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Teachers' Perceptions of School Academic Optimism in a Private Middle School in Niamey, Niger

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by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions of the practices of academic optimism in Niamey (Niger). The study used a non-experimental survey research design. School Academic Optimism Scale (SAOS), a 30-items Likert-type scale, developed by Hoy (2005) was utilized to collect the quantitative data from a small sample (14 middle school teachers). In this study using a French translated version of SAOS with 28-items Likert-type scale, an overall and strong reliability (α=0.83) was demonstrated for the three subconstructs of academic optimism. The WhatsApp application was utilized to administer the survey via Qualtrics software. The study used basic descriptive statistics to determine the extent the practices of the components of academic optimism (collective teacher efficacy, faculty trust in parents and students, and academic emphasis) are perceived by teachers.

A total of 13 middle school teachers completed the survey resulting in 93% of response rate. Using a six-point rating scale, the results of the survey indicated a combined mean score of 5.40 for teachers' self-report perceived practices of *collective teacher efficacy* and eight of the 10 items of this subconstruct were rated five (Agree) to six (Mostly Agree). Next, using the same six-point rating scale, teachers' self-report perceived practices of *faculty trust* displayed a combined mean of 4.80 and nine of 10 items were rated four (Somewhat Agree) to five (Agree). Finally, using a four-point rating scale, teachers' self-report perceived practices of *academic emphasis* demonstrated a combined mean score of 3.40 and seven of the eight items of this subconstruct were rated three (often) to approximately four (Very Often).

According to the School Academic Optimism Scale (SAOS), this study found overall high perceptions of practices of collective teacher efficacy, faculty trust in students and parents, and academic emphasis. The high perceptions of academic optimism support the assumption of a relationship between a culture of high performing private schools such as the one in this study and the culture of academic optimism.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved late father, Kassoum Seydou Mamoudou. I am very proud of you, and I missed your companionship, wisdom, and inspirational stories. Continue resting in peace.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Cultivation of a positive school culture is crucial for students' academic achievement (Doğan, 2017), their interpersonal relationship, healthy work environment, and strong teacher-student and teacher-parent relationships (Bayar & Karaduman, 2021; Atasoy, 2020). Positive school culture has internal characteristics and makes a school distinct from another, enhances academic performance, and positively influences the behavior of different members of the school (Gaziel, 1997; Peterson & Deal, 1998; Haller & Kleine, 2001). These distinctive characteristics of an effective school were first pointed out by Edmonds (1979) as follows: "strong principal leadership, high expectations for student achievement, emphasis on basic skills, an orderly environment, and frequent, systemic teacher evaluations" (as cited in Hoy, 2012, p. 78). In the same vein, Peterson and Deal (1998) depicted positive school culture where staff share the same purpose and are deeply engaged in teaching activities. In schools with positive culture, student accomplishment, teacher innovation, and parent involvement and commitment are celebrated through traditions and rituals which become a folklore of the overall school performance (Peterson & Deal, 1998). In short, positive school culture makes schools stand out and overshadow their negative counterparts because of their internal organization and the collective staff optimism about teaching, learning and student success.

In Niger, by the lens of a positive school culture, a significant learning achievement gap emerges between public schools with poor performance caused by mismanagement of time and resources, absenteeism, strikes, and failure in national exams (PASEC, 2016, 2020; The World Bank, 2011; UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2017; D'Aiglepierre, 2018) and private schools characterized by high performance on average. In terms of achievement of private and public

schools, the difference can be explained in part by the influence of a positive culture which is described as orderly environment conducive to learning and teaching (McGuigan & Hoy 2006; Rutter, 1983). Even though the landmark research of Coleman et al. (1966) revealed student achievement is mainly influenced by their socioeconomic status and family background than school factors (p. 297), the high performance of private schools in Niger should not be attributed mostly to the socioeconomic status of students. School factors can also "do much to foster good behavior and attainments, and that even in a disadvantaged area, schools can be a force for the good" (Rutter et al., 1979 as cited in Rutter, 1983, p. 2). Hence, this difference in performance can be ascribed to the following school properties found to consistently influence student achievement even after controlling for socioeconomic status, previous achievement, or school levels (elementary, middle school or high school): *academic emphasis*, *collective teacher efficacy*, *faculty trust in parents and students* (Hoy et al., 2006; Smith & Hoy, 2007; Beard et al., 2010; Hoy, 2012).

Accordingly, Hoy et al. (2006) coined a new construct called Academic Optimism to conceptualize these school properties as an effective school culture to boost student achievement. In Niger, private schools delivered quality teaching which results in high academic achievement as confirmed by the results of the study of PASEC (2020). Their performance is due to their internal organization and academically focused learning environment similar to the culture of academic optimism. Indeed, PASEC (2016, 2020) assessed public and private primary school students' performance in literacy and numeracy of 14 sub-Saharan African French speaking countries. The result for Niger shows students attending private schools performed best in reading and mathematics compared to their public-schools counterpart. According to Idi and

Mouctari (2017), the high performance of private schools stems from the following elements which can be alluded to positive culture: regular attendance of both teachers and students, discipline, security, welcoming environment, parental involvement, qualified teachers and quality teaching, and small class size. Apparently, the culture of academic optimism is assumed to relate to the learning environment and climate of private schools in Niger. As the culture of academic optimism is applicable to different school levels and effects academic achievement thereof (Hoy et al., 2006; Smith & Hoy, 2007), this research was carried out to examine the culture of academic optimism in private middle schools, particularly teachers' perceptions of school academic optimism.

The Niger Education System

There are three types of schools operating in Niger: public schools (97%), private schools (1.8%) and community schools (0.4%) (PASEC, 2016). French, the official language, is used as the language of instruction from primary school to higher education. Some reform policies were enacted to enhance quality teaching and learning. For instance, in 1998 the Nigerien Education System Reform Law (called LOSAN in French: Loi d'Orientation du Système Educatif Nigérien) was launched to reform the whole education system (Chekaraou, 2011). From this reform law derives another ten-year education development program (from French Programme Décennal pour le Développement de l'Éducation (PDDE)) in 2003 which specifically sought to facilitate access to education, enhance quality teaching and learning, and build capacity in schools by 2013 (Chekaraou, 2011). With this ten-year plan, access to schooling is achieved, however, quality remains still elusive (Chekaraou, 2011).

Moreover, to enhance quality education, Education and Training Sectoral Program (from French: Programme Sectoriel de l'Education et de la Formation (PSEF)) was enacted to improve quality teaching and learning, teachers' training, and the learning environment. The curriculum is being renovated to incorporate national languages alongside French as both language and subject of instruction throughout primary school (PASEC, 2016). National languages have already been experimented in the early years of primary schools in 500 schools nationwide and their introduction proves to be effective in hampering students learning deficit. In Niger, education is compulsory and free up to the age of 16 (PASEC, 2016).

Despite this free education, some parents opted for private schools which follows the same curriculum and is oversighted by the Ministry of Secondary Education for conformity to teaching rules and regulations. Parents are attracted to private schools due to their discipline, high achievement rate, conducive learning environment, and parents' satisfaction and confidence of their children cognitive development therein (Idi & Mouctari, 2017). In short, private schools in Niger reflect practices essential for student achievement. This study was designed to measure teachers' perceptions of their current work environment centered specifically on school academic optimism.

Statement of the Problem

Positive school culture, as the backbone of effective schools, is essential for student achievement. It makes the school environment conducive not only to healthy interactions among teachers, parents, and students, but also to teaching, learning, and academic excellence (McGuigan & Hoy 2006; Bayar & Karaduman, 2021; Atasoy, 2020). School academic optimism is a type of effective school culture which consistently proves that schools' characteristics can

influence students' academic achievement regardless of socio-economic status, demographic backgrounds, or previous achievement (Hoy et al., 2006; Smith & Hoy, 2007; Beard et al., 2010; Hoy, 2012). The positive impact of the culture of academic optimism on student achievement is not met with the expected number of research and analysis in the context of Niger.

This research is designed to examine school academic optimism in a private middle school in Niamey, Niger. Specifically, this study gathered self-reported data about teachers' perceptions of the three components of school academic optimism as identified by Hoy et al. (2006). A survey is a data collection tool with an emphasis on "the vital facts of people, and their beliefs, opinions, attitudes, motivations, and behavior" (Kerlinger, 1986, as cited in Antonakis et al., 2004, p. 58). Hence, survey research design had been widely used as a useful tool to understand community opinion (Guyette, 1983). As such, School Academic Optimism Scale (SAOS), developed by Hoy (2005), and with permission of the author was used to determine teachers' perceptions of the academic optimism of the school. The measures of the 28 items of the three components of SAOS were aggregated to determine the mean score which showed the degree of teachers' perceptions of the culture of academic optimism. For this study, the data was collected in spring of 2022 using the mobile device application WhatsApp (https://www.whatsapp.com/download).

Purpose of the Study

This study intended to examine teachers' perceptions of academic optimism in a private middle school in Niamey, Niger. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to determine to what extent the practices of academic optimism are demonstrated by teachers. The results of this study

followed with recommendations to other private schools with a similar context and traditions in academic optimism and how these practices may positively impact student achievement.

Considering the objectives of *Education For All* (EFA) of Dakar 2000 Education Forum and the Sustainable Development Goal 4, nation states, including Niger, are urged to "create safe, healthy, inclusive and equitably resourced educational environments conducive to excellence in learning, with clearly defined levels of achievement for all" (Barry, 2000, p. 9). The goals also emphasize the attainment of inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of "lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030 (United Nations, 2022, para. 1). To attain these objectives, the government of Niger partners and collaborates with communities to help promote education through private schools since 1996 (Idi & Mouctari, 2017). Indeed, private schools are being successful in these partnership and collaboration through effective management, quality teaching, and high achievement.

As a result, private schools outperform public schools both on national examinations and performance assessment studies (PASEC, 2016; Idi & Mouctari, 2017). This performance is due partly to their structured learning environment, quality teaching, security, trust, and connection to both students and parents (Idi & Mouctari, 2017; D'Aiglepierre, 2018). In addition to this positive learning environment, private schools are outnumbering public schools at all education levels including middle school (39% against 4%), especially in the capital city, Niamey, where the study was conducted (Idi & Mouctari, 2017).

Due to the emergence of private schools and lack of research on school academic optimism, the purpose of this study was to identify through teachers' perceptions the practices of academic emphasis, faculty trust in students and parents, and collective teacher efficacy which

comprise academic optimism. The findings aimed at supporting and confirming Hoy's (2005) instrument and theoretical framework and his assumptions that academic optimism tends to work more effectively in high performing schools. The findings and recommendations of the study also intends to help the Ministry of Education of Niger to devise policies and structures for schools (private and public). Professional development programs aiming at developing the culture of academic optimism will also benefit from the findings. The study may contribute to teachers, parents, and students in developing the culture of school academic optimism for effectiveness of schools.

Objective of the Study

This study contained the following objectives:

1. Seek permission to survey teachers from the school's owner of Myriam De Nazareth Middle School.
2. Identify a colleague to assist in data collection on site.
3. Required participants have access to a device to upload the WhatsApp application.
4. Secure research permission from Wayne Hoy from Ohio State University to use School Academic Optimism Scale (SAOS).

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following questions:

1. To what extent do Niger private middle school teachers self-report perceived practices of collective teacher efficacy?
2. To what extent do Niger private middle school teachers self-report perceived practices of faculty trust in students and parents?

3. To what extent do Niger private middle school teachers self-report perceived practices of academic emphasis?

Delimitations of the Study

1. Only the Commune III of Niamey (Niger) was used as a study area.
2. WhatsApp application was used to collect data.
3. The study utilized only middle school teachers.
4. Only self-reported data was gathered for the study (no students achievement data included).
5. Gender (mostly male) in a small number of teachers.

Human Subject Approval

In strict compliance to the St. Cloud State University Institutional Review Board for the protection of rights and welfare of human participants, participants' identities and privacies are protected and their consents were obtained. This study was carried out in a school setting involving typical educational activities.

Definition of Terms

1. *Academic cycle*: An academic cycle refers to a period of time students are expected to graduate from a specific school level. E.g.: Elementary school, middle school, and high school, each represents an academic cycle.
2. *Academic emphasis**:*** Sometimes called 'academic press', academic emphasis refers to schools with student-centered learning environment where academic excellence is expected from students; high but achievable goals are set for students; 'teachers believe in the ability of all students' even difficult ones to learn and succeed; both teachers and

students celebrate high academic achievement; and students respect others with high academic achievement (Hoy, 2012; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006).

3. *Academic optimism:* Academic optimism is defined by McGuigan & Hoy (2006) as:

> A shared belief among faculty that academic achievement is important, 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 schoolwide confidence that students will succeed academically. (p. 204)

4. *Collective teacher efficacy*: Collective efficacy refers to the perceptions and beliefs of teachers for the entire faculty capability to organize itself and take appropriate actions required for student achievement (Goddard et al., 2000a, 2004).
5. *Faculty trust in students and parents:* Faculty trust refers to "the group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open" (Smith & Hoy, 2007, p. 559).
6. *Practices:* Practices in schools refer to behaviors, values, beliefs, procedures, policies and cultural expectations that regulate both administrators, teachers, and students' conduct and the school environment.
7. *Private school*: The first article of the Ordinance n^{o} 96-035 that regulates and governs private schools in Niger defines a private school as "toute institution qui se propose d'exercer de façon habituelle une action éducative sur un groupe de trois enfants ou personnes au moins appartenant à deux familles différentes" (Ordinance n^{o} 96-035, article premier); "any private institution that customary exercises educational practices over a

group of three children or persons belonging at least to two different families" (Translation by the Principal Investigator).

8. *School culture*: School culture refers to "the beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, and written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions, but the term also encompasses more concrete issues such as the physical and emotional safety of students, the orderliness of classrooms and public spaces, or the degree to which a school embraces and celebrates racial, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural diversity" (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2013, para. 1).
9. *Tenured teachers:* Refers to licensed teachers who are hired as public servants to teach in public schools.

Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter reviews previous research studies on academic optimism. It expounds the culture of academic optimism and points out its impact on student achievement. The chapter first describes the structure of Niger Education System and compares public and private schools in Niger and the United States. Next, it exposes the theoretical underpinnings of school academic optimism and examines the relevant theories and concepts regarding academic optimism. Lastly, a review of relevant literature on teachers' perceptions of academic optimism and its components (perceptions of a sense of collective teacher efficacy, faculty trust in parents and students, and academic emphasis) is presented.

