Teacher Academic Optimism and Effective Learning Environment at Kuwaiti Primary schools

By:

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Introduction:

With continuous accountability demands placed on education, school effectiveness remains a prime focus to researchers and administrators. Building an effective learning environment along with improving student learning and achievement depend largely on teachers' beliefs about students' academic achievement and their focus on academic tasks (Ballone&Czerniak, 2001; Kılınc, 2013; Pajares, 1992). Because teachers are the central point of the classroom innovation, they need to capable, optimistic, keen and confidant that they continue to grow and teach more effectively. They need to believe that they can engage student in learning and improve their learning outcomes. They need to be hopeful and satisfied about their work and future in a way that restores the stressed-out emotionally and physically (Pendergast, 2010).

Teachers' sense of self efficacy, motivation to teach and trust are the most critical elements of effective classroom practice as well as the overall success of school (Pendergast & Bahr, 2010). Focusing on teachers' ability to cope well with the daily adversity and challenges of classroom practice provide a more proactive and positive lens to understand the ways that teachers manage and sustain their motivation and committee in times of change (Beard et al., 2010). Schools that are looking to support their staff are more likely to have staff more willing and able to take up educational reform (Pendergast, 2010).

Over the past three decades, Wayne K. Hoy and his colleagues at Ohio State University have tried to identify school climate factors that account for student achievement. In 2006, Hoy, Tarter, and Woolfolk Hoy introduced a new construct, academic optimism, which was shown to be positively related to student achievement even after controlling for socioeconomic factors. Academic optimism is comprised of three school properties: academic emphasis, collective efficacy, and faculty trust in students and parents (Hoy et al., 2006)."A school with academic optimism has a faculty that collectively believes it can make difference, all students can learn, and high academic performance can be achieved" (Hoy, 2012, p. 85).

According to Hoy et al. (2006), academic optimism of teachers has the potential to influence the quality of learning and teaching environment at school's level. Alhendal, Marshman & Grootenboer, (2015) argue that changing behavior involves changing beliefs and feelings related to that behavior. Academic optimism is one of the constructs that reflects teachers' positive beliefs and efforts on improving student achievement (Beard et al., 2010; Hoy et al., 2006).Academic optimism, creates school culture and encourages teachers to create optimistic beliefs about themselves, trust to students and their parents. They are also encouraged to scientifically stress on fulfillment of educational tasks and try to spread positive, active and happy environment (Nasab, Asgari & Ayati; 2015).

Although relationships between academic optimism and various concepts have already been investigated, the number of studies centered upon relationships between academic optimism and school climate is quite limited (Kılınc, 2013). Nasab et al., (2015) postulates that school climate of academic press plays a critical role in facilitating student learning. Hoy et al. (2006) emphasize that academic

emphasis has been a critical factor in predicting student engagement and that more research is required for a better understanding of teacher academic optimism and for constructing the theory of academic optimism in schools. Therefore, more research is needed to understand the academic optimism and its relationship with other school or individual characteristics This study examining the relationships between teacher sense of academic optimism and school climate. The results of the study may produce empirical evidence on which types of school climates support or hinder teacher sense of academic optimism.

Conceptual Framework:

This study was guided by positive psychology which stresses peoples' control over their own actions and words (Seligman, 2011).This new construct, academic optimism, is grounded in research on positive psychology (Hoy et al., 2006; Woolfolk Hoy, Hoy &Kurz, 2008; Beard et al., 2010). Psychologists offer a great deal of time and effort to identify workplaces or circumstances in which individuals are happy and effective and that they generally analyze the positive aspects of life (Woolfolk Hoy et al., 2008). It is therefore possible to argue that positive psychology is primarily related to positive human beliefs, thoughts, and feelings that create positive human experience (Seligman, 2011). The construct of individual teacher academic optimism depends upon positive psychologists which primarily focuses on the individuals' actions and experience in the aspects of well-being, hope, and happiness (Beard et al., 2010).

Teacher sense of academic optimism:

Guided by earlier research (Beard et al., 2010; Hoy et al., 2006; Woolfolk Hoy et al., 2008;), this study focuses on academic optimism at the individual teacher level. Individual sense of academic optimism is comprised of

teacher sense of self efficacy, teacher trust in parents and students, and teacher academic optimism to create a positive and challenging learning environment for students (Hoy et al., 2006). Academic optimism relies upon the assumption that school members feel a sense of shared purpose about achieving a higher level of student achievement and learning (Hoy, 2012).

