 1; The Reciprocal Nature of the Three Dimensions of Academic Optimism (Hoy & Miskel, 2013)

Collective efficacy, cognitive optimism derived from Bandura's work (1986, 1997) in social cognitive theory. Collective efficacy is a group belief; it is

cognitive. Faculty trust in parents and teachers is a valid response from the school, and the academic emphasis is the behavioral enactment of efficacy and trust. As

the figure 1 shows, the three aspects of academic optimism interact with each other. For example, faculty trust in parents and students facilitates a sense of collective efficacy, but collective efficacy reinforces the trust.

The main issue of the research is that: a) There is no clear picture of the current situation of teachers' academic optimism culture in Tehran schools. b) There is ambiguity about the role or influence of Teacher's academic optimism culture on student achievement. This study is essential; because it can clear the current situation of teachers' academic optimism culture in Tehran schools and it can explain the role of teachers' academic optimism culture on student achievement.

Literature Review

In this research, we have examined the previous research which are mentioned below.

Strakova et al., (2018) studied that "Does Teachers' Academic Optimism Matter?", So their research built on the concept of academic optimism, which combined three aspects of a teacher's professional creed: self-efficacy, trust, and academic emphasis. Their study explored the functioning of the collective and individual measures (indexes) of academic optimism in the Czech environment and studied its impact on students' outcomes. Two-level structural equation modeling showed a significant impact of school's academic optimism on students' achievement even after

controlling for prior performance and socioeconomic status at both the student and the school level.

Mitchell and Tarter (2016) in their research as "A Path Analysis of the Effects of Principal Professional Orientation towards Leadership, Professional Teacher Behavior (PTB), and School Academic Optimism on School Reading Achievement (RA)" found that socio-economic status (SES) had a significant effect on school academic optimism (SAO) but not on PTB. School level hurt both PTB and SAO suggesting that both variables were higher in elementary school and declined in middle school. SES paired with SAO in predicting RA. As expected, SAO had a more significant effect on RA than SES. The significance of the findings lies in the confirmation of SAO as an essential influence on RA and in demonstrating the importance of SES in establishing a context in which AO and PTB can flourish.

Bakhshae and Hejazi (2016) in their research as "Student's Academic Engagement: The Relation between Teacher's Academic Optimism and Female Student's Perception of School Climate" found that the perception of teacher's support and understanding of student's autonomy have a significant impact on the student's academic engagement. Further, they found that there is a relationship between teachers' efficacy and student engagement.

Sezgin and Erdogan (2015) in their research as "Academic Optimism, Hope and Zest for

Work as Predictors of Teacher Self-Efficacy and Perceived Success" found that there are positive and significant relationships among teacher self-efficacy, perceived success, academic optimism, hope and zest for work and that these factors positively predict teacher self-efficacy. Furthermore, academic optimism, hope, and enthusiasm for work positively predict teachers' perceived success. These factors were also shown to predict self-efficacy through perceived success indirectly. Discussion of the findings is provided within the context of improving teachers' self-efficacy and positive psychological state.

Moghtadaie and Hoveida (2015) in their research as "The Relationship between Academic Optimism and Classroom Management Styles of Teachers--Case Study: Elementary School Teachers in Isfahan" found that there is a significant relationship between classroom management style of the teachers and their academic optimism and the correlation coefficient equal to 39% obtained, and the correlation coefficient of 47% received between the academic optimism and non-interventionist classroom management, and the correlation coefficient of 43% was obtained between the academic optimism and interactionist classroom management, and the correlation coefficient of 24% was obtained between the academic optimism and interventionist classroom management that is significant. According to the results, the

classroom management style is a variable that has a relation with academic optimism, and at educational opportunities, it must be emphasized.

Tschannen-Moran, Bankole, Mitchell, and Moore (2013) did a study as "Student Academic Optimism: a confirmatory factor analysis", so they found that the Student Academic Optimism was unrelated to SES and that Student Academic Optimism has a significant effect on achievement over and above the impact of SES, and student demographic characteristics leads the authors to consider the possibility that SES may not be as influential as once thought when other conditions of the school environment are taken into consideration.

Wu (2013) did a study as "Academic Optimism and Collective Responsibility: An Organizational Model of the Dynamics of Student Achievement." The results of this research demonstrated that academic optimism confirmed as a latent construct manifested by collective efficacy, faculty trust in students and parents, and academic emphasis in Taiwan elementary schools. Furthermore, the research also extended the theory of academic optimism by demonstrating that academic optimism works through collective responsibility to significantly influence student achievement while controlling for socioeconomic status, school size, and prior student achievement.