The Structure of Niger Education System

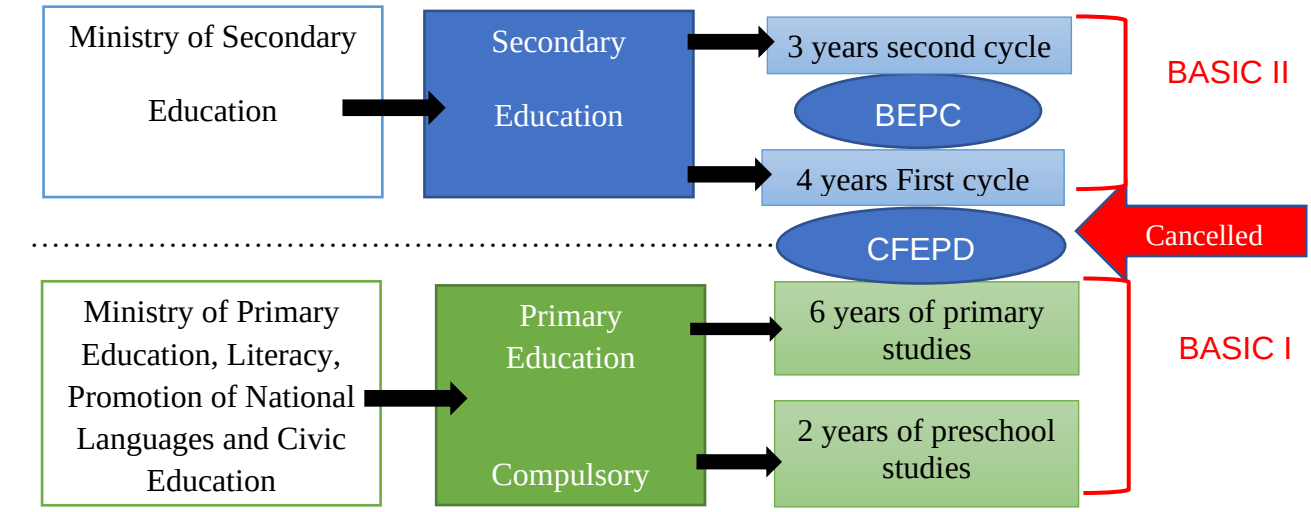
The Niger education system is influenced by the French education system model, and it follows a 6-7-8 pattern referring respectively to primary, secondary, and higher education.

In Niger, except for higher education, the education system comprises two parts: Basic I, covering preschool and primary school and Basic II, covering middle school/first cycle and high school/second cycle (see Figure 2. 1 below). The preschool accepts children aged three-five and lasts for two years covering two levels. The primary school welcomes children aged six or seven and lasts six years (UNESCO International Bureau of Education, 2010). In Niger, basic education is structured as follows. The primary school is comprised of six levels namely: C.I. (Cours d'Initiation or Initiation Class), C.P. (Cours Préparatoire or Preparatory Class), C.E.1 (Cours Elémentaire 1 or Elementary Class 1), C.E.2 (Cours Elémentaire 2 or Elementary Class 2), C.M.1 (Cours Moyen 1 or Middle Class 1) and C.M.2 (Cours Moyen 2 or Middle Class 2) (Education in Niger, 2022, Part 1). These different levels are structured into three sub levels:

C.I.- C.P., C.E.1- C.E.2, C.M.1- C.M.2. In between of each sublevel, students can advance to the next sub level (PASEC, 2016).

FIGURE 2. 1

The Structure of Niger Basic Education



Note. Adapted from *PASEC2014 – Performances du système éducatif nigérien : Compétences et facteurs de réussite au primaire* (PASEC, 2016, p.5)

In the Basic II phase, secondary education comprises two cycles. Middle school/first cycle lasts four years covering the following levels: sixième (6^{e}): 1st year, cinquième (5^{e}): 2nd year, quatrième (4^{e}): third year, troisième (3^{e}): 4th year. High school/second cycle lasts three years covering seconde (2nd): first year, première (1re): second year, and terminale (Tle): third year. The duration of higher education varies across field of studies and oscillates from two to eight years: (Duel or Associate degree (two years), Bachelor (three years), Masters (two years), and Doctorate (three years). Higher education includes technical and vocational education, secondary teacher education, social science studies, and medical studies.

National examinations are organized at the end of academic cycles to allow students to graduate from lower school levels and pass to higher ones. For instance, in primary school, at the end of the last grade, C.M.2/ Middle Class 2**,** students used to be assessed for Primary School Completion Certificate examination called CFEPD (from French: Certificat de Fin d'Etude du Premier Degré) which was cancelled in 2014 by a reform law to facilitate and accelerate the education rate in middle school. The Ministry of Secondary Education oversees middle school and high school examinations. Students take Junior High School Diploma examination called Brevet d'Etude du Premier Cycle (BEPC) in 3^{e} /4^{th} year of middle school and High School Diploma in terminal/third year of high school. This High School Diploma provides students access to Higher Education and is considered the first diploma therein (PASEC, 2016; The World Bank, 2011).

Public Versus Private Schools in American and Niger Education System

This part compares public and private schools in America and Niger. It underscores the nature and characteristics of the two types of schools and the achievement of students in each school type.

American Public Schools Versus Private Schools

Two types of schools exist in the American education system: public (non-charter and charted schools) and private (religious and nonsectarian schools) (Braun et al., 2006; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2020). According to the U.S. Department of Education, NCES (2020), in 2019, 89.9 percent of elementary and secondary school students attended public schools which may be assigned to students or chosen by parents depending on their locality and financial means. Public schools are funded by taxes

from local, states, and federal government along with some donations from corporate organizations and fundraising activities by parents and students (Alt & Peter, 2002). In contrast to public schools' student population, only 10.1 percent of students attended private schools subdivided into religious and nonsectarian schools and are funded through tuition (U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 2020).

Private schools have more flexibility to devise strict disciplinary policies governing students' conduct. Private schools have better opportunities to cultivate and maintain a positive school climate and culture (Shakeel & DeAngelis, 2018). In contrast, public schools are rule-bound in enforcing discipline due to students' rights (Rossi & Wright, 1982). Consequently, public schools face more safety issues such as contraband, gangsterism, crime, bullying, drugs, victimization, threats to teachers, and robbery than their private counterparts (Shakeel & DeAngelis, 2018; Choy, 1997). Further to excel private schools' religious affiliations and aspirations, private schools use their autonomy to select textbooks and teaching materials appropriate for their goals and purposes while public schools are required to follow strictly the standards set by states and district officials (Alt & Peter, 2002). Moreover, in terms of qualification, public schools hire better qualified teachers with higher degrees and more teaching experience than private schools (Choy, 1997). Teacher attrition is more prevalent in private schools than public ones; however, private school teachers turn out to be more satisfied with their work conditions than public school teachers (Choy, 1997).

Furthermore, various studies pointed out private schools outperform public schools on standardized tests including the ACT, SAT, and the PISA (Alt & Peter, 2002; Braun et al., 2006; Pianta & Ansari, 2018; Duncan & Sandy, 2007). Nevertheless, such achievement is a result from

differences between public and private school and student characteristics (e.g.: demographics, socioeconomic background, climate, and culture). For instance, Braun et al. (2006), using National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores, revealed private school's higher mean scores in mathematics and reading to be nearly zero or insignificant after accounting for students' characteristics. In addition, after analyzing unadjusted school and student variables, Pianta & Ansari (2018) discovered adolescents educated in private school outperformed their peers from public schools in all subject matters. However, after adjusting for sociodemographic characteristics, advantages and privileges of private school education vanished. In the same vein, Lubienski and Lubienski (2006) demonstrated a significantly better public schools' performance. Moreover, they often outperform private schools after accounting for demographic differences which give advantage to private schools over public schools.

In conclusion, American public and private schools relatively vary in their admission, culture, teacher qualification, input, and outcome. Private schools are portrayed to outperform their public counterparts due to privileges of students who attend private schools. However, after accounting for those privileges, the two school types exhibited similar performance.

Niger Public Schools Versus Private Schools

In 2016, 97 percent of Niger primary school students were enrolled in public schools. Public schools are funded by the government and the remaining three percent of students were registered in private schools (PASEC, 2016). In public schools, the scarcity of qualified teachers impedes quality teaching. For instance, less than 20 percent of teachers are tenured and beneficiary of preservice teacher training in normal schools or pre-service teacher training schools and more than 80 percent of teachers are contractual teachers (PASEC, 2016).

Contractual teachers are employed under a two-year renewable contract and among them some receive pre-service teacher training and others are former secondary school dropouts and professional and university graduates who are desperately in need of employment (Chekaraou, 2011). To emphasize the lack of teacher qualification in public schools, most elementary school teachers are holders of high school diploma (PASEC, 2016).

In addition, some tenured and contractual teachers tend to be very fluid in their employment, i.e., they flow back and forth between private and public schools. In other words, private schools employ teachers from public schools in addition to their full-time teachers. Public schools' teachers employed in private schools exhibit different behaviors and perform better in private schools than in public schools due to accountability and expectations of parents in private schools.

Consequently, Niger public school students perform extremely poorly on national exams and research studies. According to UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (2019), 90 percent of elementary school students have deficiencies in language (e.g.: speaking, reading, writing, and understanding oral communications) and around 72 percent struggle with mathematics. Learning deficiencies in primary school have repercussions on performance in secondary schools. Every year, less than 50 percent of middle school (21.8% in 2018) and high school students graduate due to imperfect academic skills (UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning, 2019; Idi & Mouctari, 2017).

Moreover, other factors exacerbate the deterioration of public schools namely dearth of teaching materials and facilities, strikes of teachers and students, failure to execute teaching programs, high rate of dropouts, and absenteeism of both teachers and students (UNESCO

International Institute for Educational Planning, 2019; Idi & Mouctari, 2017; PASEC, 2016). Teacher absenteeism and excessive strikes specially of contractual teachers are detrimental to student learning. Because of extreme absenteeism and strikes, 300 teaching hours of the 900 teaching hours (1/3) of the academic year are wasted; thus, this irresponsible act of shrinking teaching time undermines acquisition of the basics of academic skills (UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning, 2019).

In Niger, private schools follow the same curricula as public schools and are oversighted by the education authorities for compliance to educational policies. At their inception, private schools highly recruited school dropouts or expelled students from public schools (Idi & Mouctari, 2017). Doing so gives an alternative to parents to save the future of their children. Hence, students were enrolled in private schools to receive a second chance of learning skills to become productive citizens. Eventually, private schools become a magnet for parents and students in search of quality education due to the government's unwillingness to invest in public schools and devise effective education policies, which cause failure and mediocracy of public schools (Idi & Mouctari, 2017).

In private schools, both education officials and parents testify the prevalence of quality education missing in public schools. On one hand, education officials asserted, students in private schools acquire the standard level of learning and succeed more on national exams than public school students (Idi & Mouctari, 2017). On the other hand, parents affirm their satisfaction of quality education in private schools. They highlighted children's ability to read and speak in the language of instruction, teachers' qualification and diligence, quality input, welcoming and conducive learning environment, security, discipline, punctuality of both

students and teachers, and parents' reception of feedback about students' behavior (Idi & Mouctari, 2017).

Although private schools appear to outperform public schools, some critics debunked private school academic success. According to Idi and Mouctari (2017), private school success is based on a benchmark of admission, i.e., some select students with at least B^+ and others select students with C^+. Moreover, paradoxically, the best teachers in public schools make private school operate successfully while in public schools the same teachers shirk their main duties and display lack of commitment because of lack of accountability (Idi & Mouctari, 2017). Perception of accountability between public and private schools is best described by The Probe Team (1998) as follows:

> In a private school, the teachers are accountable to the manager (who can fire them), and, through him or her, to the parents (who can withdraw their children). In a government school, the chain of accountability is much weaker, as teachers have a permanent job with salaries and promotions unrelated to performance. This contrast is perceived with crystal clarity by the vast majority of parents. (p. 64)

With strong accountability in public schools and responsibility of education officials, public schools could perform as well as private schools.

In summary, Niger public school system is dysfunctional due to a significant number of unqualified teachers and lack of resources and accountability. In contrast to public schools, private schools are stable and take advantage of the circumstances to thrive. Consequently, public schools fare poorly while private ones are succeeding.

Disclaimer

This study is neither aimed at exclusively studying private schools nor promoting private education. This study is conducted in a private middle school because private schools in Niger possess a minimum organization and fulfil the requirement of the curricula and the education policies. Therefore, the private middle school chosen is appropriate for our study.

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura), Social Capital Theory (Coleman), Positive Psychology (Seligman), and studies on school climate and culture (Hoy and colleagues). These theories engender the different components of academic optimism (collective teacher efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis) and lay the background of the culture of academic optimism.

Social Cognitive Theory

According to the Social Cognitive Theory, human agency refers to people's intention and willingness to initiate actions based on their beliefs of personal efficacy (Bandura, 1997). These beliefs of personal efficacy allow them to "exercise control over events affecting their lives" (Bandura, 1986, as cited in Derrington & Angelle, 2013, p. 2). For instance, facing an action or challenge, people are not motivated to react proactively unless they believe in their capability to produce tangible results (Bandura, 1997). This ability to control results from their perceived self-efficacy, which is a main concept of Social Cognitive Theory, and is defined by Bandura as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Bandura (1986) clarifies the beliefs aspect of self-efficacy emphasizing the judgement of people's ability to work with their skills. Therefore, when

people judge themselves as capable of carrying out a task, they will marshal their skills and effort to fulfil it and they would even stay persistent and resilient in the face of challenges and obstacles until realization of that action (Bandura, 1986).

Unlike perceived self-efficacy described at individual level, at the organizational level perceived collective efficacy is a group level attribute that underscores the judgement of group members to believe in the "performance capability of a social system as a whole" (Bandura, 1997, p. 469). In other words, in a specific work environment, group members judge their capability to successfully undertake a task through the team's firm beliefs that the task is doable and it is committed to face it and generate whatever needed for its full execution (Bandura, 1997). In school context, collective teacher efficacy, one of the components of Academic Optimism, springs from Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and is used to indicate the beliefs of teachers in each school about the "faculty as a whole can organize and execute the courses of action required to have a positive effect on students" (Goddard et al., 2004a, p. 4).

Therefore, practices of perceived collective teacher efficacy in Niger will be determined through teachers' feelings, as a collective, about their competencies, strength, intellectual abilities, perseverance, and patience and resilience in the face of challenges in the process of helping students succeed academically and making their school thrive.

Social Capital Theory

Social Capital as an organizational theory emphasizes a bonding social relation stemming from people's interactions or transactions in a specific group or community. According to Schneider (2009), all social relation definitions are characterized by three essential elements namely "networks, trust, and (shared) norms and culture" (as cited in Claridge, 2020, para. 9).

For instance, in a social relation, trust, mutual respect, benevolent, positive behaviors, favors and moral obligation to reciprocate create a context of social trust which facilitate collective actions (Coleman, 1988; Goddard, 2003; Claridge, 2020). This social trust provides people with confidence and assurance to share information freely and openly with group members (Goddard, 2003) or to easily render or receive services within their social networks (Claridge, 2020).

Overtime, this social trust becomes social norms which determine the appropriateness of group members' actions and behaviors (Claridge, 2020). According to Coleman (1990), social norms "specify what actions are regarded by a set of persons as proper or correct, or improper and incorrect" (p. 242). These norms allow group members to control actions of others in case those actions violate the group's shared beliefs and may engender consequences for the group (Coleman, 1990; Goddard, 2003). Consequently, sanctions to correct these deviant actions ensue (Goddard, 2003; Claridge, 2020).

Faculty trust originates in Social Capital Theory. For the wellbeing and success of schools, trust must exist among administrators, faculty members, and clients (parents and students). Otherwise, the school atmosphere and climate will be undermined and will hinder therein healthy relationships based on trust which in turn impedes students' learning. However, in a school culture permeated with trust, the faculty uses it as a social norm to judge their collective efficacy and a teacher whose actions are incongruent with the faculty's expectations for students' academic achievement will be sanctioned (Goddard, 2003; Hoy et al., 2006).