A teacher's positive belief that he or she can make a difference in the academic performance of students by emphasizing academics and learning. Woolfolk Hoy et al. (2008) summarize that academic optimism is a self-referent, positive belief about the ability to teach all students, to form trusting relationships with parents and students, and to emphasize academic tasks. Teachers who believe in the potential of all students, make management and instructional decisions aligned with these expectations, and are committed to the success of their students will be more academically optimistic (Hoy et al., 2006; Kilinc, 2013). The more positive and optimistic the beliefs are the more likely a reform will be implemented (Alhendal et al., 2015).

Academic optimism is one of the most critical elements of effective classroom practice as well as the overall success of a school. Schools with academic optimism have higher levels of academic emphasis and collective efficacy (DiPaola & Hoy, 2005). According to Pajares (2001) optimistic teachers focus on the positive qualities of students, classrooms, schools, and communities.

Teacher sense of self efficacy:

Teachers' sense of efficacy refers to teachers' beliefs in their capability to make a difference in student learning. As suggested by Woolfolk Hoy et al. (2008), teachers' sense of efficacy is teachers' ability to affect even the unmotivated or difficult students' learning and achievement positively. Hoy and Spero (2005) propose that teacher sense of self

efficacy impacts effort they invest in improving the quality of teaching and learning environment in schools. It is the perception of teachers in a school that the efforts of the faculty will have a positive effect on students. Woolfolk Hoy et al. (2008) further assert that self-efficacy is one of the few teacher characteristics associated with student achievement. If teachers believe that they can affect student learning, then they set higher expectations, exert greater effort, and persist in the face of difficulties. Therefore, collective efficacy symbolizes the cognitive side of academic optimism.

Teachers' sense of academic emphasis:

Academic emphasis refers to teachers' beliefs about and efforts on student learning (Woolfolk Hoy et al., 2008). Beard et al. (2010) define teacher academic emphasis as "the degree to which teachers find ways to engage students in appropriate and academic task" (p. 1137). In other words, it explains directed behaviors, practices or actions and a sense of press towards increasing the quality of classroom instruction to achieve a higher level of student achievement (Beard et al., 2010). Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2000) proposed that academic emphasis is a pressure that teachers feel to facilitate student learning. McGuigan and Hoy (2006) also confirm that a higher level of teacher academic emphasis can impact teacher sense of self efficacy and teacher trust in parents and students. Therefore, teacher academic emphasis holds the normative and behavioral side of academic optimism (McGuigan& Hoy, 2006).

Teacher trust in parents and students:

Trust is one of the critical components that impact student academic achievement within the construct of academic optimism(Beard et al., 2010). Teachers' sense of trust in students and parents is based on feelings that the

students and their parents are benevolent, reliability, competent, honest, and open (Hoy et al., 2006). Woolfolk Hoy et al. (2008) argued that teachers' sense of trust in students and parents may increase teacher sense of self efficacy which results in greater teacher efforts on planning and designing a more effective classroom instruction. Beard et al. (2010) further assert that teachers who trust students and parents can perform more effectively to increase the quality of classroom practices which in turn enhances teacher trust in other parties of school. It is also expected that students become more open and motivated to learn when teachers trust them (Woolfolk Hoy et al., 2008). Thus, trust can be considered as one of the critical components to improve student learning and achievement.

School climate:

School climate is a general term that refers to teachers' perceptions of their work environment, it is influenced by formal and informal relationships, personalities of participants, and leadership in the organization (Hoy et al., 1991; Osman, 2012; Kilinc, 2014). School climate is closely related to the quality of communication and interactions among school community members (Haynes et al., 1997) .Kaplan and Geoffroy (1990)suggest that school climates addresses school community members' reflections about physical and psychological environment of school. School climate is a powerful and multi-dimensional organizational concept significantly affecting both school members (including administrators, teachers, students, parents and other staff) and the educational environment itself (Marshall, 2004; Kilinc, 2014). School climate plays a significant role in providing a healthy and positive atmosphere. Freiberg (1998) notes, "the interaction of various school and classroom climate factors can create a

fabric of support that enables all members of the school community to teach and learn at optimum levels" (p. 22).