Ngidi and David (2012) in their study as "Academic Optimism: An

Individual Teacher Belief" found that the teacher's sense of academic optimism is positively and significantly related to student-centered teaching, citizenship behavior and dispositional optimism. The findings further indicated that student-centered teaching beliefs, dispositional optimism and citizenship behavior emerged as significant predictors of individual teacher's academic optimism. Lastly, the results revealed that the teaching phase is the only teachers' biographical variable that is a significant predictor of academic optimism.

For the first, Fahy, Wu, and Hoy (2010) examined the relationship between individual teachers' academic optimism and student achievement. They studied 131 teachers of the junior high school. They found that characteristics of school have a little effect on student achievement, but social conditions a lot of impact on student learning. Finally, they discovered that academic optimism is one of these characteristics that affect student achievement positively.

Karimzadeh (2008) did a study as "relationship between quality of life and self-efficacy of teachers in Shahr-e-Kord." He found that there is a significant relationship between quality of life and self-efficacy of teachers at all education levels. Therefore, by using appropriate methods in increasing of self-efficacy can lead to increasing of quality of life.

Smith and Hoy (2007) in their research as "Academic optimism and student achievement in urban

elementary schools" found that the main hypotheses of the study were supported; academic optimism was a second-order construct comprised of collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic optimism. Moreover, academic optimism is a school characteristic that predicts student achievement even controlling for socioeconomic status.

Hoy, Tarter, and Woolfolk Hoy (2006) examined academic optimism of schools as a force that affects student achievement. They tested 96 samples from high schools. The results showed that academic optimism has the most impact on student achievement after controlling social-economic status and before achievement.

Caprara and Barbara Nell (2006) examined the role of teachers' self-efficacy in job satisfaction and student achievement. They found that there is a significant relationship between a sense of self-efficacy and their job satisfaction of teachers and student achievement. The teachers have a high sense of self-efficacy, they had the better high ability in making of interpersonal relationship, planning, and organizing in the job environment.

Kurz, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2006) examined the relationship between teachers' academic optimism and their job commitment. Their findings showed that teachers' beliefs affect their job commitment. The process of teachers' cognitive thinking is less known in related to their job commitment, while the job commitment impacts teachers' efficacy. There is no relationship

between academic optimism and teachers' conditions. There is a positive relationship between academic optimism and social-economic status of students but academic optimism not related to job experience and special conditions of teachers. Finally, they found that there is a relationship between teachers' academic optimism and their job commitment.

Mohsenpour (2006) did a study as "the role of self-efficacy, goals of achievement, learning strategies, and stability in student achievement in mathematics in the third level of high school in Tehran." The results showed that self-efficacy, goals of achievement, learning strategies, and stability have an impact on student achievement in mathematics. But self-efficacy has the most effect on student achievement in mathematics.

Wheatley (2002) and Spero (2005) found that doubting self-efficacy in teachers can benefit learning and educational reforms. The sense of doubt may lead to the development of thinking, learning motivation, more accepting of differences, more cooperation, and changing of disability. The thought of doubt about efficacy in teaching leads to development in teaching skills in a way that the responses of doubt about efficacy happen positively. It is worth mentioning that having high self-efficacy can lead to avoidance actions instead of positive effects when the performance is weak.

Brouwers and Tomic (2000) found evidence about the sense of

teacher's efficacy in classroom management in their study that confirms the cycle model: high levels of destructive behavior will lead to reducing a sense of self-efficacy in students that can lead to more burnout in teachers. This burnout leads to increased destructive behaviors in students, and these destructive behaviors also lead to a decrease in teacher's self-efficacy.

Ross (1998) examined the research that had been done on the efficacy of teachers and found that there is a relationship between self-efficacy of teachers and some of their behaviors. He found that the teachers who have a sense of higher self-efficacy are more likely to:

- Learn and use the approaches and new strategies.
- Use of management strategies that increase student autonomy and reduce the student control.
- Provide special assistance to students who are weak.
- Develop an understanding of self-educated in students.
- Set achievable goals.
- Be patient in dealing with students' academic failure.

Muiton, Brown, & Lent (1991) and Pagares, and Schunk (2001) showed that there is a positive relationship between self-efficacy and academic optimism in a study. There is a relationship between self-efficacy and performance since $r=38\%$ self-efficacy explains the variance of return by about 14%. Two separate meta-analyses

showed that the relationship is strong between self-efficacy and performance.

In sum, regarding the foundations of theoretical and empirical literature in Bandura's social cognitive learning theory, it can be said that self-efficacy beliefs influence people's choices, fields, and streams of action that follow. So that people tend to do things that they feel capable and confident. Decision, behavior, and activities of teachers in the classroom for students are no exception. Hence, the purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between teachers' academic optimism culture and students' achievement of English at Junior High Schools. According to Bandura's social cognitive learning theory (1997) and the theory of Gibbs (2002) the presented question of the model has been studied in Figure 1.