Positive Psychology

According to Seligman (2006), the customary belief about academic achievement is based on students' talent and motivation. When academic failure occurs, it is attributed to lack of talent or motivation (Seligman, 2006). However, Seligman (2006) demonstrates the possibility for students to have both talent and motivation and still fail because of lack of optimism which gives energy and stamina to optimistic students to persist and stay resilient in the face of obstacles and setbacks. Optimistic students perceive failure, bad outcomes, and setbacks as temporary defeats. However, with patience, perseverance, and hopeful explanatory style, they can overcome these obstacles (Seligman, 2006). Whereas pessimistic students perceive the same obstacles as permanent, they give up easily whether talented or not and thus face depression (Seligman, 2006). Therefore, both talent plus motivation and optimism are essential to succeed in the long run. As Einstein said, "genius is 1% talent and 99% hard work..." (Goodreads, n.d., Quote 1) because achievement and success are guaranteed to the optimistic who believe in themselves and are willing to persevere and be successful.

The concept "Academic Optimism" is partly founded on "learned optimism." According to Seligman (1998) "learned optimism" is the cure to get "people over the wall of learned pessimism and not simply as individuals but also as organizational participants" (as pointed out in Smith & Hoy, 2007, p. 565). Similarly to individuals learning pessimism (i.e., beliefs in their incapability to bring about change, and improve their lives, academics, or jobs), organizations also become pessimistic (Smith & Hoy, 2007). School faculty which learns to be optimistic displays a culture of "collective beliefs and norms that view teachers as capable, students as

willing, parents as supportive, and academic success as achievable" (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 195).

Academic Optimism

In the 1970s, Hoy and his colleagues engaged in research on school climate and its impact on school atmosphere and student learning. They discovered that schools with open and humanistic climate have self-actualized students, staff with high morale, and authentic principals with integrity and care (Hoy, 2012). They launched another research to determine if openness and humanism in school can affect students' academic achievement (Hoy, 2012). Unfortunately, this attempt to connect humanistic and open school climate to effect achievement was to no avail. Consequently, they turned their attention to school organizational properties (collective trust, authentic principalship, and school health). These properties turned out to be directly related to student achievement after controlling for socio-economic status (SES) because they were centered on faculty interpersonal relationship and school organization and not on student achievement per se (Hoy, 2012).

After two decades of research, they found out an aspect of school characteristic, *academic emphasis*, positively and consistently correlated with students' academic achievement even after controlling for SES (Hoy, 2012). Academic emphasis, sometimes called academic press, is the "degree to which teachers find ways to engage students in appropriate, academic tasks" (Beard et al., 2010, p. 1137).

Academic optimism as a construct of school property is defined by McGuigan & Hoy (2006) as:

> A shared belief among faculty that academic achievement is important, 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 schoolwide confidence that students will succeed academically. (p. 204)

Academic optimism consists of three interconnected components at the faculty level. First, *collective teacher efficacy* refers to the perceptions and beliefs of teachers for the entire faculty capability to organize itself and take appropriate actions required for student achievement (Goddard et al., 2000a, 2004a). Second, *faculty trust in students and parents* refers to "the group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open" (Smith & Hoy, 2007, p. 559). By making themselves vulnerable to their clients (parents and students), they expect to win their trust and work with them collaboratively, productively, and honestly. Finally, *academic emphasis,* sometimes called 'academic press', refers to schools with student-centered learning environment where academic excellence is expected from students; high but achievable goals are set for students; 'teachers believe in the ability of all students' even difficult ones to learn and succeed; both teachers and students celebrate high academic achievement; and students display respect for those with high academic achievement (Hoy, 2012; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006).

Culture of Academic Optimism

The earliest study on school culture dated back to Waller (1932) which analyzed schools as social systems with distinctive culture, values, rituals, and ceremonies (Hoy, 2010). To

elaborate on Waller's perceptions of schools as social systems, Hoy (2010) defines school organizational culture as a system of "shared norms, values, philosophies, beliefs, expectations, myths, ceremonies, or artifacts" (p. 157). These characteristics give a school a distinctive identity and patterns of behaviors suitable to its success and growth (Hoy, 2010; Teasley, 2016). Schools with effective organizational culture exhibit not only a high level of teacher satisfaction, motivation, and commitment but also a high level of student achievement (Cheng, 1993).

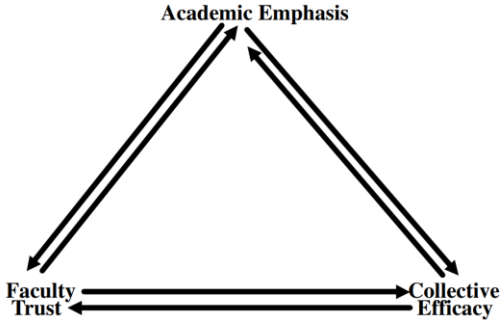
Moreover, school culture is a component of school organizational climate which is described as the "set of internal characteristics that distinguishes one school from another and influences the behavior of its members" (Hoy & Hannum, 1997). Schools with healthy climate are characterized by positive interpersonal relationship among students, teachers, and administrators, academic excellence, high but achievable goals, teacher commitment and student motivation (Hoy et al., 1998; Hoy, 2012; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006). In short, school culture and climate are interdependent and the combination of the two produces a positive school culture with healthy climate.

Academic optimism, as an effective school culture, both improves school climate and student achievement and overcomes the influence of socioeconomic background which may hinder or facilitate learning (McGuigan & Hoy, 2006). This culture results from the constant interactions of the three dimensions of academic optimism (collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis). According to Hoy et al. (2006), the three dimensions of academic optimism are in a bidirectional relationship to one another. For instance, faculty trust in parents and students nurtures collective teacher efficacy which in turn strengthens faculty trust (Hoy et al., 2006). Again, when faculty trusts parents, teachers feel supported and free to set higher academic

goals to students and try new teaching technics and strategies to help them succeed without being afraid of parents' reaction in case of mistakes or aborted results (Hoy et al., 2006). And this emphasis on reasonably higher academic goals will in return consolidate faculty trust in parents and students (Hoy et al., 2006). Lastly, when the faculty believes in its capability to successfully engage students in learning activities to result in achievement, they will emphasize academic achievement which in turn strengthens their sense of collective efficacy (Hoy et al., 2006). See the bidirectional relationship of the culture of academic optimism in Figure 2. 2 below.

FIGURE 2. 2

Bidirectional Relationship among Academic Emphasis, Faculty Trust, and Collective Efficacy



Note. Reciprocal causal relationships among the three dimensions of academic optimism (Hoy et al., 2006, p. 432)

Similar to this effective learning environment based on academic optimism, Bryk and Schneider (2002) in a longitudinal study in Chicago, investigated the characteristics and conditions to make school effective and promote students' learning (Beard et al, 2010). The results highlight the following elements as social conditions to enhance learning: a) teachers with a "can do" attitude, b) school outreach to and cooperation with parents, c) a professional community working collaboratively and setting high academic expectations for students (Beard et al, 2010; Hoy, 2012). Due to the close similarity between the two school characteristics, the

interactions of the three components of academic optimism are said to reinforce a school environment which possesses the same learning and social conditions described by Bryk and Schneider (Beard et al., 2010).

In short, school academic optimism, as a school level construct, delineates an effective school culture characterized by collective efficacy, faculty trust in parents and students, and academic emphasis. The fusion of the three components works interdependently to create a healthy, caring, and fertile learning environment for academic achievement.

Academic Optimism and Achievement

In 2006, Hoy et al. confirmed the hypothesis about collective efficacy, faculty trust in students and parents, and academic emphasis to form a latent construct called academic optimism. In the same vein, scholars have tested and confirmed its reliability, validity, and credibility and used it to predict academic achievement in schools. After identifying the construct, academic optimism, Hoy et al. (2006) used it in 96 high schools to explicate its effect on student achievement while controlling for SES, urbanicity and previous achievement. Using structural equation model, they found academic optimism to be significantly related to student achievement. This finding proves the strength of the culture of academic optimism in contributing to student achievement no matter their social and economic background. In the same vein, McGuigan and Hoy (2006) conducted a study in 40 Ohio elementary schools to find out the effect of academic optimism on student achievement. The results reveal academic optimism as a strong and significant predictor of school-level achievement in both mathematics and reading and it overpowers SES which used to be perceived as the strongest predictor of academic achievement.

In addition, the effectiveness of the culture of academic optimism in improving academic achievement was tested by Smith & Hoy (2007) in 99 urban elementary schools in Texas using multiple regression analysis while controlling for SES and school size. The study revealed the positive impact of academic optimism (independent variable) on mathematics achievement (beta= 0.34, $p < 0.01$) (dependent variable). Moreover, Wagner & Dipaola (2011) also tested the relationship of the culture of academic optimism and student achievement in 36 public high schools in Virginia and they found a significant correlation between each of the component of academic optimism and student achievement despite the control for student background. Similarly, Bevel & Mitchell (2012) explored the relationship between the culture of academic optimism and elementary reading achievement in 29 schools in Alabama and pointed out a strong and positive relationship between the culture of academic optimism and elementary student achievement in reading ($r= 0.78$, $p<0.01$). This result highlights the importance of academic optimism in schools, i.e., the greater the perceptions of the culture of academic optimism in a school, the higher the student achievement.

Other scholars were more interested in recognizing school organizational structures able to impact achievement through academic optimism. These structures work as antecedents to academic optimism and establish the context of nurturing the culture of academic optimism which directly affects student achievement (McGuigan & Hoy, 2006; Mitchell and Tarter, 2016). For instance, enabling school structure/bureaucracy defined as "the extent to which school structures, hierarchies, rules, and procedures enable teachers in their work […and] support rather than hinder the tasks of teaching and learning" (McGuigan & Hoy, 2006, p. 210) is proven to indirectly affect achievement. To illustrate, Anderson et al. (2018) found academic optimism to

mediate the relationship between enabling school structure and student achievement. Likewise, Mitchell and Tarter (2016), McGuigan and Hoy (2006), and Wu et al. (2013) pointed out a strong and positive relationship between enabling school structure and academic optimism via which enabling school bureaucracy indirectly influence school achievement.

In summary, the culture of academic optimism may predict student achievement in various school levels even after controlling for student's social status, socioeconomic background, previous achievement, and school size. This positive effect of academic optimism on student achievement is facilitated by enabling school structure which nurtures the development of the composite of academic optimism (collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis), the main predictor of academic achievement regardless of SES.

Dissection of Academic Optimism's Components and their Impact on Schools

This part expounds teachers' perceptions of collective teacher efficacy, faculty trust in clients, and academic emphasis and uses research studies to support the nature and importance of these concepts in schools and the positive outcome they engender in schools whose culture reflects academic optimism.

Collective Teacher Efficacy

For the success of schools and student and parent satisfaction of educational services, schools need to have instructional staff with a sense of collective efficacy which makes them believe in their capability to "organize and execute the courses of action required to have a positive effect on students" (Goddard et al., 2004, p. 4). This perception of collective efficacy establishes a normative environment of academic excellence that influences both teachers' actions and behaviors and the school achievement (Goddard et al., 2000a). In this normative

environment, teachers collectively believe they can successfully teach students skills necessary for their academic achievement. They are also willing to accept challenges (e.g.: achievement of educational goals, difficult students, etc.) and stay resilient and persistent (Goddard et al., 2000a). In case of violation of group norms or failure to fulfill the requirement of this normative environment, the perpetrators will be punished to keep group norms stable (Goddard, 2003; Hoy et al., 2006; Goddard et al., 2004a; Goddard et al., 2000b). In short, schools aspiring to have a culture of high academic achievement need to cultivate a sense of collective efficacy as a social norm to influence the school outcome. As Bandura (1997) contended "staff's collective sense of efficacy that they can promote high levels of academic progress contributes significantly to their schools' level of academic achievement" (p. 250).

Teachers with a sense of collective efficacy are determined, motivated, competent, and self-assured in dealing with their instructional duties. In a context of collective teacher efficacy perceptions, Goddard et al. (2004a) noted individual teachers' possession of both self-referent efficacy beliefs and "beliefs about the conjoint capability" (p. 4) of the school faculty to agentively work to improve schools' conditions. To clarify the concept, collective teacher efficacy, Bandura (1997) declared "an emergent group-level attribute that is the product of coordinative and interactive dynamics" (p. 7). This means, collective teacher efficacy does not refer to the aggregate of individuals' self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997) instead it is a group-level perceptions resulted from the product of a collaborative work of a faculty team. Indeed, teachers' perceptions of collective efficacy may be an effective mechanism to impact school culture and student learning.

Moreover, the collective efficacy beliefs provide the faculty with psychological, intellectual, and emotional aptitude to face students' learning needs. These competencies and aptitudes allow the faculty to overcome the challenges of the learning environment (Goddard et al., 2000a). Consequently, students in schools where the faculty has strong perceptions of collective efficacy receive higher achievement outcome than students in schools where the faculty has low perceptions of collective efficacy (Goddard et al., 2000a). In addition, faculty members with strong collective efficacy beliefs are said to display "a positive attitude toward professional development, higher job satisfaction, and commitment to the teaching profession, less stress or burnout [….and to be] willing to take risks and to overcome challenges to meet students' needs" (Zhou, 2019, p.71). Faculty with strong collective efficacy perceptions may be considered well equipped to engage in instructional activities and receive productive results.

In conclusion, it is necessary for schools to have faculty with strong perceptions of collective efficacy which sets a normative environment for an effective school culture where the faculty collectively believe in their capability to carry out educational services. Faculty members of schools with strong collective efficacy perceptions have aptitudes and positive behaviors which are efficiently used to help students achieve academically.

Collective Teacher Efficacy and Achievement. Perceptions of collective teacher efficacy as a norm in a school produces academic achievement in schools which embrace it as a subculture. This contention is affirmed by scholars who investigated the concept in practice. For instance, both Goddard et al. (2000a) and Goddard (2001) revealed that perceptions of collective teacher efficacy positively and significantly predict differences between schools in student achievement in mathematics and reading. In the same vein, Tschannen-Moran & Barr (2004)

examined the relationship between collective efficacy and student achievement in 66 middle schools in the state of Virginia and they also found a strong correlation between perceptions of collective teacher efficacy and eighth grade achievement in mathematics, writing, and English. To diversify the research variables, Goddard et al. (2004b) examined the relationship between collective teacher efficacy and student achievement in other subjects of studies apart from mathematics and reading. In a sample of 96 US high schools, the two variables highly correlated with each other. In brief, perceptions of collective teacher efficacy revealed the differences between schools in terms of student achievement and showed the same effect in different school levels.

Faculty Trust in Parents and Students

Trust plays an important role in school management especially in interpersonal relationship between administrators, teachers, parents, and students. It is the "emotional glue that binds" (Quotefancy, n.d., Quote 1) faculty, parents, and students together and help create a heathy and interactive relationship among them which will result in a productive work environment. According to Forsyth et al. (2011), trust emerges in schools as the lubricant that strengthens the relationships among administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Cooperation vanishes when interpersonal trust deteriorates, and interpersonal trust is a fundamental characteristic of human learning which requires cooperation from involved parties for it to happen (Hoy et al., 2006). Therefore, "when students, teachers, and parents have common learning goals, trust and cooperation are likely ingredients that improve teaching and learning" (p. 430). Bryk and Schneider (2002) noted this coexistence of trust and cooperation resulting in "regular students' attendance, persistent learning, and faculty experimentation with new

practices" (as cited in Hoy et al. 2006, p. 430). In addition, a school environment permeated with high interpersonal trust produces a high level of parental involvement in decision-making (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). In brief, faculty trust in parents and students facilitates interpersonal relationships and enhances teaching, learning and student achievement.