Research shows that school climate can affect many areas and people within schools. As argued by Kilinc (2014), school climate and its unique features may have many effects on organizational behavior, organizational performance and relationships among school community members. Positive and negative school climates have various effects on both relationships among colleagues and teacher-student relationships and on overall school performance (Calık& Kurt, 2010).Healthy and positive school climate can produce positive educational outcomes for students and teachers, similarly unhealthy and negative climate can prevent optimal learning and growth in the institution (Marshall, 2004).

The positive climate is marked by "cooperation and respect within the faculty and between the faculty and principal" (Hoy &Miskel, 2013, p. 212). In positive climate, school leadership implement structures that provide time for teachers to work together, get to know each other, and create a bank of common experiences that allow for strong interpersonal bonds to develop (Graham & Ferriter, 2010; Kilinc, 2014). In such climate, school principals are open to ideas and suggestions from teachers as teachers are regarded as the potential power to create a healthy and positive school climate. As suggested by Allen, Grigsby &Peters (2015), principals who motivate and empower teachers can positively influence school climate. "Heads of schools should know that most of their teachers understand what a healthy climate constitutes; and therefore, should work closely with them to construct one for the benefit of the schools" (Tshabalala &Ncube 2014, P. 34). DiPaola and Hoy (2005) argued that supportive leadership is the key to getting teachers to do beyond what is formally expected.

Professional orientation is also high in supportive school climates.Hoy, Tarte&K ottkamp (1991)argue that strong collegial and congenial relationships are experienced in positive school climates in which teacher and principals support each other well, reflect on ideas, and socialize together. Hoy, Tarte & Bliss (1990) state that collaborative and supportive relationships in healthy school climates lead to a positive mental mood and effective engagement with one's responsibilities. Taylor and Tashakkori (1995) found that a positive school climate is associated with increased job satisfaction for school members. Thus, principals in open schools have more loyal and satisfied teachers (Hoy &Miskel, 2013).

On the other hand, negative school climates have been characterized by routine workloads, low job engagement and satisfaction, and principals' lack of leadership skills (Kottkamp et al., 1987). Principals of these schools are far away from facilitating teacher work and focusing on student achievement. Schools with directive climates, principal is the only one who controls and manages all the school (Calık& Kurt, 2010; Kılınç, 2014). In such climate, teachers are busy with unnecessary workload which prevents them from exerting productive efforts on increasing student engagement. Unhealthy school climate inhibits the creativity of all school members and results in teachers' and administrators' low job satisfaction, isolation, aggression and detention (Marshall, 2004; Welsh ,2000).

In their study, Hoy and Tarter (1997) suggest that an open and healthy school climate may well be a predictor of a school environment characterized by trust, commitment, and high level of student achievement. Another study by DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2001) indicates that school climate predicts organizational citizenship. The authors argue that teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors

increase in school climates fostering teacher collegiality and professionalism. Another study by Sweetland and Hoy (2000) also shows that the two strongest climate predictors of teacher empowerment were collegial leadership and academic press. They stated, "schools in which the principal's leadership is collegial, teachers demonstrate a high degree of professionalism, and there is a strong internal academic press are conducive to teacher empowerment" (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000, p. 720).

Smith and Piele (1997), based from a review of researches, proposed that a positive school culture and climate is associated with higher student motivation and achievement, increased teacher collaboration, and improved attitudes among teachers toward their jobs. Calık and Kurt (2010) argue that climate is of vital importance for schools in that it results from organizational practices and impacts both the attitudes and behaviors of each school community member. Sandberg (2007) argued that instead of solely teaching character-building lessons, that all adult school members: teachers, administration, and support staff, build a good climate within entire schools.

In their study Mascall, Leithwood, Straus & Sacks (2008) examined the relationship between school leadership and teachers' academic optimism. 1,640 elementary and secondary teachers in one Ontario school district completed the online survey. The study revealed that academic optimism was positively and significantly associated with school leadership. Kılınc (2013) examine the impact of healthy school climates on teacher sense of academic optimism. The study sample consisted of 302 teachers employed in primary schools in Turkey. Results indicated that teacher sense of academic optimism was positively and significantly related to supportive, directive, and intimate school climates. Teachers working in schools with

supportive, directive, intimate climates are more likely to be academically optimistic.