Research Questions

1. What is the situation of teachers' academic optimism culture in Junior High Schools?
2. Is there a significant difference between teachers' academic optimism culture of male and female teachers in the statistical population of the research?
3. Is there a relationship between teachers' academic optimism culture and student achievement?

4. Is it possible to predict student achievement based on teachers' academic optimism culture in Junior High Schools?

Research Methodology

This research is the application of objective and descriptive (correlation) regarding performance. The study was performed through descriptive method (correlation). Statistical population of the research consisted of all teachers (2600 teachers) in Junior High school in Tehran in School Year of 2017-2018. According to the Morgan's Table, the sample size for the study consisted of 309 teachers (Females=150 and Males=159) who were selected by simple random. Data gathering tools for measuring academic optimism was a standard questionnaire (Hoy, 2010) with a reliability coefficient of 0.86. To measure student achievement structures were the average score of the students that had in class. In this study, we used descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation, and Spearman correlation coefficients and regression analysis to analyze the data by using SPSS 24.

Findings

- 1. What is the situation of teachers' academic optimism culture in schools?**

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation of teachers' academic optimism

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Self-Efficacy	309	6.5599	1.11291	.06331
Trust	309	3.7055	.64851	.03689
Academic Emphasis	309	3.4757	.70650	.04019
Academic Optimism	309	4.5804	.60955	.03468

Table 3. T-Test

Test Value = 4						
	T	Df	Sig.	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Self-Efficacy	40.433	308	.0001	2.55987	2.4353	2.6844
Trust	-7.983	308	.0001	-.29450	-.3671	-.2219
Academic Emphasis	-13.04	308	.0001	-.52427	-.6034	-.4452
Academic Optimism	16.737	308	.0001	.58037	.5121	.6486

As the table 2 shows, the mean of academic optimism culture in schools is 4.58; its Standard Deviation is 0.61. The mean of self-efficacy component is 6.56, so it is more than average, and its Standard Deviation is 1.11, the mean of teachers' trust component is 3.70, so it is lower than average, and its Standard Deviation is 0.65, and the mean of academic emphasis component is 3.50, so it is lower than average, and its

Standard Deviation is 0.70. As the table 3 shows, the sig is 0.001, and as it is lower than 0.05, we understand that the teachers' academic optimism culture is more than average in the schools.

2. Is there a significant difference between teachers' academic optimism culture of male and female teachers in the statistical population of the research?

Table 4. Group Statistics

	Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Academic Optimism	Female	150	4.508	.60081	.04906
	Male	159	4.647	.61194	.04853

Table 5: teachers' academic optimism culture according to demographic characteristics

		Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig.	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Academic Optimism	Equal variances assumed	.010	.918	-2.012	307	.045	-.13891	.06904	-.274	.003
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.013	306.5	.045	-.13891	.06900	-.274	.003

According to the table 4, the mean of academic optimism for the female is 4.508, but for the male is 4.647, as the significance in Levene's test is 0.918 and as it's more than 0.05, the equal variances assumed. Therefore, as the significance is (0.045) lower than 0.05 in the t-test, we find that there

is a significant difference between male and female teachers' academic optimism culture. So the mean difference is about 0.14.

3. Is there a relationship between teachers' academic optimism culture and student achievement?

ANOVA

Table 6. Teachers' efficacy and student achievement

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Self-Efficacy	Between Groups	112.995	25	4.520	4.76	.0001
	Within Groups	268.481	283	.949		
	Total	381.476	308			
Trust	Between Groups	44.732	25	1.789	5.97	.0001
	Within Groups	84.802	283	.300		
	Total	129.534	308			
Academic Emphasis	Between Groups	28.129	25	1.125	2.53	.0001
	Within Groups	125.606	283	.444		
	Total	153.735	308			
Academic Optimism	Between Groups	38.170	25	1.527	5.66	.0001
	Within Groups	76.270	283	.270		
	Total	114.439	308			

According to the table 6, as the significance of self-efficacy is 0.0001, and it's lower than 0.05, there is a positive and significant relationship between teacher's efficacy and student achievement. Then as the significance of trust is 0.0001, and it's lower than 0.05, there is a positive and significant relationship between teacher trust and student achievement. After that, as the significance of academic emphasis is 0.0001, and it's lower than 0.05, there is a

positive and significant relationship between academic stress and student achievement. Finally, as the significance of academic optimism is 0.0001, and it's lower than 0.05, there is a positive and significant relationship between teachers' trust and student achievement.