Faculty Trust and Achievement. Among the three referents of faculty trust (faculty trust in colleagues, faculty trust in the principal, and faculty trust in clients (parents and students)), faculty trust in clients is the only referent which directly and significantly impact student achievement (Forsyth et al., 2011). In fact, this trust referent was found to positively and significantly predict differences among schools in student achievement in reading and mathematics even after controlling for SES and prior achievement (Goddard et al., 2001). This result implies higher level of achievement in reading and mathematics in schools with a strong perceptions of faculty trust in clients. In the same vein, both Hoy (2002) and Bryk and Schneider (2002) established the same positive effect of perceptions of faculty trust in clients had on student academic achievement (Smith & Hoy, 2007). In short, perceptions of faculty trust in a school contribute to improving student academic achievement and distinguishing schools with high faculty trust from those with low faculty trust through their performance.

Academic Emphasis

Perceptions of academic emphasis are reflected through the atmosphere and climate of a learning environment which values scholarship and stresses academic activities. According to Hoy et al. (2006), academic emphasis refers to the degree to which a school emphasizes activities that stimulate students' intellect and boost their achievement. In these schools with

high academic emphasis engendered by healthy climate, the faculty stresses high but achievable goals; the learning environment is serious and orderly; students strenuously work to achieve requirements; they are cooperative and respect their peers with higher level of achievement (Hoy et al., 2006; Sweetland & Hoy, 2000; Goddard et al., 2000b). In contrast to schools with unhealthy climate, academic emphasis does not exist because learning and academic achievement are not prioritized for students who in turn are careless to persevere in their studies and those who do are not respected by their unmotivated peers (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000). Such learning environment is devoid of faculty trust which triggers collective teacher efficacy and both of which in turn establish a healthy climate where perceptions of academic emphasis would be evident.

Academic Emphasis and Achievement. Academic emphasis, as a feature of school organizational climate, creates the conditions and context where academic activities are operated smoothly, students thrive academically, and teachers' morale is high. Hoy et al. (2006) argued a positive learning outcome is achieved in a conducive learning environment. For instance, Goddard et al. (2000b) explored differences among schools in achievement in mathematics and reading. They discovered a statistically significant difference in achievement between schools with high academic emphasis and those with low one after controlling for students' demographics, socioeconomic status (SES), and school size. This finding demonstrates the importance and impact of an orderly, collaborative, and coordinated work environment in making some schools to perform better than others. Similarly, Tschennen-Moran and Gareis (2015) found academic emphasis to strongly and significantly correlate with student achievement ($r= 0.80$, $p < 0.01$) in 64 schools of different levels (elementary, middle, and high school). The

more school faculty values scholarship through academic press for achievement, the higher the chance of the school to perform.

Moreover, the same positive effect of academic emphasis on achievement was noted by Alig-Mielcarek and Hoy (2005) who after controlling for demographics variables and SES, investigated the impact of academic emphasis and instructional leadership on achievement in elementary schools using structural equation modeling (McGuigan & Hoy, 2006). They discovered academic emphasis directly impacted student achievement while instructional leadership failed to produce the same effect (McGuigan & Hoy, 2006). In fact, instructional leadership indirectly influences student achievement (McGuigan & Hoy, 2006). In connection to the influence of instructional leadership on student achievement through academic emphasis, Sweetland and Hoy (2000) identified a positive and strong correlation between academic emphasis and teacher empowerment ($r = .58$, $p < .01$). The result indicates a higher probability for instructional leaders who promote academic emphasis to support teachers to try new teaching methods and involve them in decision-making. Thus, academic emphasis is a school characteristic which promotes teaching and learning by creating a suitable school environment for the development of students' cognitive abilities.

To summarize, each of the composite of academic optimism effectively contributes to creating a learning environment where teachers are confident of their capability to successfully assist students in their academic journey. The faculty trust in parents and students results in a healthy interpersonal relations and parental involvement in school matters. The healthy climate and appropriateness of the learning environment energize both teachers and students to take

academic activities very seriously. As a result, these practices positively and significantly improve a school academic achievement.

Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter describes the research methods utilized in the study. The chapter is comprised of the following elements: background information of the study, participants' description, human subject approval, sampling technique, instrumentation, data collection, procedures, and treatment of data.

Statement of the Problem

Positive school culture as the backbone of effective schools is essential for student achievement. It makes the school environment conducive not only to healthy interactions among teachers, parents, and students, but also to teaching, learning, and academic excellence (McGuigan & Hoy 2006; Bayar & Karaduman, 2021; Atasoy, 2020). Academic optimism is a type of effective school culture which consistently proves schools' characteristics can influence student academic achievement regardless of their socio-economic status, demographic backgrounds, or previous achievement (Hoy et al., 2006; Smith & Hoy, 2007; Beard et al., 2010; Hoy, 2012). The positive impact of the culture of academic optimism on student achievement is not met with the expected number of research and analysis in the context of Niger.

This research was designed to examine school academic optimism in a private middle school in Niamey, Niger. Using a survey, data was collected from teachers to obtain their perceptions of the three components of school academic optimism (academic emphasis, collective efficacy and faculty trust in parents and students) as identified by Hoy et al. (2006). The analysis of the data provided insight in determining whether the culture of this specific Niger private middle school reflects the culture of academic optimism. A survey is a data collection tool with an emphasis on "the vital facts of people, and their beliefs, opinions,

attitudes, motivations, and behavior" (Kerlinger, 1986, as cited in Antonakis et al., 2004, p. 58). Hence, survey research had been widely used as a useful tool to understand community opinion (Guyette, 1983). As such, the School Academic Optimism Scale (SAOS), developed by Hoy (2005), and with permission of the author was used to determine teachers' perceptions of school academic optimism (Appendix C). A translated version of SAOS in French with 28 items was used to measure the three components of Academic Optimism. A Cronbach Alpha was utilized to test the reliability of the new instrument and the basic descriptive statistics for each item was aggregated to determine the degree of teachers' perceptions of the culture of academic optimism in a private middle school in the Commune III of Niamey (Niger).

Purpose of the Study

As mentioned in chapter one, this study was designed to examine teachers' perceptions of academic optimism in a private middle school in Niamey, Niger. This study determined to what extent the practices of academic optimism are demonstrated by teachers. The results of this study followed with recommendations to other private schools with a similar context and traditions in academic optimism and how this practice may positively impact student achievement.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following questions:

1. To what extent do Niger private middle school teachers self-report perceived practices of collective teacher efficacy?
2. To what extent do Niger private middle school teachers self-report perceived practices of faculty trust in parents and students?

3. To what extent to Niger private middle school teachers self-report perceived practices of academic emphasis?

Context of the Study

The study was conducted in Niamey, the capital city of Niger. Niamey is the largest city of the country with 1,302,910 people (World Population Review, 2022). It is the education hub of the country. In Niamey, people's interest in education explains the tendency of most of the educated to claim quality teaching for their children by sending them to private schools. Private middle schools in Niamey significantly outperform public schools and outnumber them by 39 percent to three percent (see Table 3. 1 below). This significant disparity prompted an examination of the culture of academic optimism in these private schools which demonstrate high achievement and predominance over public school by using the scale of academic optimism. Niamey is subdivided into five Communes or Districts among which the Commune III of Niamey (or simply Niamey 3) is the research area.

TABLE 3. 1

Private Middle Schools Outnumbering Public Middle Schools

Number of middle schools by region (State)	Public		Private	
	enrollment	Percent	enrollment	percent
Agadez	18	2%	5	5%
Diffa	21	3%	3	3%
Dosso	159	20%	5	5%
Maradi	150	19%	24	24%
Niamey	**32**	**4%**	**38**	**39%**
Tahoua	151	19%	7	7%
Tillabéry	135	17%	5	5%
Zinder	125	16%	11	11%
Country Total	**791**	**100%**	**98**	**100%**

Note. Adapted from *Data of yearbook 2014/15 of Ministry of Secondary Education* (in Idi & Mouctari, 2017, p. 29).

Research Design

This study utilized a non-experimental survey research design and a quantitative approach to analyze a small sample size using basic descriptive statistics.

Instrumentation

In this study, a survey questionnaire was used to collect data online via WhatsApp application (https://www.whatsapp.com/download). According to Johnson and Christenson (2000), questionnaires are used in research studies to "obtain information about the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values, perceptions, personality, and behavioral intentions of research participants" (p. 127). An existing self-report instrument granted with permission by Hoy (2005) was used for data collection (Appendix C). The instrument is called School Academic Optimism Scale (SAOS) (Appendix B) and is comprised of three subscales namely academic emphasis, collective teacher efficacy, and faculty trust in parents and students.

The original instrument of SAOS is in English and is a 30-items Likert-type scale which measures and describes the extent to which a school environment is permeated with practices of the culture of academic optimism. The instrument measures the extent to which faculty members believe "that academic achievement is important, 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" (McGuigan & Hoy, 2006, p. 204). The first 22 items measure collective teacher efficacy (12 items) and faculty trust in parents and students (10 items). They are scored on a six-point scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* (with endpoint "1") to *Strongly Agree* (with endpoint "6"). The remaining eight items measure academic emphasis, and they are scored on a four-

point scale ranging from *Rarely occurs* (with endpoint "1") and to *Very Often occurs* (with endpoint "4").

In this study, the original instrument (SAOS) was translated into French with 28 Likert-type items (collective teacher efficacy and faculty trust in clients (20 items) and academic emphasis (8 items)) as a result of an adaptation to the researcher's socio-cultural context (Appendix D). The researcher's translation was submitted for verification to an outside external language specialist from the English Department of Abdou Moumouni University of Niamey (Niger). As a result, some minor errors were pointed out and were corrected. The final version of the instrument is consistent with the original instrument meaning wise. The three subscales of academic optimism are described below:

Collective Teacher Efficacy. Collective efficacy is a 12-item scale which measures the shared perceptions of teachers' beliefs in their collective capability to "organize and execute the courses of action required to have a positive effect on students" (Goddard et al., 2004a, p. 4). Sample items of this scale include:

"Teachers in this school are able to get through to the most difficult students,"

"Teachers here are confident they will be able to motivate their students,"

"Teachers in this school believe that every child can learn,"

"Students here just aren't motivated to learn" (reverse scored), and

"If a child doesn't want to learn teachers here give up" (reverse scored).

Construct validity and reliability of this scale have been supported by previous studies and the calculated Cronbach Alpha varies from .87 to .98 (Anderson et al., 2018; Mitchel & Tarter, 2016; Smith & Hoy, 2007; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006; Hoy et al., 2006; Gray & Mitchell,

2021; Kirby & DiPaola, 2011). In the current study, items 10 and 12 were removed due to not being relevant in the Niger culture.

Faculty Trust in Parents and Students. The faculty trust subscale is a 10-item scale that measures teachers' perceptions of their "willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open" (Smith & Hoy 2007, p. 559). This scale has the following sample items:

"Teachers in this school trust their students,"

"Teachers in this school trust the parents,"

"Parents in this school are reliable in their commitments," and

"Students here are secretive" (reverse scored).

The reported reliability and construct validity ranges from .92 to .97 (Anderson et al., 2018; Mitchel & Tarter, 2016; Gray & Mitchell, 2021; Hoy et al., 2006; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006; Smith & Hoy, 2007).

Academic Emphasis. The academic emphasis subscale is an eight-item scale that measures teachers' perceptions of schools' positive climate and culture which contribute to creating a conducive learning environment where academic achievement is recognized; high but achievable goals are set to students; students strenuously work to achieve requirements; they are cooperative and respect their peers with higher level of achievement (Hoy et al., 2006; Sweetland & Hoy, 2000, Goddard et al. 2000b). Sample items for this scale are:

"The school sets high standards for performance,"

"Academic achievement is recognized and acknowledged by the school," and

"The learning environment is orderly and serious".

Previous studies have supported the reliability of this scale whose score varies from .83 to .94 (Anderson et al., 2018; Mitchel & Tarter, 2016; Kirby & DiPaola, 2011; Gray & Mitchell, 2021; Hoy et al., 2006; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006).

Participants

Participants in the study were middle school teachers at a private middle school in the Commune III of Niamey (Niger). The study collected data via the WhatsApp application (https://www.whatsapp.com/download). The researcher requested the permission of the school's owner to conduct the study utilizing a detailed cover letter (Appendix E) sent via WhatsApp. Upon receipt of the approval letter from the school's owner to conduct the study (Appendix F), another detailed cover letter of participation request was sent to 14 participants to kindly ask them to contact the researcher on his/her WhatsApp number or email address and express their interest in participating in the study (Appendix G). Interested participants gave their perceptions of practices of academic emphasis, collective efficacy, and faculty trust in parents and students upon receiving the survey link from the researcher via WhatsApp. The mean results were aggregated to determine the extent to which the culture of academic optimism is perceived in the school.

The study used an existing instrument. To test the reliability of collecting the data using WhatsApp, eight individuals were used to take a practice survey generated by Qualtrics software by accessing a link via WhatsApp. On one hand, during this pilot testing, the researcher discovered issues related to the format and content of the survey questionnaire. For instance, the font size was found to be small for participants to read and the directions were not clear. Consequently, the researcher adjusted the font size and reformulated the directions to facilitate

clarity to participants. On the other hand, some individuals of the pilot test group pointed out failure to open the survey link copied on the implied consent form and problems related to the internet connection while others successfully completed the survey using WhatsApp. As a result, the Principal Investigator accordingly took precautions by recommending research participants to take the survey during appropriate time when the internet connection is stable. The Principal Investigator also sent the survey link separately to participants, i.e., the link was removed from the implied consent form on which the link was found to be inaccessible by the pilot group. In addition, to ensure teachers complete the survey, participants followed the same instructions and received the same forms (participation cover letter and implied consent form).

Sampling Technique

The researcher opted to use convenient and intentional sampling because of the circumstances in which the research was conducted. The researcher was far away from the community of the research, therefore had no direct access to various private middle schools. Accordingly, the researcher selected one reachable school and suitable for the study, for a convenient and intentional sampling. According to Johnson and Christenson (2000) researchers use convenient sampling "when they include in their sample people that are available or volunteer or can be easily recruited and are willing to participate in the research study" (p. 174). The sample of this study is reachable to the researcher, and therefore can easily recruit participants for data collection.

Fourteen teachers (thirteen men and one woman) were recruited from a private middle school in the Commune III of Niamey (Niger). Private schools have a good record of academic performance (Idi & Mouctari, 2017). The study site and the sample may be suitable to determine

the practices of academic emphasis, collective efficacy, and faculty trust in parents and student which comprise the culture of academic optimism.

Human Subject Approval

To ensure the rights and welfare of subjects participating in the study were adequately protected, all requirements set forth by the Saint Cloud State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) were strictly followed. This thesis was conducted in an educational setting involving typical education practices. Data was collected by means of questionnaire survey, and no foreseeable discomforts to or risks imposed upon participants were expected. As stated on Appendix H, consent of participation was considered approved through the completion and return of the survey and non-participation was determined by no completion of a survey.

Data Collection and Procedures

Once permission to collect data at the school was granted by the owner of the school, the researcher proceeded to administer the School Academic Optimism Scale (SAOS) to the 14 teachers interested in the study within the first two weeks of January 2022. To begin with, the principal posted the participation request cover letter on teachers' bulletin board as a reminder for completion of the survey (Appendix G). Then, on January 3rd, 2022, by means of WhatsApp, participants received a brief instruction about the survey, a link to the survey generated by Qualtrics Research Suite™ software, and an implied consent form (Appendix H) which explicated the study and assured that their anonymity was protected and secured. The survey link was sent to teachers' WhatsApp numbers, and they were able to open the link online on their phones. During the study, the principal engaged with the teachers to ensure the completion of the survey in time. He also referred participants to the researcher in case of clarification and kept the

researcher updated about the study progress. Finally, upon completion of surveys via Qualtrics Research Suite™ software, responses were saved as comma delimited. Qualtrics automatically generated the basic descriptive statistical results.