Kirby and DiPaola (2009) confirmed that academic optimism has independent effects on student achievement and academic optimism can be predicted by open and healthy climates. The authors suggested that academic optimism is high in schools where parents have opportunities to collaborate with teachers and the school on meaningful education matters that affect their children. Therefore, one could argue that school climate depends heavily on the specific characteristics of a school and its environment, which are deeply affected by school administrators' leadership styles and impacted by organizational behaviors, norms and values (Hoy & Clover, 1986).

Previous research on school climate focused mainly on defining and measuring the concept of school climate (Hoy et al., 1991; Kottkamp et al., 1987). A variety of recent studies have also investigated the relationship between school climate and teachers' perceptions of school climate (Gunbay, 2007), organizational commitment (Turan, 2002), school disorder (Gottfredson, Gottfredson, Payne, &Gottfredson, 2005), student achievement (Allen et al., 2015;McNeil, Prater & Busch, 2009; Uline&Tschannen-Moran, 2008),school Effectiveness (Rapti,2012), faculty trust in colleagues (Hoy, Smith, & Sweetland, 2002), and school leadership (Kilinc, 2014).

Academic optimism and organizational climate are similar in nature that they both have been examined by researchers to determine whether they predict academic achievement and organizational effectiveness(Kilinc, 2013).Past research findings indicate that academic optimism, which is made up of collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis is a predictor of both

academic achievement and school effectiveness (Hoy et al., 2006; McGuigan, 2005; Rapti,2012). Research has also confirmed the connection between school climate (represented by the openness and health of the school) and both achievement and perceptions of effectiveness (MacNeil et al., 2009; Uline & Tschannen-Moran, 2008).It is also assumed that academic emphasis within a positive learning environment is crucial for improving student learning and achievement (DiPaola& Hoy, 2005; Sweetland & Hoy, 2000). As argued by Henderson et al. (2014) when schools can achieve a culture of academic optimism student achievement is elevated to a much higher degree.

Purpose of the study:

The purpose of this study was to determine whether there is a relationship between teacher sense of academic optimism and school climate. Specifically, the four subscales of the school climate (OCI), collegial leadership, professional teacher behavior, achievement press, and institutional vulnerability, and their relationship to teacher sense of academic optimism. Hoy et al. (2006) proposed that research will benefit from gaining detailed information about the relationships between academic optimism and school and individual characteristics. Beard et al. (2010) has also emphasized the importance of both school and individual properties as predictors of academic optimism. Hence, it might be reasonable to study the kinds of school climates in which teacher academic optimism thrives or hinders.

Although there are various studies on academic optimism of schools or individual teachers, research focusing on the relationships between academic optimism and school climate is quite limited (Kılınc, 2013). Consequently, the current study tried to develop a better

understanding of the relationships between Kuwaiti primary school climate and teacher academic optimism.

The findings of this study may well contribute to the better understanding of improving teacher sense of academic optimism in which teacher sense of academic optimism flourishes or hinders. It is also expected that the study may provide some important implications for policy-makers and researchers engaging in fostering teacher academic optimism in schools. Thus, the following research questions were formulated to address the aims of the study.

1. Are primary school teachers' perceptions on academic optimism correlated with the four subscales of school climate?
2. Are teachers' perceptions on the dimensions of school climate significant predictors of teacher academic optimism?

Method and Procedures:
Design:

This study was designed with a correlational research model to examine the relationships between teachers' perceptions on academic optimism and the dimensions of school climate among primary school teachers in Kuwait. The four subscales of the OCI, collegial leadership, professional teacher behavior, achievement press, and institutional vulnerability, were the independent variables and teacher sense of academic optimism was the dependent variable. The study was conducted in during the spring semester of the 2015-2016 academic year.

Sample:

A pilot study was conducted with primary teachers (n=30) in three schools. The questionnaire was first translated into Arabic by an official translator. Arab language expert, who was fluent in English, checked the translation. The translated questionnaire was then given to

other expert, who were asked to check the translation according to the original version. The revised questionnaire was distributed to the primary schools through each school's daily mail. The population for this study consists of public primary school teachers. Total of 500 survey questionnaires were distributed in all the primary schools in the six Kuwaiti district, and then 236 were returned that presents the sample size for the study.