4. Is it possible to predict student achievement based on teachers' academic optimism culture in schools?

Table 7. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. The error of the Estimate
1	.367 ^a	.135	.132	1.43846
2	.411 ^b	.169	.163	1.41225

a. Predictors: (Constant), Self-Efficacy

b. Predictors: (Constant), Self-Efficacy, Trust

Table 8. Summary of calculation regression analysis to predict student achievement in schools based on academic optimism culture

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	11.720	.490		23.918	.000
	Self-Efficacy	.509	.074		6.910	.000
2	(Constant)	10.571	.580		18.211	.000
	Self-Efficacy	.422	.076	.304	5.532	.000
	Trust	.463	.131	.195	3.536	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Student Achievement

As the table 7 shows, two models proposed in the regression analysis in stepwise. The second model considered the perfect model. In other words, the multiple correlation coefficient between the two components culture (teacher's self-efficacy) based on academic optimism and self-efficacy of teachers with varying student achievement of their common variance of 0.41 and 0.169 has

been made, in fact, about 17% of the variable student achievement to be explained with self-efficacy in schools. Given that a significant level calculated and the results of the analysis of variance of less 0.01, so it can be concluded that 99% shared variance calculated is significant. Academic optimism culture prediction equation based on student achievement and

regression coefficients calculated according to the following:

$$\text{Student Achievement} = (\text{Teacher's Trust} \times 0.195) + (\text{Teacher's Self-Efficacy} \times 0.304) + 10.571$$

Discussion and Conclusion

Academic optimism has proposed as a conceptualization for how teachers influence student outcomes (Hoy, 2012). McGuigan and Hoy (2006) defined that academic optimism is a shared belief among faculty that academic achievement is remarkable, that the faculty has the capacity to help students achieve, and that students and parents can be trusted to cooperate with them in this endeavor; in brief, a school-wide confidence that students will succeed academically (Kulophas et al., 2018). In this study, we examined the relationship between teachers' academic optimism culture and student achievement in Tehran schools.

The first finding of this study showed that the culture of academic optimism in schools is about average. The other result revealed that two components of academic optimism such as teacher's trust and academic emphasis are lower than average and they are undesirable. But, teachers' efficacy is the best component of this study. The other result showed that there isn't a significant difference between the teacher's academic optimism by qualification. And there is a significant difference between the teacher's academic optimism by gender. But teacher's academic

optimism is about average for male and female. This result probably says that these teachers don't believe their students, so they can't trust the students and their parents.

On the other hand, the teachers have a very low emphasis on student achievement (low academic stress), it caused that the culture of academic optimism isn't very desirable in schools. Results of the study are consistent with previous findings, Straskova et al. (2018) and Mitchell and Tarter (2016). There wasn't any research for exact matching with this research. Furthermore, this finding may indicate that teachers are involved in teaching hours more and more. According to the low literacy of people in our society such as students (according to the evidence), they start to believe that they aren't able to learn concepts in high levels. So, the students involve themselves less at schools, both cognitively and behaviorally. They emphasize their bureaucratic roles more and more in classes. The other result of this study showed that there is a significant positive relationship between the culture of academic optimism and student achievement. And there is a significant positive relationship among each component of the academic optimism culture (self-efficacy, teachers' trust, and academic emphasis) and student achievement. This finding confirms the results of the research of Strakova et al. (2018), Hoy, Tarter, and Woolfolk Hoy (2010), Fahy, Wu, and Hoy (2010), Caprara, and Barbara Nell (2006). This research showed the

relationship between teachers' academic optimism and student achievement. In explaining the finding, it can be said that the teachers who have high academic optimism can communicate better interpersonal, planning and organizing in the classroom. These teachers are able to focus on teaching and learning (the consonant of academic emphasis), by trusting the participation of students and their parent (the consonant trust in students and their parent) and by having faith in their capacity and efficiency (feel of self-efficacy), in overcoming difficulties and failures, with effort and perseverance, it leads to student achievement. We suggest that;

- The principals and educational leaders should celebrate the academic success of teachers and students in schools (Academic Emphasis).
- The principals, educational leaders, and parents should focus on teachers and students learning correctly (Academic Emphasis).
- The teachers should trust students and their parents (Trust).
- The principals, educational leaders, teachers, and parents should study new research in this field during the school year.

Research Suggestions

- 1) Because there is a positive and significant relationship between teachers' academic optimism culture and

student achievement, future researchers should study developing the culture of teachers' academic optimism and identify its effective factors.

- 2) Since there is a positive and significant relationship between teachers' trust and student achievement and the teachers' trust is low, school administrators should provide a connection between home and school.
- 3) As there is a positive and significant relationship between academic emphasis and student achievement and the academic emphasis is low, principals should focus on teachers and students' learning.
- 4) Because we just examined the relationship between teachers' academic optimism and student achievement, future researchers should study the relationship between students' academic optimism and their achievement.

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