Data Treatment and Analysis

After the collection of data, the raw data was saved as comma delimited. In addition to the basic descriptive statistical results generated by Qualtrics, Excel was also used to compute additional information needed for the study. The basic descriptive results (frequency counts, mean average score, and standard deviation of each item) were used to address the three research questions. These central tendencies would help interpret responses collected from participants. A Cronbach Alpha was calculated for the 28 items (first group of 20 items and second group of 8 items) to determine the internal consistency and reliability of the instrument.

Data Security

To preserve the data from loss or being corrupted, after the retrieval of the raw data from Qualtrics software and stored as comma delimited, the data was stored on a secured Microsoft OneDrive and accessed by a password-protected computer. To access each individual data set required a two-step verification. Only the Principal Investigator and his advisor was authorized to access the data. During the treatment process, the stored data was imported into Excel for additional analysis. Next, the Principal Investigator saved the treated data on Microsoft OneDrive.

This chapter covered the background of the study, participants' profiles, proof of compliance to the regulations of study on human subjects, the sampling technique, the

instrumentation, and the procedures. Finally, the statistical techniques used in the treatment and analysis of data were explained.

Chapter IV: Results

As discussed in Chapter One, the purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions of academic optimism in a private middle school in Niamey, Niger. This study determined the extent practices of each of the components of academic optimism (collective teacher efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis) was demonstrated by teachers. This study used a non-experimental survey research design and School Academic Optimism Scale (SAOS), a 30-items Likert-type scale, developed by Hoy (2005) was used to collect data. A translated version of SAOS with 28-items Likert-type scale was used to measure the three components of academic optimism. SAOS utilized a six-point Likert-type rating scale for the first two subconstructs (collective teacher efficacy and faculty trust) and a four-point Likert-type rating scale for the last subconstruct (academic emphasis). The rating scales of the six-point Likert-type items are: Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Somewhat Disagree=3, Somewhat Agree=4, Agree=5, and Strongly Agree=6. The four-point Likert-type items are scaled as follows: Rarely=1, Sometimes=2, Often=3, Very Often=4.

This chapter highlights the response rate of the study. It also underscores the reliability and validity of the new instrument used to collect data. For the data analysis, basic descriptive statistics per item was computed to determine the aggregate mean of each of the subconstructs (collective teacher efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis) and the sum of the means of the three subconstructs was used to measure the degree to which academic optimism was perceived by teachers in the school. Moreover, to interpret the Academic Optimism Score of the school, Hoy's (2005) Academic Optimism Score formula was used to compute the standard

score for each of the subconstructs and then the results were summed to determine the academic optimism score.

According to the standardized scores, the mean score for academic optimism of a typical school is 500. Therefore, a score of 650 on academic optimism is considered high while a score of 350 represents a low score displaying a pessimistic view on academic optimism (Hoy, 2005). See the range and interpretation of scores based on the following normal distribution:

If the score is 200, it is lower than 99% of the schools.

If the score is 300, it is lower than 97% of the schools.

If the score is 400, it is lower than 84% of the schools.

If the score is 500, it is average.

If the score is 600, it is higher than 84% of the schools.

If the score is 700, it is higher than 97% of the schools.

If the score is 800, it is higher than 99% of the schools.

(Hoy, 2005, interpreting the School Academic Optimism score)

To create clarity, tables were used to display data of each of the subconstructs. These tables were described in rank descending order by the mean from highest to lowest. Tables reflecting specific items include subconstruct names and respective items, means, and standard deviations. In addition to exhibiting construct names, means and standard deviations, tables describing subconstructs display standard scores of academic optimism. Moreover, five items of *Collective Teacher Efficacy* (Items 3, 4, 8, 9, and 11) and one item of *Faculty Trust* (item 22) were reversed from negative to positive for ease of interpretation of the data. For the

computation of means of the subconstructs of academic optimism, the Principal Investigator used the reverse scored of these items.

The chapter will be organized according to the following research questions:

1. To what extent do Niger private middle school teachers self-report perceived practices of collective teacher efficacy?
2. To what extent do Niger private middle school teachers self-report perceived practices of faculty trust in parents and students?
3. To what extent do Niger private middle school teachers self-report perceived practices of academic emphasis?

Return Rate

Fourteen (14) teachers at a private middle school were eligible to complete the survey. The number of responses received was 13, or 93 percent (93%) response rate. The Principal Investigator sent a reminder to participants interested in the study one week after receiving the survey link. After receiving eight responses, a second reminder was sent via the school principal by the middle of the second week and a total of 13 responses were received in total.

Instrument Reliability

This study used a translated version (French) of the School Academic Optimism Scale (SAOS) instrument with 28 Likert-type items to measure teachers' perceptions of academic optimism. The original SAOS contains 30 Likert-type items subdivided into three subconstructs namely *Collective Teacher Efficacy*, *Faculty Trust in students and parents*, and *Academic Emphasis*. A high reliability ranging from 0.87 to 0.94 was determined for each of the sub-constructs in previous studies (Mitchell & Tarter, 2016; Anderson et al., 2018; Bevel & Mitchell,

2012; Gray & Mitchell, 2021). In this study, using a French translation version of SAOS, an overall Cronbach Alpha test of reliability was run for the three subconstructs resulting in a 0.83 correlation coefficient demonstrating strong reliability.

Basic Descriptive Results

Data presented in Table 4. 1 is the overall data of the three sub-constructs (collective teacher efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis) of academic optimism. The data display the mean, standard deviation, and the three academic optimism subconstructs and their respective items. The 28 items are listed by the item numbers. For ease of exposition of the data, the frequency counts of items were removed from Table 4. 1 and subsequent related tables and can be found in Appendix I.

TABLE 4. 1

Descriptive Results for the Three Subconstructs of Academic Optimism. N=13

Subconstructs and items	Mean	SD
Collective Teacher Efficacy		
Q1. Teachers in this school are able to get through to the most difficult students.	5.31	1.38
Q2. Teachers here are confident they will be able to motivate their students.	5.70	0.61
***Q3. If a child doesn't want to learn teachers here give up.**	**5.90**	**0.55**
***Q4. Teachers here don't have the skills needed to produce meaningful results.**	**5.80**	**0.44**
Q5. Teachers in this school believe that every child can learn.	5.80	0.42
Q6. These students come to school ready to learn.	4.54	1.55
Q7. Home life provides so many advantages that students are bound to learn.	4.15	1.99
***Q8. Students here just aren't motivated to learn.**	**5.10**	**1.55**
***Q9. Teachers in this school do not have the skills to deal with student disciplinary problems.**	**5.70**	**0.63**
***Q10. Learning is more difficult at this school because students are worried about their safety.**	**5.80**	**0.44**

Table 4.1 (cont'd)	Mean	SD
Faculty Trust		
Q11. Teachers in this school trust their students.	5.40	0.84
Q12. Teachers in this school trust the parents.	5.00	0.88
Q13. Students in this school care about each other.	5.23	1.05
Q14. Parents in this school are reliable in their commitments.	4.92	0.92
Q15. Students in this school can be counted upon to do their work.	4.92	1.33
Q16. Teachers can count upon parental support.	5.23	0.89
Q17. Teachers here believe that students are competent learners.	5.23	1.12
Q18. Teachers think that most of the parents do a good job.	4.40	1.78
Q19. Teachers can believe what parents tell them.	4.00	1.75
***Q20. Students here are secretive.**	**3.62**	**1.86**
Academic Emphasis		
Q21. The school sets high standards for performance.	3.50	0.88
Q22. Students respect others who get good grades.	3.54	0.78
Q23. Students seek extra work so they can get good grades.	2.80	0.93
Q24. Academic achievement is recognized and acknowledged by the school.	3.70	0.63
Q25. Students try hard to improve on previous work.	3.10	0.86
Q26. The learning environment is orderly and serious.	3.80	0.44
Q27. The students in this school can achieve the goals that have been set for them.	3.23	0.93
Q28. Teachers in this school believe that their students have the ability to achieve academically.	3.62	0.51

**Bold-faced items were reverse scored*

Note: Collective Teacher Efficacy and Faculty Trust (Q1 through Q20) are scaled as follows: 1= Strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=somewhat disagree, 4=somewhat agree, 5=agree, 6=strongly agree.

Academic Emphasis (Q21 through Q28) is scaled as follows: 1=Rarely, 2= Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very Often.

The rating scale of the first two subconstructs (collective teacher efficacy and faculty trust) ranges from one to six. For instance, with a score of six, the teacher "Strongly Agree[s]" teachers in the school practice collective teacher efficacy/faculty trust in parents and students (clients). A score of five signifies the teacher "Agree[s]" teachers in the school practice collective teacher efficacy/faculty trust in clients and a score of four means the teacher "Somewhat Agree[s]" about the practices of collective teacher efficacy/faculty trust in clients. Whereas a score three indicates the teacher "Somewhat Disagree[s]" teachers in the school practice collective teacher efficacy/faculty trust in clients. Likewise, a score of two (2) points out the teacher "Disagree[s]" about teachers' practices of collective efficacy/faculty trust and finally, a score one indicates the teacher "Strongly Disagree[s]".

Moreover, the rating scale of the last subconstruct, academic emphasis, ranges from one to four. To clarify, a score of four implies the teacher "Very Often" perceives practices of academic emphasis in the school. A score of three indicates the teacher "Often" perceives practices of academic emphasis in the school. Finally, a score of two denotes the teacher "Sometimes" perceives practices of academic emphasis and a score of one signifies they "Rarely" perceive practices of academic emphasis.

Items 10 and 12 were removed from the original 30-item instrument, School Academic Optimism Scale (SAOS), to align with the cultural context of the study. Following the scoring directions of Hoy (2005), bold faced items were reversed from negative to positive for ease of interpretation of the data. To explain, bold faced items were reversed because they were worded negatively: "*Q3. If a child doesn't want to learn teachers here give up", "Q4. Teachers here don't have the skills needed to produce meaningful results", "Q9. Teachers in this school do not*

have the skills to deal with student disciplinary problems", "Q8. Students here just aren't motivated to learn". Exception to these negative statements, bold-faced item 10 and 20 (*Q10. Learning is more difficult at this school because students are worried about their safety* and *Q20. Students here are secretive*) were also reverse scored because the statements are contrary to the culture of academic optimism. As a result, participants scored these negatively worded items low, i.e., on the first three rating scales for collective efficacy and faculty trust (1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Somewhat Disagree). Consequently, in compliance with academic optimism scoring directions, the Principal Investigator reversed these items from negative to positive for ease of interpretation of the data.

Research Question One

To what extent do Niger private middle school teachers self-report perceived practices of collective teacher efficacy?

The data exhibited in Table 4. 2 emphasize the items pertaining to *Collective Teacher Efficacy* and their mean scores and standard deviations. *Collective Teacher Efficacy* comprises 12 items from which items 10 and 12 were removed as mentioned previously. The items are listed in descending order by the mean from highest to lowest value to determine the perceptions of practices of collective teacher efficacy by teachers. The mean scores for the 10 items of *Collective Teacher Efficacy* range from 4.15 to 5.90 and the standard deviations range from 0.42 to 1.99.

TABLE 4. 2

Descriptive Results for Collective Teacher Efficacy: N =13

Items	Mean	SD
***Q3. If a child doesn't want to learn teachers here give up.**	**5.90**	**0.55**
Q5. Teachers in this school believe that every child can learn.	5.80	0.42
***Q4. Teachers here don't have the skills needed to produce meaningful results.**	**5.80**	**0.44**
***Q10. Learning is more difficult at this school because students are worried about their safety.**	**5.80**	**0.44**
***Q9. Teachers in this school do not have the skills to deal with student disciplinary problems.**	**5.70**	**0.63**
Q2. Teachers here are confident they will be able to motivate their students.	5.70	0.61
Q1. Teachers in this school are able to get through to the most difficult students.	5.31	1.38
***Q8. Students here just aren't motivated to learn.**	**5.10**	**1.55**
Q6. These students come to school ready to learn.	4.54	1.55
Q7. Home life provides so many advantages that students are bound to learn.	4.15	1.99

*Bold faced items were reverse scored for ease of interpretation of the data.

Note. Scale: 1= Strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=somewhat disagree, 4=somewhat agree, 5=agree, 6=strongly agree.

According to collective teacher efficacy results, "*Q3. If a child doesn't want to learn teachers here give up*" (reverse scored) displays the highest mean value of 5.90 and a standard deviation of 0.55. The item *"Q7. Home life provides so many advantages that students are bound to learn"* had the lowest mean score of 4.15 and the highest standard deviation of 1.99. The first eight items rank-ordered by the mean received a mean value of above 5.00. Examining

items "*Q5. Teachers in this school believe that every child can learn"* (M=5.80, SD= 0.42), *"Q4. Teachers here don't have the skills needed to produce meaningful results"* (reverse scored) (M= 5.80, SD= 0.44), and *"Q10. Learning is more difficult at this school because students are worried about their safety"* (reverse scored) (M= 5.80, SD= 0.44), the mode of the data set is 5.80. The range of the mean scores of the 10 items of collective teacher efficacy is 1.75.

Research Question Two

To what extent do Niger private middle school teachers self-report perceived practices of faculty trust in parents and students?

The data in Table 4. 3 report items belonging to *Faculty Trust,* and their respective means and standard deviations. *Faculty Trust* encompasses 10 items listed in descending order by the mean from highest to lowest value to determine the perceptions of practices of faculty trust in parents and students. The mean scores for the 10 items of *Faculty Trust* range from 3.62 to 5.40 and the standard deviations range from 0.84 to 1.86.

According to faculty trust results, *"Q11. Teachers in this school trust their students"* demonstrates the highest mean value of 5.40 and the lowest standard deviation of 0.84. Item *"Q20. Students here are secretive"* (reverse scored) receives the lowest mean value of 3.62 and the highest standard deviation of 1.86. The first five items (Q11, Q17, Q16, Q13, and Q12) rank-ordered by the mean had mean values equal to or greater than 5.00. The next four items (Q15, Q14, Q18, and Q19) received mean values equal to or greater than 4.00. Analyzing items *"Q17. Teachers here believe that students are competent learners"* (M=5.23, SD= 1.12), *"Q16. Teachers can count upon parental support"* (M=5.23, SD= 0.89), and *"Q13. Students in this*

school care about each other" (M=5.23, SD= 1.05), the mode of the data set encompassing faculty trust is 5.23. The range of the mean scores is 1.78.

TABLE 4. 3

Descriptive Results for Faculty Trust: N =13

Items	Mean	SD
Q11. Teachers in this school trust their students.	5.40	0.84
Q17. Teachers here believe that students are competent learners.	5.23	1.12
Q16. Teachers can count upon parental support.	5.23	0.89
Q13. Students in this school care about each other.	5.23	1.05
Q12. Teachers in this school trust the parents.	5.00	0.88
Q15. Students in this school can be counted upon to do their work.	4.92	1.33
Q14. Parents in this school are reliable in their commitments.	4.92	0.92
Q18. Teachers think that most of the parents do a good job.	4.40	1.78
Q19. Teachers can believe what parents tell them.	4.00	1.75
***Q20. Students here are secretive.**	**3.62**	**1.86**

*Bold faced item was reverse scored for ease of interpretation of data.