Measures:

The Organizational Climate Index (OCI)

The Organizational Climate Index (OCI) created by Hoy et al. (2002) was used to measure organizational climate. The organizational climate index (OCI) is a 27-item descriptive questionnaire that measures four critical dimensions of school climate. The four dimensions are collegial leadership, professional teacher behavior, achievement press, and institutional vulnerability.

As defined by Hoy et al. (2002), collegial leadership is principal behavior directed toward meeting both social requirements of the faculty and achieving the goals of the school. Professional teacher behavior is marked by respect for colleague competence, commitment to students, autonomous judgment, and cooperation and support of colleagues. Achievement press describes a school that sets high but achievable academic standards and goals. Institutional vulnerability is the extent to which the school climate that is susceptible to outside forces and their input might expect a low level of teacher commitment. A highly vulnerable school will leave the teachers and principal unprotected from influential parents and citizen groups. (Hoy, et. al., 1990; Hoy et al., 2002).

The reliability scores for each dimension in Hoy et al. (2002) research study were relatively high: collegial leadership (0.94), professional teacher behavior (0.88),

achievement press (0.92), and institutional vulnerability (0.87).The questionnaire items were answered on a rating scale from 1 (rarely occurs) to 4 (very frequently occurs).A higher scale score indicates a more positive perception of climate and a higher level of satisfaction. The collegial leadership factor consists of seven items, the professional teacher behavior factor consists of seven items, the achievement press factor consists of eight items, and finally the institutional vulnerability consists of five items. Sample items from the factors of OCI are presented below:

Collegial leadership:
☐ The principal is friendly and approachable.
☐ The principal treats all faculty members as his or her equal.

Professional teacher behavior:
☐ Teachers respect the professional competence of their colleagues
☐ Teachers help and support each other

Achievement press
☐The school sets high standards for academic performance.
☐ student seek extra work so they can get good grades.

Institutional vulnerability
☐ A few vocal parents can change school policy.
☐ The school is vulnerable to outside pressures.

The Teacher Academic Optimism Scale for Elementary Teachers (SAOS)

The Teacher Academic Optimism Scale for Elementary Teachers (SAOS) was used to measure the academic optimism of teachers. This scale was originally developed by Beard, Hoy and Woolfolk-Hoy (2009). The scale included 20 items under three factors entitled as teacher sense of self efficacy (e.g. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in schoolwork), teacher trust in parents and students (e.g. I have confidence

in my students), and teacher academic emphasis (e.g. I press my students to achieve academically).However, in the current study one-factor structure was employed to measure teacher sense of academic optimism. The instruments are listed in the first column of Table 1. The second column of the table includes all the factors for the instruments, and the third column lists only the factors used in this study.

Table 1

Instrumentation for This Study

Instrument	All instrument factors	Factors used in this study	Number of questions in measure
Organizational Climate Index (OCI)	Collegial leadership	Collegial leadership	7
	Professional teacher behavior	Professional teacher behavior	7
	Achievement press	Achievement press	8
	Vulnerability	Vulnerability	5
Teacher Academic Optimism Scale for Primary Teachers (TAOS)	· Collective Efficacy of the School	Teacher sense of academic optimism	20
	·Academic Emphasis		
	· Faculty Trust in Students and Parents		

Reliability:

Internal consistencies of the instrument were examined and reported using Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha as stated by Pallant (2010) "provides an indication of the average correlation among all of the items that make up the scale" (p. 6). Values range from 0 to 1, with higher values

indicating greater reliability. Cronbach alpha coefficients of inter-item reliability were computed for four subscales of the Organizational Climate Index (OCI)and yielded high measures. Reliability coefficients for the subscales of school climate were 0.94for the collegial leadership, 0.87 for the professional teacher behavior, 0.84 for the achievement press, and 0.83 for the vulnerability factor. Teacher sense of Academic Optimism (TSAO) had a Cronbach alpha of 0.85.Descriptive statistics of scale scores, including the scale mean, standard deviation, Cronbach's alpha, and number of variables is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Summary of the Measurement Variables*

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha
TSAO	236	4.14	.41	.85
Collegial Leadership	236	2.71	.73	.94
Professional Teacher Behavior	236	2.37	.85	.87
Achievement Press,	236	2.95	.74	.84
Vulnerability factor	236	2.48	.52	.83