Note. Scale: 1= Strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=somewhat disagree, 4=somewhat agree, 5=agree, 6=strongly agree

Research Question Three

To what extent do Niger private middle school teachers self-report perceived practices of academic emphasis?

Table 4. 4 below presents eight items along with their respective means and standard deviations to describe the extent to which teachers perceive *Academic Emphasis* in the school.

The items are displayed in descending order by the mean from highest to lowest value. The mean scores for the eight items of *Academic Emphasis* range from 2.80 to 3.80 and the standard deviations range from 0.44 to 0.93.

TABLE 4. 4

Descriptive Results for Academic Emphasis: N =13

Items	Mean	SD
Q26. The learning environment is orderly and serious.	3.80	0.44
Q24. Academic achievement is recognized and acknowledged by the school.	3.70	0.63
Q28. Teachers in this school believe that their students have the ability to achieve academically.	3.62	0.51
Q22. Students respect others who get good grades.	3.54	0.78
Q21. The school sets high standards for performance.	3.50	0.88
Q27. The students in this school can achieve the goals that have been set for them.	3.23	0.93
Q25. Students try hard to improve on previous work.	3.10	0.86
Q23. Students seek extra work so they can get good grades.	2.80	0.93

Note. Scale: 1=Rarely, 2= Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very Often

The descriptive results of academic emphasis demonstrate *"Q26. The learning environment is orderly and serious"* received the highest mean value of 3.80 and the lowest standard deviation of 0.44. *"Q24. Academic achievement is recognized and acknowledged by the school"* possessed the second highest mean score of 3.70 and standard deviation of 0.63. Item *"Q28. Teachers in this school believe that their students have the ability to achieve academically"* had the third highest mean score of 3.62 and a standard deviation of 0.51. All the

items, except the last one, were scored above the mean of 3.00. The second to last item, *"Q25. Students try hard to improve on previous work,"* received the second lowest mean value of 3.10 and a standard deviation of 0.86. Finally, the lowest mean score of 2.80 and the highest standard deviation of 0.93 are connected to *"Q23. Students seek extra work so they can get good grades."*

Table 4. 5 displays the three subconstructs of academic optimism (collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis), their overall frequency counts, means, and standard deviations. The subconstructs are presented in descending order by their combined means from highest to lowest value to determine the perceptions of each of the subconstructs in the school. The first two subconstructs (collective efficacy and faculty trust) are scaled on a six-point Likert-type scale. A combined mean score of 4.00 on collective teacher efficacy signifies teachers "Somewhat Agree" about the practices of collective teacher efficacy.

TABLE 4. 5

Descriptive Results of the three Subconstructs of Academic Optimism of the School:

Constructs	Rating Scale (*f*)						Mean	SD
	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Somewhat Disagree 3	Somewhat Agree 4	Agree 5	Strongly Agree 6		
Collective Efficacy	55	12	3	7	14	39	5.40	1.00
Faculty Trust	7	6	9	20	34	54	4.80	1.24
	Rating Scale (*f*)							
	Rarely 1	Sometime 2	Often 3	Very Often 4				
Academic Emphasis	2	15	27	60			3.40	0.75

Note. Some of the items of collective efficacy were reverse scored that is why the mean score does not reflect the frequency counts of the rating scales.

In the table above, analysis of subconstructs revealed collective teacher efficacy had a combined mean score of 5.40 and a combined standard deviation of 1.34. The combined mean of collective efficacy (5.40) indicates teachers “Agree” about practices of collective efficacy in the school. Faculty trust received a combined mean value of 4.80 and a combined standard deviation of 1.24. Faculty trust combined mean score (4.80) means teachers approximately “Agree” they perceive practices of faculty trust. Finally, academic emphasis is scaled on a four-point Likert-type scale. The combined mean score of 3.40 and standard deviation of 0.75 correspond to academic emphasis. The combined mean score (3.40) shows teachers “Often” perceive practices of academic emphasis in the school.

Table 4. 6 presents the descriptive results including means and standard deviations for each of the subconstructs as well as the overall academic optimism perceived by participants. In this study, the academic optimism score of the school was computed from the formula provided in the SAOS scoring guide (Hoy, 2005). The standard scores of the subconstructs and the standardized score of academic optimism were determined and are used to provide ranges when compared to the normal distribution of typical school scores (Hoy, 2005).

The overall mean and standard deviation of academic optimism of the school are 4.53 and 1.11 respectively. The result for the overall level of academic optimism when compared to the normal distribution of typical schools (Hoy, 2005) demonstrates that the 13 teachers in this study from this one school site scored higher than 99% of schools in the normal distribution for overall level of academic optimism.

TABLE 4. 6

Descriptive Results: Standard Scores of Academic Optimism (SSAO) N=13

	Mean	SD	St. Score	Range
Collective Teacher Efficacy	5.40	1.34	924.24	> 99% Extremely high
Faculty Trust	4.80	1.24	792.31	> 97 % Very High
Academic Emphasis	3.40	0.75	750.00	> 97% Very High
Academic Optimism Score =	**4.53**	**1.11**	**822.18**	**> 99%** **Very High**

Note. St. Score: Standard score (of academic optimism)

This chapter presented the results from the statistical analyses performed to examine teachers' perceptions of academic optimism in a private middle school. Descriptive statistics per item was computed for each of the subcontracts of academic optimism (collective teacher efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis). Findings support high perceptions of practices of collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis in the middle school. Findings of this study, along with their implications for research and practice, will be discussed in chapter 5.

Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions, Discussion, Limitations, and Recommendations

This research study sought to examine the effective culture of high performing private middle schools in Niamey (Niger) by using the scale of academic optimism. Academic optimism, as a culture specific to effective schools, appears to possess similar characteristics with the culture of high performing private middle schools in Niger.

With the assumed similarity between the culture of high performing private middle schools in Niger and the culture of academic optimism, this study examined teachers' perceptions of practices of academic optimism in a private middle school in Niamey (Niger). Specifically, this study explored the extent to which each of the subconstructs of academic optimism (collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis) was perceived by teachers in this study.

The study used a non-experimental survey research design and School Academic Optimism Scale (SAOS) developed by Hoy (2005) was utilized to collect data using the WhatsApp application (https://www.whatsapp.com/download). The survey link was generated by Qualtrics Suite. A translated version of SAOS with 28 items was used to collect data from 13 middle school teachers (93% of participation rate) in Niamey (Niger). The survey contained a set of 20 items with six-point Likert-type scale and another set of eight items with four-point Likert-type scale. An overall Cronbach alpha of 0.83 was computed for the translated version of the three subconstructs of the academic optimism. That means the data collected using the translated version of the three subconstructs are reliable and valid.

Devising solutions and educational practices aiming at improving academic achievement is on the agenda of any nation hoping to prepare its citizens to become productive and well-

rounded individuals. To the quest for characteristics affecting student achievement, Coleman et al. (1966) revealed student socioeconomic status had more impact on their academic achievement than school characteristics (p. 297). Consequently, Coleman Report sparked waves of research studies aiming at investigating school properties which positively influence student achievement. As a result, Edmonds (1979) refuted Coleman et al.'s (1966) claims and emphasized the following school properties which can impact student achievement: "strong principal leadership, high expectations for student achievement, emphasis on basic skills, an orderly environment, and frequent, systemic teacher evaluations" (as cited in Hoy, 2012, p. 78). These characteristics constitute the culture of effective schools. To clarify, despite the contribution of student socioeconomic status (SES) to their achievement, SES is not the sole predictor of achievement; schools also play a significant role in student achievement.

Moreover, research studies investigating student achievement in the context of Niger revealed higher academic achievement in private schools than in public schools. This higher achievement in private schools is due to their positive culture conducive to teaching and learning (PASEC, 2016, 2020). Private schools also are described to have discipline, security, regular attendance of both teachers and students, welcoming environment, satisfaction of parents, parental involvement, qualified teachers, and quality teaching (Idi & Mouctari, 2017). As a result, in Niamey, the site of the study, private schools attracted parents and students with their satisfactory results. With ratio of 39% to 3%, Niamey's private schools significantly outperform public schools and outnumbered them (Idi & Mouctari, 2017).

Exploring Edmonds' effective school characteristics and by extension school climate and culture, Hoy et al. (2006) discovered the following school properties which consistently

influence student achievement regardless of their socioeconomic status, previous achievement, or school level: collective teacher efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis. The subconstruct, collective teacher efficacy, refers to the perceptions and beliefs of the entire faculty's capability to organize itself, stay steadfast to its duties, and take appropriate actions required for student achievement (Goddard et al., 2000a, 2004a). Next, faculty trust in students and parents refers to "the group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open" (Smith & Hoy, 2007, p. 559). Finally, academic emphasis denotes a student-centered learning environment where the faculty promotes learning, and academic excellence is expected from students; high but achievable goals are set for students; teachers believe in the capabilities of all students to learn and succeed; academic achievement is celebrated and students respect their high achieving peers (Hoy, 2012; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006). The three subconstructs (collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis) come together to create the latent construct, academic optimism, which is an effective school culture highly correlated with academic achievement (Hoy et al., 2006; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006; Smith & Hoy, 2007).

Conclusion

This section is organized by order of the research questions posed for this study.

Research Question One

To what extent do Niger private middle school teachers self-report perceived practices of collective teacher efficacy?

The results of the teachers' self-report perceived practices of collective teacher efficacy for questions 1-10, using a six-point rating scale, ranged from 4.15 (Somewhat Agree) to 5.90

(Strongly Agree), with a combined mean score of 5.40. Item *"Q3. If a child doesn't want to learn teachers here give up"* (reverse scored) had the highest mean (5.90). Two items, *"Q6. These students come to school ready to learn"* and *"Q7. Home life provides so many advantages that students are bound to learn"* had mean scores of 4.54 and 4.15, respectively. Eight of the 10 items of this subconstruct were rated five (Agree) to six (Mostly Agree). Therefore, teachers in the middle school of Niamey self-report high level of practices of collective efficacy.

Research Question Two

To what extent do Niger private middle school teachers self-report perceived practices of faculty trust in parents and students?

The results of the teachers' self-report perceived practices of faculty trust in students and parents for questions 11-20, using a six-point rating scale, ranged from 3.62 (Somewhat Agree) to 5.40 (Agree), with a combined mean score of 4.80. Item *"Q11. Teachers in this school trust their students"* received the highest mean (5.40). Nine of the 10 items of this subconstruct were rated four (Somewhat Agree) to five (Agree). Hence, teachers in the middle school of Niamey self-report high level of practices of faculty trust in students and parents.

Research Question Three

To what extent do Niger private middle school teachers self-report perceived practices of academic emphasis?

Using a four-point rating scale, the results of the teachers' self-report perceived practices of academic emphasis for questions 21-28 indicated a range of 2.80 (approximately "Often") to 3.80 (approximately "Very Often"), with a combined mean score of 3.40. Item *"Q26. The learning environment is orderly and serious"* received the highest mean (3.80). Seven of the

eight items of academic emphasis were rated three (Often) to approximately four (Very Often). Consequently, teachers in the middle school of Niamey self-report high perceptions of practices of academic emphasis.

Discussion

The results revealed overall high perceptions of practices of collective teacher efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis. Although the results can only be generalized back to this school site in Niamey (Niger), the high perceptions of academic optimism support the assumption of this researcher of a relationship between a culture of high performing private schools such as the one in this study and the culture of academic optimism. The results also confirm and support Hoy et al.'s (2006) theory of academic optimism, his instrument, and conceptual framework. This study reaffirms Hoy et al.'s (2006) claims that academic optimism tends to work more effectively in high performing schools in a new context.

The following characteristics are used to describe the learning environment of high performing private schools: discipline, security, regular attendance of both teachers and students, welcoming environment, satisfaction of parents, parental involvement, qualified teachers, and quality teaching (Idi & Mouctari, 2017). As academic optimism shares these characteristics, perceptions of each of the subconstructs of academic optimism were seen justified in this study.

Collective teacher efficacy is the faculty beliefs in its capabilities and skills to "organize and execute the courses of action required to have a positive effect on students" (Goddard et al., 2004a, p. 4). Practices of collective efficacy establish a normative environment of academic excellence influencing teachers' behaviors and actions, and the school achievement (Goddard et al., 2000a). To be self-efficacious as an individual teacher, one must first be qualified, i.e., have

the capabilities to help students succeed. At the faculty level, qualification is referred as a "performance capability of a social system as a whole" (Bandura, 1997, p. 469).

In this study, teachers, as a group, demonstrated high perceptions of collective efficacy with a combined mean score of 5.40. The 10 items were rated *Somewhat Agree* to *Strongly Agree* i.e., *most all agree they perceive practices of collective efficacy* because they prove themselves capable of executing their duties. To illustrate, the following items stress the teachers' sense of capability to help students succeed: *"Q4. Teachers here don't have the skills needed to produce meaningful results"* (reverse scored) (M=5.80), *"Q9: Teachers in this school do not have the skills to deal with student disciplinary problems"* (reverse scored) (M=5.70), and *"Q1. Teachers in this school are able to get through to the most difficult students"* (M=5.31). The high perceptions of collective teacher efficacy can also be explained by teachers' eagerness, caring, persistence, and commitment in assisting students learn and succeed. For instance, *"Q3. If a child doesn't want to learn teachers here give up"* (reverse scored) with the highest mean value (5.90), *"Q5. Teachers in this school believe that every child can learn"* (M=5.80), and *"Q1. Teachers in this school are able to get through to the most difficult students"* (M=5.31) demonstrate the persistent and resilient mindset of teachers practicing collective efficacy.

Furthermore, *faculty trust in students and parents* is essential to healthy interpersonal relationship between teachers and students and teachers and parents. Teachers' trust in parents and students results in students' willingness to learn and parental collaboration and cooperation. Therefore, "when students, teachers, and parents have common learning goals, trust and cooperation are likely ingredients that improve teaching and learning" (Hoy et al., 2006, p. 430). In this study, teachers demonstrate a high level of practices of faculty trust with a combined

mean score of 4.80. Nine of the 10 items were rated *Somewhat Agree* to *Agree* i.e., *nearly all agree practices of faculty trust are perceived in the school*. The following high mean scored items highlight the healthy interpersonal relationship between teachers and students and faculty trust in students both of which facilitate learning: *"Q11. Teachers in this school trust their students"* (M=5.40), *"Q17. Teachers here believe that students are competent learners"* (M=5.23), and *"Q15 Students in this school can be counted upon to do their work"* (M=4.92). In addition, high parental involvement in their children learning indicates parents' support and faculty trust in parent (*"Q16. Teachers can count upon parental support"* (M=5.23), *"Q12. Teachers in this school trust the parents"* (M=5.00), and *"Q14. Parents in this school are reliable in their commitments"* (M=4.92)). This high parental involvement is not surprising because most parents of private school students are educated. Therefore, they are cognizant of their contribution to their children's learning. Item "*Q20. Students here are secretive"* (M=3.62) shows lack of sufficient trust of students in teachers as they do not fully confide in teachers. Such attitude may result from the culture which constitutes a barrier between adults and children, i.e., between teachers and students and expect children to respect adults and stay reserved at adults' presence. For, children's behaviors and attitudes are judged by the way they speak, listen, and look at adults. Consequently, in front of adults, children may be reserved for not breaching the cultural norm.