Data Analysis:

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21.0 was used to analyze the data. Before analyzing the data, missing or wrong data were examined. Descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, were computed for the independent variables (collegial leadership, professional teacher behavior, achievement press, institutional vulnerability), and the dependent variables (teacher sense of academic optimism).Pearson correlation coefficients were also computed to examine the relationships between teacher sense of academic optimism and school climate. Then, multiple linear regression

analysis was used to predict the dependent variable (teacher sense of academic optimism) by the independent variables (subscales of school climate).Multiple regression as defined by Pallant (2010) "is not just one technique but a family of techniques that can be used to explore the relationship between one continuous dependent variable and a number of independent variables or predictors" (p. 148). According to Field (2009), multiple regression is a way of predicting an outcome variable from one predictor variable (simple regression) or several predictor variables (multiple regression). Beta (β) coefficient and results of a t-test were used to interpret the results of regression analysis.

Demographic Variables:

236 Kuwaiti primary teachers who taught Grade One to Grade Five responded to the survey. 80% of the sample were female, and 20.0% were male. Approximately 27.2% of teacher participants were aged between 26 and 30 and 29.6% of teacher participants had more than 6 years of teaching experience. Most teacher participants (92.5%) held a Bachelor's degree while the rest held either a Graduate Diploma, Master's or PhD qualifications.

Results:

Correlation:

Correlation analyses were run on the five test variables. As shown in Table 3, teacher sense of academic optimism was positively and significantly correlated with collegial leadership ($r = .45$, $p < .01$), professional teacher behavior ($r = .47$, $p < .01$) and achievement press ($r = .36$, $p < .01$) subscales of school climate. On the other hand, teacher sense of academic optimism was negatively but not significantly related to institutional vulnerability ($r = -.17$, $p < .05$).Achievement press had a correlation ($r = .36$, $p < .01$) that was significant, although the relationship is less than collegial leadership and professional teacher behavior.

There were positive and significant correlations between collegial leadership and achievement press (r = .54, p < .01), and collegial leadership and professional teacher behavior (r = .56, p < .01), and professional teacher behavior and achievement press (r = .64, p < .01). Table 3 shows the correlations of the variables.

Table 3. *Correlations (Pearson) between the Five Variables*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1- TSAO	-	.46**	.47**	.36**	-.17
2- Collegial Leadership		-	.56**	.54**	-.16
3- Professional Teacher Behavior			-	.64**	-.21
4- Achievement Press				-	.06
5- Vulnerability factor					-
***p<0.01*					

Prediction of Teacher Sense of Academic Optimism

A multiple regression of teacher sense of academic optimism on collegial leadership, professional teacher behavior, achievement press, and institutional vulnerability was done to examine their individual impact. The four subtests were entered as independent variables. As shown in Table 4,the combined influence was 23% of the variance in teacher sense of academic optimism (adjusted R^2= .23; p < .01). Collegial leadership (β= .25, p < .01) and professional teacher behavior (β= .45, p < .01) were still found to be predictors of teacher sense of academic optimism, and professional teacher behavior was the still the better predictor of teacher academic optimism. Institutional vulnerability was the only subtest of the OCI which had no bearing on teacher sense of academic optimism.

Table 4. *Multiple Regression for Variables Predicting Teacher Sense of Academic Optimism*

Variables	r	Standardized β
Collegial Leadership	.46**	.25**
Professional Teacher Behavior	.47**	.45**
Achievement Press	.36**	.07
Vulnerability factor	-.17	-.06
		$R = .51, R^2 .23**$
**p<0.01		

Discussion:

This study using the collegial leadership, professional teacher behavior, achievement press, and vulnerability as predictors of teacher sense of academic optimism has supported the argument that school climate is a significant factor for understanding and explaining teacher sense of academic optimism. This finding is consistent with Kılınc (2013)research findings suggesting that school climate is important for explaining teacher sense of academic optimism. This finding is also consistent with the findings of Kirby and DiPaola (2009)which proved positive relationships between school climate and academic optimism.

Results also revealed that teacher sense of academic optimism was positively and significantly associated with collegial leadership, professional teacher behavior, and achievement press. This finding refers that anopen and positive school climate in which teachers feel comfortable to communicate, support, and reflect each other may well contribute to the teacher academic optimism. As previously discussed in this study, different types of school climates may have various effects on organizational behavior, organizational performance and relationships among school

community members (Calık& Kurt, 2010). Hoy et al.
(1991) also make it clear that that supportive school climate
presents a wide variety of ways for all members of school
community including teachers, students, principals, and
parents to collaborate, to reflect on instruction, and to
develop a shared sense of purpose toward increasing school
effectiveness. This finding is consistent with Marshall
(2004)findings suggesting that school climate is a powerful
and multi-dimensional organizational concept significantly
affecting both school members and the educational
environment. This finding is also consistent with Osman
(2012) findings suggesting that school climates have
numerous effects on organizational behavior, organizational
performance and relationships among school community
members. It is therefore understandable why teacher sense
of academic optimism was positively associated with
supportive and warm school climates.

This study also revealed that teacher sense of academic
optimism was positively and significantly related to
collegial leadership. Hoy et al. (1991) claimed that teachers
are not the main concern and that principals don all the
responsibility of school activities in directive school
climates. This finding is not surprising because in Kuwait,
the Ministry of Education (MOE) has a very highly
centralized structure, and principals often play a key role in
monitoring and controlling teachers. (Ministry of
Education. ,2003). Therefore, teachers participating in the
present study may need the directions or support of their
school principals to be academically more optimistic.

This finding is consistent with Mascallet al.'s(2008)
research findings suggesting that the more academically
optimistic are teachers, the more likely they are to report
that leadership is distributed in their schools.This finding is
also in line with the argument that school principals still

hold key positions in school leadership processes, and their support plays a significant role in cultivating teacher leadership in schools (Allen at al., 2015; Kılınc,2014).Improved school climate is a goal to pursue and school principals need to constantly work toward improving their school climate, culture, and conditions so that student learning is improved (Osman, 2012).

Regression model of the present study demonstrated that school climate was a significant predictor of teacher academic optimism. Regression model also demonstrated that professional teacher behavior was the only school climate dimension that was a significant predictor of teacher academic optimism. While collegial leadership refers to the openness of teacher and principal relations, openness of teacher interactions is summarized in teacher professionalism (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000). This finding is consistent with Hoy et al., (1991) findings suggesting that collegial and congenial relationships among school members are supported in positive and healthy school climates which may result in a higher sense of teacher professionalism. According to Tshabalala & Ncube (2014), school leaders should ensure that relations amongst major school stakeholders are cordial and this is possible in a healthy climate within the school. In such school climates teachers' collaboration and reflection with each other and other will be supported (Hoy et al., 1991; Osman, 2012). In other words, close relationships, collaboration and friendship are the top priority in optimistic and positive school climates. Therefore, this finding suggests that teachers in such kind of schools may find various ways to collaborate and to reflect on ideas about academic issues.

The result of this study also revealed that achievement press indirectly affects teacher sense of academic optimism by directly influencing professional teacher behavior and

collegial leadership. This study shows how the principal and faculty can apply pressure for high standards and student achievement, which, in turn, will improve collaboration between fellow teachers and the building level principal. Thus, the establishment of high academic standards or achievement press should not beignored when trying to improve positive school climate. The finding is consistent with Beard et al.'s (2010)research findings suggesting that teacher sense of academic optimism is quite much associated with teachers' engaging students in challenging but achievable academic tasks. This finding also consistent with Marshall (2004) findings suggesting that positive school climate can yield positive educational and psychological outcomes for students and school members.

The results of this study showed no significant relationship between institutional vulnerability and teacher sense of academic optimism. This result indicated that the degree of how susceptible a school is to outside influence from parent groups and local community members will not adversely affect teacher academic optimism. It is not surprising that institutional vulnerability was adversely related to teacher academic optimism. School members may feel helpless in making decisions if they believe their decisions will be reversed due to pressure by citizen groups. They may also feel less active when susceptible to vocal parent and citizen groups. Thus, fear can lead a school into making decisions that are ineffective for both the school and its students. According to Hoy et al. (2002),school experience high vulnerability when both teachers and principals are unprotected and put on the defensive.