Finally, *academic emphasis* refers to a student-centered learning environment where the faculty promotes learning, and academic excellence is expected from students; high but achievable goals are set for students; teachers believe in the capabilities of all students to learn and succeed; academic achievement is celebrated and students respect their high achieving peers

(Hoy, 2012; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006). In this study, it is not astonishing to discover high perceptions of academic emphasis with a combined mean score of 3.40. Seven of the eight items were rated *Often* to *Very Often* indicating *most all agree they perceive practices of academic emphasis* because the middle school is permeated with academic activities. Teachers' responses to the survey revealed the value attached to learning, student improvement, and achievement. To illustrate the practices of academic emphasis in this study, items are subdivided into two groups: one reflects practices of academic emphasis through the school and faculty and the other through students. Using four-point scale, items *"Q26. The learning environment is orderly and serious"* (M=3.80), "*Q28. Teachers in this school believe that their students have the ability to achieve academically"* (M=3.62), *"Q21. The school sets high standards for performance"* (M=3.50), and *"Q24. Academic achievement is recognized and acknowledged by the school"* (M=3.70) were rated with strong mean values. The scores of these items clearly depict the conducive learning atmosphere, the school high expectation for students, teachers' trust and beliefs in students, their determination and motivation in helping them succeed. The scores of the second group of items (*"Q22. Students respect others who get good grades"* (M=3.54), *"Q27. The students in this school can achieve the goals that have been set for them"* (M=3.23), *"Q25. Students try hard to improve on previous work"* (M=3.10), and *"Q23. Students seek extra work so they can get good grades"* (M=2.80)) portray students to be highly motivated, receptive to learning, perseverant, and caring to each other.

In this study, teachers demonstrated overall high perceptions of practices of academic optimism supporting a relationship between the culture of academic optimism and high performing private schools in Niamey (Niger). To begin with, the reason for this private middle

school's teachers to exhibit high perceptions of academic optimism results in the stablished normative culture of academic excellence. This normative culture of academic excellence is the main agent of high practices of collective efficacy. In this culture, striving for excellence becomes a norm to the group and any member must abide to the group norm or exit the system. The high practices of collective efficacy are in turn nurtured by practices of faculty trust both of which are manifested in high practices of academic emphasis.

In addition, in this private middle school, the normative culture of academic excellence manifested through high perceptions of academic optimism is propelled by high accountability for student learning and academic results. This normative culture is also driven by parental involvement, sufficient resources for teachers (prompt payment of salary, teaching equipment, and some extra-benefits) and students (either of student parents work or do business to support their children's learning needs). With accountability and availability of resources in private schools, efficacious teachers at public schools make private schools operate successfully. However, the same teachers feign lack of motivation and commitment and tend to shirk their main duties because public schools are devoid of accountability (Idi & Mouctari, 2017). The absence of structured and normative culture of academic excellence in most public schools result from lack of accountability and resources, insignificant and tardy payment of salaries, and plethora of unqualified teachers. For instance, more than 80 percent of teachers are contractual teachers while less than 20 percent are tenured teachers and almost all elementary school teachers hold a high school diploma. (PASEC, 2016).

Accountability is very important in cultivating a normative culture of academic excellence where academic optimism can be perceived. The Probe Team's (1998) description of

the perception of accountability in public and private schools is still relevant to the reality of public and private schools in Niger. The Probe Team (1998) stated:

> In a private school, the teachers are accountable to the manager (who can fire them), and, through him or her, to the parents (who can withdraw their children). In a government school, the chain of accountability is much weaker, as teachers have a permanent job with salaries and promotions unrelated to performance. This contrast is perceived with crystal clarity by the vast majority of parents. (p. 64)

Hence, in Niger, accountability is missing in public schools and the government demonstrates a lack of will power to improve school conditions; the majority of students attending these public schools are from low-income families and children of the elite attend private schools.

The findings revealing high practices of academic optimism are supported by the school's academic optimism standard score which rated the school higher than 99% of schools of the normal distribution established by Hoy (2005). Moreover, the high perceptions of practices of academic optimism are consistent with a study conducted by Ekeh & Njoku (2014) on the state of academic optimism in inclusive schools in Nigeria. Using School Academic Optimism Scale (SAOS) and mean and standard deviation, they found high perceptions of practices of academic optimism. Unlike our study, this study used students as subjects to determine perceptions of practices of academic optimism in inclusive schools.

Limitations

The limitations of this study include:

1. The academic optimism score of the school is inflated because the school is a high performing and upper socioeconomic status school. The academic optimism score result cannot really be compared to the academic optimism scores of schools of the normal distribution established by Hoy (2005). These schools have higher sample sizes which make their academic optimism scores more accurate than the score of this school which is only reflective of 13 participants from one school.
2. The sample is very small, hence finding cannot be generalizable.
3. While computing the descriptive statistics of the last subconstruct, *academic emphasis* (8 items), a technical glitch in Qualtrics system reported scores of a six-point rating scale in the numerical values of the raw data while the items were designed with a four-point scale. This was not under the researcher's control and cannot be explained. Fortunately, upon verification of the choice text of the raw data, the choice text reflected a four-point scale. The researcher and his advisor manually input the right scaling of the choice text in Excel.

Recommendations for Professional Practice

The recommendations for practice include

1. The combined mean scores of the collective efficacy and academic emphasis are higher than the combined mean score of faculty trust. Despite the high perceptions of faculty trust, teachers in this study can work to improve trust among themselves, between them and parents and students. Item *"Q20. Students here are secretive"* (M=3.62) shows

enough trust is missing between teachers and students. Teachers may show themselves more approachable to students and create opportunities for students to interact with them one-on-one. This practice can mitigate students' shyness and help them express their needs to teachers.

2. Trust and collective efficacy are missing in some private schools and in various public schools and consequently practices of academic emphasis becomes elusive. These schools are permeated with low achievement, cynicism, and lack of trust between principals and teachers and teachers and clients (students and parents). Therefore, to improve school health and achievement:
    a. Private and public schools can build and nurture the culture of academic optimism by emphasizing practices of collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis. These practices may eradicate the cynicism and under performance and infuse trust which is the emotional glue binding the group together (Quotefancy, n.d., Quote 1) for practices of collective efficacy both of which are translated into practices of academic emphasis.
    b. Principal leadership plays a crucial role in implementing and influencing an effective school culture which was proven to directly impact student achievement (Hoy, 2006, 2012). However, in Niger, leadership illiteracy is rampant in schools despite the significant duties and responsibilities required from educational leaders to make schools functional and successful. Only few principals succeed in this endeavor through perhaps unconscious natural leadership abilities. Principals are not introduced to leadership theories which influence leadership practices and

indirectly affect student achievement. Therefore, professional development on theories and practices of leadership should be organized for principals so that they would acquire knowledge, skills, and know-how for effective educational leadership practices. With these competencies, principals should embrace a core leadership theory (authentic leadership, transformational leadership, etc.) and use it as a medium to build a healthy relationship based on trust between the leader and faculty, the leader and parents, the leader and students, and among teachers and students. In this atmosphere of leadership awareness, the leader should be the guardian of the normative culture of academic excellence which is driven by collective efficacy. Thanks to practices of collective efficacy and genuine trust, academic emphasis will be evident, and the leader will be able to indirectly impact student achievement. Hallinger and Heck (1996) said the relationship between principal and academic achievement is indirect (Hoy, 2006)

c. Considering the following goals of *Education For All* of Dakar 2000 Education Forum and Sustainable Development Goal 4: Attainment of healthy, inclusive, and equitable quality education by 2030 (United Nations, 2022), the government should support public schools and devise a professional development plan aiming at cultivating the practices of the culture of academic optimism. Academic optimism is highly related to student achievement regardless of their socio-economic status (Hoy et al, 2006). This is an opportunity for the government to invest and improve the structure of public schools which will make them fertile for the implementation of practices of academic optimism. In so doing, teachers

will develop trust among themselves, between them and principals, and between them and clients (parents and students). Teachers will also learn a sense of collective efficacy and emphasize academic emphasis. With the development of these characteristics, students from public schools may be more responsive and stay committed to their learning. Practices of these characteristics inspire hope for student achievement.

Recommendations for Further Research

The recommendations for further research include**:**

1. Replicate the study in Niger with a larger sample size of both private and public schools and use mix methods to collect data. With cultural differences of studies done in the US, using qualitative data would help determine teachers' feelings and perceptions of academic optimism in Niger
2. With a larger sample size of private and public schools in Niamey (Niger), examine the correlations between academic optimism, school socioeconomic status, and school achievement using private schools and public schools as indicators of school socioeconomic status (SES).
3. Examine the cause and effect between academic optimism and student achievement.
4. Compare the behaviors of fluid teachers in public and private schools: Explore the causes of fluid teachers' motivation in private schools.
5. Examine the impact of academic optimism on student achievement in low socioeconomic status schools such as public schools in Niger.

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Appendices

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY
EDUCATION FOR LIFE.

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
720 4th Avenue South AS 210, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

Name: Souleymane Kassoum

Email: souleymane.kassoum

IRB PROTOCOL DETERMINATION:
Exempt Review

Project Title Teachers perception of academic optimisn in a private middle school in Niamey, Niger

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol to conduct research involving human subjects. Your project has been: **APPROVED**

Please note the following important information concerning IRB projects:

- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of participants in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (ex. research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).

- For expedited or full board review, the principal investigator must submit a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated on this letter to report conclusion of the research or request an extension.

-Exempt review only requires the submission of a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated in this letter if an extension of time is needed.

- Approved consent forms display the official IRB stamp which documents approval and expiration dates. If a renewal is requested and approved, new consent forms will be officially stamped and reflect the new approval and expiration dates.

- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (ex. research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc.). The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.

If we can be of further assistance, feel free to contact the IRB at 320-308-4932 or email ResearchNow@stcloudstate.edu and please reference the SCSU IRB number when corresponding.

IRB Chair:

Dr. Mili Mathew
Chair and Graduate Director
Assistant Professor
Communication Sciences and Disorders

IRB Institutional Official:

María-Claudia Tomany

Dr. Claudia Tomany
Associate Provost for Research
Dean of Graduate Studies

OFFICE USE ONLY

SCSU IRB#: 2076 - 2710	**Type:** Exempt Review	**Today's Date:** 2/14/2022
1st Year Approval Date: 2/14/2022	**2nd Year Approval Date:**	**3rd Year Approval Date:**
1st Year Expiration Date:	**2nd Year Expiration Date:**	**3rd Year Expiration Date:**

Appendix B: School Academic Optimism Scale

SAOS

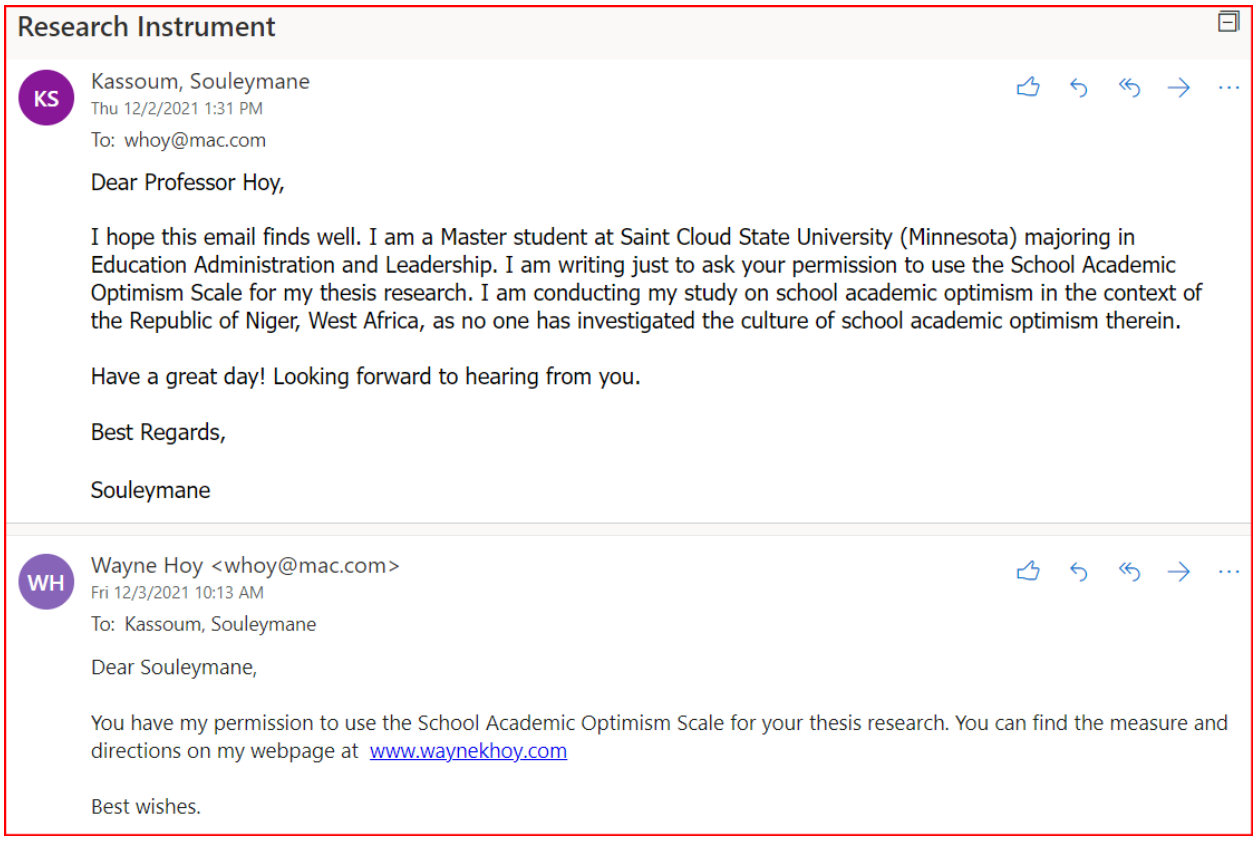
Directions: Please indicate your degree of with each of the statements about your school from **strongly disagree** to **strongly agree**. Your answers are confidential.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Teachers in this school are able to get through to the most difficult students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Teachers here are confident they will be able to motivate their students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. If a child doesn't want to learn teachers here give up.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Teachers here don't have the skills needed to produce meaningful results.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Teachers in this school believe that every child can learn.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. These students come to school ready to learn.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Home life provides so many advantages that students are bound to learn.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Students here just aren't motivated to learn.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Teachers in this school do not have the skills to deal with student disciplinary problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. The opportunities in this community help ensure that these students will learn.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Learning is more difficult at this school because students are worried about their safety.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Drug and alcohol abuse in the community make learning difficult for students here.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Teachers in this school trust their students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Teachers in this school trust the parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Students in this school care about each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Parents in this school are reliable in their commitments.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. Students in this school can be counted upon to do their work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. Teachers can count upon parental support.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. Teachers here believe that students are competent learners.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. Teachers think that most of the parents do a good job.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. Teachers can believe what parents tell them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. Students here are secretive.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Directions: Please indicate the degree to which the following statements characterize your school from **Rarely Occurs** to **Very Often Occurs.** Your answers are confidential.