Conclusion and Implications

This study concluded that collegial leadership, professional teacher behavior, and achievement press were

positively and significantly related to teacher sense of academic optimism, while institutional vulnerability was negatively associated with teacher academic optimism. Teachers working in schools with supportive, positive, and friendly climates are more likely to be academically optimistic. This study also showed that school climate was a significant predictor of teacher academic optimism. As proposed by Osman (2012) positive school climate can yield positive educational outcomes for students and teachers, similarly a negative climate can prevent optimal learning and growth in the institution. As claimed by Pajares (2001), an optimistic teacher focus on the positive qualities of students, classrooms, schools, and communities. A practical implication of this study is that schools need collegial leaders, close relationships among school members, and a high level of academic orientation to develop optimism. School leaders and teachers should help to develop and sustain a positive and optimistic school climates.

Since collegial leadership is related to academic optimism, school systems need to find and develop supportive leaders to increase school effectiveness. As Tshabalala & Ncube (2014) notes, school leaders should work closely with their teachers to create healthy climates for high pass rates in their schools. Supportive leaders can work on increasing positive school climate and improve academic optimism in their respective schools in the effort to increase achievement and effectiveness. Seligman's study (2011) claimed that optimism can be practiced, learned and improved over time, and matters as much as talent and motivation in regards to achievement.

School administrators can use the organizational climate index, which measures organizational climate in a school, to identify potential problems that a school may

need to overcome. as Freiberg (1998) notes, "school climate can be a positive influence on the health of the learning environment or significant barrier to learning" (p.22). Administering the index would allow administrators to determine their own leadership style, as perceived by teachers. They would also understand the professional interactions and behaviors of their teachers.

Professional relationships in which teachers trust and support each other likely develop academic emphasis and a sense of collective efficacy (DiPaola & Hoy, 2005).

Sezgin (2009) also claims that teacher sense of academic emphasis is strongly required for a school to achieve higher academic standards. This study showed that professional teacher behavior was a significant predictor of teacher academic optimism. Thus, an optimistic and positive school climate can promote teachers' professional orientation by facilitating the collaboration and reflection among school members. It is possible to suggest that school administrator foster collaborative environments and cultures of trust at their schools to improve student outcome. It is also possible to suggest that school members spend more time and effort on improving the quality of personal relationships which would probably be useful to create a healthy and positive school climate. Thus, Kuwait Ministry of Education should organize workshops and staff development sessions for school leaders and teachers to provide guidance for the construction of healthy climates. Deal and Peterson (2009) stated, "schools that value collegiality and collaboration offer a better opportunity for the social and professional exchange of ideas, the enhancement and spread of effective practices, and widespread professional problem solving" (p.13).

The establishment of high academic standards or achievement press should not be ignored when trying to

build an optimistic school climates. The result indicated that achievement press indirectly affects teacher sense of academic optimism by directly influencing professional teacher behavior and collegial leadership. When achievement press is high, everyone works together to meet the goals of their institution. Teachers will set high but achievable goals for their students. The students will work to meet these goals. Both the teachers and the school administration will strive to establish a neat and orderly learning environment. Teachers will give extra effort to confirm students meet their goals (Hoy et al., 1998). This study shows how the principal and faculty can exert pressure for high standards and student achievement, which, in turn, will improve collaboration between fellow teachers and the building level principal.

This study highlighted the importance of school climate and teacher sense of academic optimism. Teacher sense of academic optimismis closely related to achieving a higher level of student learning (Woolfolk Hoy et al., 2008). Thus, in-service training activities organized for promoting teacher professionalism may well benefit from research on relationships between teacher sense of academic optimism and other constructs as well as research on factors influencing teacher sense of academic optimism.

This study was conducted to examine the relationships between school climate and teacher academic optimism according to the perceptions of primary school teachers. Consequently, further research could also be conducted to examine the perceptions of school principals, parents or other parties of school on teacher academic optimism. This study examined the relationship between teacher sense of academic optimism and school climate using the survey. Thus, we also suggest that future studies use other research methods such as observation and interview.

Finally, teachers' confidence and optimism levels should continue to be sustained as these were highlighted as important in this study. Therefore, the Kuwait Ministry of Education should organize training programs to help school leaders build optimism into efforts at improving the school environment and culture. Thus, the levels of optimism and hopefulness in both leaders and teachers could be increased and it could create positive and healthy school climate.

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