	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
23. The school sets high standards for performance.	1	2	3	4
24. Students respect others who get good grades.	1	2	3	4
25. Students seek extra work so they can get good grades.	1	2	3	4
26. Academic achievement is recognized and acknowledged by the school.	1	2	3	4
27. Students try hard to improve on previous work.	1	2	3	4
28. The learning environment is orderly and serious.	1	2	3	4
29. The students in this school can achieve the goals that have been set for them.	1	2	3	4
30. Teachers in this school believe that their students have the ability to achieve academically.	1	2	3	4

Appendix C: Permission to Use the SAOS



Research Instrument

KS

Kassoum, Souleymane
Thu 12/2/2021 1:31 PM
To: whoy@mac.com

Dear Professor Hoy,

I hope this email finds well. I am a Master student at Saint Cloud State University (Minnesota) majoring in Education Administration and Leadership. I am writing just to ask your permission to use the School Academic Optimism Scale for my thesis research. I am conducting my study on school academic optimism in the context of the Republic of Niger, West Africa, as no one has investigated the culture of school academic optimism therein.

Have a great day! Looking forward to hearing from you.

Best Regards,

Souleymane

WH

Wayne Hoy <whoy@mac.com>
Fri 12/3/2021 10:13 AM
To: Kassoum, Souleymane

Dear Souleymane,

You have my permission to use the School Academic Optimism Scale for your thesis research. You can find the measure and directions on my webpage at www.waynekhoy.com

Best wishes.

Appendix D: Translated Version of SAOS

Echelle de l'Optimisme Académique d'Ecole

Ce questionnaire est conçu pour aider à bien comprendre la culture de l'optimisme académique d'école.

Consigne : Veuillez indiquer votre degré d'accord à propos des affirmations suivantes concernant votre école. Les réponses varient de **Pas du tout d'accord** à **Tout à fait d'accord.** Il y'a 20 questions dans cette première partie et chaque question a 6 choix de réponses. Vos réponses sont anonymes.

Pas du tout d'accord	Pas d'accord	Plutôt pas d'accord	Plutôt d'accord	D'accord	Tout à fait d'accord
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.

1. Les enseignants de cette école sont capables d'enseigner les élèves les moins réceptifs à l'enseignements.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
2. Dans cette école les enseignants sont confiants qu'ils pourront motiver leurs élèves.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
3. Si un enfant ne veut pas apprendre, les enseignants d'ici ne font rien pour le motiver.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
4. Dans cette école les enseignants n'ont pas les compétences nécessaires pour produire des bons résultats scolaires.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
5. Les enseignants de cette école croient que chaque élève peut acquérir le savoir.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
6. Ces élèves arrivent à l'école prêts à apprendre.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
7. La vie familiale produit beaucoup d'avantages aux élèves qu'ils sont obligés d'apprendre.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
8. Les élèves de cette école ne sont pas du tout motivés à apprendre.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
9. Les enseignants de cette école n'ont pas les compétences leur permettant de trouver des solutions aux problèmes de discipline des élèves.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
10. L'apprentissage est plus difficile dans cette école parce que les élèves s'inquiètent de leur sécurité.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
11. Les enseignants de cette école font confiance à leurs élèves.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
12. Les enseignants de cette école font confiance aux parents d'élèves.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
13. Les élèves de cette école s'entre-aident.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
14. les parent(e)s des élèves de cette école sont digne de confiance (honorent leurs engagements).	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)

15. On peut compter sur les élèves de cette école qu'ils feront leurs devoirs.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
16. Les enseignants peuvent compter sur le soutien des parents des élèves.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
17. Dans cette école les enseignants croient que les élèves sont capables d'apprendre.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
18. Les enseignants pensent que la plupart des parents jouent bien leurs rôles de parents	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
19. Les enseignants sont disposés à croire ce que leur disent les parents des élèves.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
20. Dans cette école les élèves préfèrent garder leurs secrets.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)

Consigne : Veuillez indiquer le degré auquel les affirmations suivantes représentent votre école.

Les choix de réponses varient de **Rarement** à **Très souvent.** Il y'a 8 questions dans cette première partie et chaque question a 4 choix de réponses Vos réponses sont anonymes.

	Rarement	**Parfois**	**Souvent**	**Très souvent**
21. Cette école exige aux élèves un standard élevé en termes de performance.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
22. Les élèves respectent leurs camarades qui obtiennent de bonnes notes.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
23. Les élèves effectuent des exercices supplémentaires pour avoir de bonnes notes.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
24. La réussite académique est reconnue et encouragée dans l'école.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
25. Les élèves fournissent des efforts pour s'améliorer.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
26. L'environnement pour l'apprentissage est sérieusement et proprement entretenu.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
27. Les élèves de cette école peuvent atteindre les objectifs qu'on leurs a fixés.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
28. Les enseignants de cette école croient que leurs élèves ont les compétences requises pour réussir leurs études.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)

Adapted from Hoy (2005)'s School Academic Optimism Scale

Appendix E: Cover Letter to the School's Owner (English Version)

December 20, 2021
Sister Marie des Anges, owner of
Myriam de Nazareth Middle School
PO Box: 12 661
Niamey, Niger

Dear Sister Marie:

In an effort to gather information on the culture of school academic optimism, I am seeking the participation of teachers in your school for my thesis research. My research will center on academic optimism. There is very little research on this topic in Niger. This study will hopefully close the gap. The objective is to determine to what extent academic optimism is practiced by teachers. The results of this study will contribute to our understanding to effective teaching practice that leads to improving academic achievement and student success.

I am writing to request permission from your school organization to allow teachers to participate in the study by completing 28 items questionnaire. Would you kindly permit your teachers to serve as participants in this study?

There are no foreseeable discomforts or risks involved with this study. **Participation is voluntary.** All participants are free to withdraw her/his consent and to discontinue participation in this study at any time. All data provided will be kept confidential. Only this investigator will be involved in the tabulation of the data. No birthdates, social security numbers, or names will be required. The time required to complete the 28-item questionnaire is approximately 15-20 minutes.

If permission is granted, I have enclosed a standard form letter template, which can be retyped on your school letterhead and returned to myself or my major professor at the addresses below. The school will be provided with an analysis and description of the results at the conclusion of the study. Included in the enclosures is a sample questionnaire, which teachers will be asked to complete. The link to the questionnaire will be sent to participants via WhatsApp application. If there are any questions, concerns, or objections please call Souleymane at (417) 773-6617 and/or e-mail souleymane.kassoum@go.stcloudstate.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration regarding participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Souleymane Kassoum Amy Christensen, Ed.D.

500 12 Street South
St. Cloud, MN 56301
Home- (417) 773-6617

Major Professor
Educational Administration & Leadership
St. Cloud State University
720 4th Avenue South
Education Building B 109-1
St. Cloud, MN 56301
Office: (320)- 308-3115
E-mail: amchristensen@stcloudstate.edu

Enclosures: (3)

Approval form for letterhead

- Teacher Questionnaire
- Participant Cover Letter

Appendix E: Cover Letter to the School's Owner (French Version)

Nom du projet de recherche : La perception des enseignants de l'optimisme académique dans un collège d'enseignement général privée à Niamey, Niger.
Etudiant-chercheur : Souleymane Kassoum
Nom d'Université : Saint Cloud State University
Filière : Administration et leadership en Education
Phone : 417-773-6617

Saint Cloud, le 10 Décembre 2022
A
Madame la Présidente de l'ONG Fraternité Notre Dame Niger.

Objet: Demande d'accès à votre école pour

un projet de recherche.

Chère Madame la Présidente,

Dans le cadre du projet de recherche pour mon mémoire de Master, je sollicite la participation des enseignants de votre école à une étude afin d'acquérir des informations sur la culture de l'optimisme académique. Il y'a très peu de recherche sur le sujet au Niger. Nous espérons que cette étude comblera cette lacune de recherche. Cette recherche a pour objectif de déterminer le degré auquel la culture de l'optimisme académique est pratiquée par les enseignants. Les résultats de cette étude contribueront à notre compréhension des pratiques d'enseignement efficace qui mènent à l'amélioration des résultats scolaires et de la réussite des élèves.

Je vous écris pour demander la permission à la direction de votre école de permettre aux enseignants de participer à cette étude en remplissant un questionnaire à 28 items. Auriez-vous l'amabilité d'accepter la participation des enseignants dans cette recherche ?

Il n'y a pas d'inconforts ou risques prévisibles liés à cette étude. **La participation à cette étude est volontaire**. Tout(e) participant(e) est libre de retirer son consentement et mettre fin à sa participation à tout temps. Toutes les données fournies demeureront confidentielles. Ce chercheur est le seul qui participera au traitement et à la compilation des données. Ni dates de naissances de

participants, ni leurs numéros de sécurité sociale, ni leurs noms ne seront requis. Le remplissage du questionnaire à 28 items prendra environ 15 à 20 minutes.

Dans l'espoir que la permission me sera accordée, j'ai joint un exemplaire de lettre d'approbation d'accès à votre école. Cette lettre peut être signée et renvoyée à moi ou à ma directrice de recherche aux adresses ci-dessous. Pour votre information, vous trouverez ci-joint un exemplaire de questionnaire que les enseignants vont remplir. Le lien pour accéder au questionnaire sera bientôt envoyé aux participants via l'application WhatsApp. Si vous avez des questions, inquiétudes, ou objections, n'hésitez pas à m'appeler sur ce numéro : (417)773-6617 ou lui envoyer un e-mail: souleymane.kassoum@go.stcloudstate.edu. ou à ma directrice de mémoire, Dr. Amy Christensen sur (320) 308-3115 ou e-mail: amchristensen@stcloudstate.edu.

Je vous remercie de votre temps et considération pour la participation à cette étude et je vous prie de croire en l'assurance de mes meilleurs sentiments.

Souleymane Kassoum
500 12 Street South
Saint Cloud, MN, 56301
Phone: (417)-773-6617

Amy Christensen, Ed. D
Directrice de recherche
Administration et Leadership en Education
St. Cloud State University
720 4th Avenue South
Education Building B 109-1
St. Cloud, MN 56301
Office: (320)- 308-3115

E-mail: amchristensen@stcloudstate.edu

Pieces jointes : (3)

- 1 copie de letter d'approbation
- 1 copie du questionnaire
- 1 copie de lettres adressée aux participants

Appendix F: Site Approval Letter (English Version)

Republic of Niger
Ministry of Secondary Education
DREN Niamey-DDEN Niamey III
MYRIAM DE NAZARETH MIDDLE SCHOOL
E-mail : myriamdenazarethcsp@gmail.com
BP : 12 661 NIAMEY NIGER

Date: 12/25/2022

To: St. Cloud State Institutional Review Board

From: Myriam de Nazareth middle school

Re: Permission to conduct study

This school organization has agreed to allow Souleymane Kassoum to collect data from selected teachers for his master's thesis on academic optimism. Please consider this a letter of approval.

Respectively,

Sister Marie Des Anges,
President of NGO-Fraternité Notre Dame Niger

Appendix F: Site Approval Letter (French Version)

FRATERNITE
Notre Dame

République du Niger
Ministère des Enseignements Secondaires
DREN Niamey-DDEN Niamey III
CSP MYRIAM DE NAZARETH
E-mail : myriamdenazarethcsp@gmail.com
BP : 12 661 NIAMEY NIGER

Sœur Marie Des Anges
La présidente de
l'ONG-Fraternité Notre Dame Niger

Niamey, le 25 Décembre 2021

Au
Comité d'éthique institutionnel de
Saint Cloud State University
720 4th Avenue South
St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

Object: Lettre d'approbation d'accès
au site de recherche.

Madame/Monsieur,

J'écris par la présente pour vous informer que l'administration de cette école a accepté de permettre à Souleymane Kassoum de collecter des données auprès des enseignants sélectionnés pour participer à l'étude pour son mémoire de master sur l'optimisme académique. Veuillez considérer cette note comme une lettre d'approbation.

Veuillez agréer, les membres du comité d'éthique institutionnel, l'expression de mes sentiments les plus distingués.

O.N.G FRATERNITÉ NOTRE DAME
Notre Dame
Le Président
BP 12661 NIAMEY - NIGER

Sœur Marie Des Anges, La Présidente

Appendix G: Participation Request Cover Letter (English Version)

Dear middle school teachers,

My name is Souleymane Kassoum, a master's student at Saint Cloud State University. In an effort to gather information on the culture of school academic optimism, I am seeking your participation for my thesis research which will center on academic optimism. There is very little research on this topic in Niger. This study will hopefully close the gap. The objective is to determine to what extent academic optimism is practiced by teachers. The results of this study will contribute to our understanding to effective teaching practice that leads to improving academic achievement and student success.

There are no foreseeable discomforts or risks involved with this study. Participants will be asked to complete a 28 items questionnaire in approximately 15 to 20 minutes**. Participation will be voluntary.** All participants are free to withdraw her/his consent and to discontinue participation in this study at any time. All data provided will be kept anonymous. Only this investigator will be involved in the tabulation of the data. No birthdates, social security numbers, or names will be required.

I would be most grateful if participants interested in this study could contact me on my phone number or email address below to express their interest. The link to the questionnaire will be sent to participants via WhatsApp application. If you have any questions, concerns, or objections please call me at +1 (417) 773-6617 and/or send me an e-mail: souleymane.kassoum@go.stcloudstate.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration regarding participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Souleymane Kassoum
500 12 Street South
St. Cloud, MN 56301
Home- (417) 773-6617

Amy Christensen, Ed.D.
Major Professor
Educational Administration & Leadership
St. Cloud State University
720 4th Avenue South
Education Building B 109-1
St. Cloud, MN 56301
Office: (320)- 308-3115
E-mail: amchristensen@stcloudstate.edu

Appendix G : Participation Request Letter (French Version)

Nom du projet de recherche: La perception des enseignants de l'optimisme académique dans un collège d'enseignement général privée à Niamey, Niger.
Etudiant-chercheur: Souleymane Kassoum
Nom d'Université: Saint Cloud State University
Filière: Administration et leadership en Education
Phone: 417-773-6617

Saint Cloud, le 15 Décembre 2021

Aux

Enseignants intervenants au collège

Objet: Demande de participation à une recherche.

Chers enseignants,

Je me présente Souleymane Kassoum, étudiant en Master à l'université de Saint Cloud State (Minnesota). Dans le cadre de la rédaction de mon mémoire de Master, je sollicite votre participation à une étude en vue d'acquérir des informations sur la culture de l'optimisme académique. Il y'a très peu de recherche sur le sujet au Niger. Nous espérons que cette étude comblera cette lacune de recherche. Cette recherche a pour objectif de déterminer le degré auquel la culture de l'optimisme académique est pratiquée par les enseignants. Les résultats de cette étude contribueront à notre compréhension des pratiques d'enseignement efficace qui mènent à l'amélioration des résultats scolaires et de la réussite des élèves.

Il n'y a pas d'inconforts ou risques prévisibles liés à cette étude. L'étude consiste à remplir un questionnaire à 28 items qui prendra environ 15 à 20 minutes. **La participation sera volontaire**. Tout(e) participant(e) est libre de retirer son consentement et mettre fin à sa participation à tout temps. Toutes les réponses sont anonymes. Ce chercheur est le seul qui participera au traitement et à la compilation des données. Ni dates de naissances de participants, ni leurs numéros de sécurité sociale, ni leurs noms ne seront requis.

Je vous serais reconnaissant de me contacter sur mon numéro de téléphone ou adresse courriel ci-dessous pour exprimer votre intérêt à participer à cette étude**.** Le lien pour accéder au

questionnaire vous sera bientôt envoyé via l'application WhatsApp. Si vous avez des questions, inquiétudes, ou objections, n'hésitez pas à m'appeler sur ce numéro WhatsApp : +1 (417)773-6617 ou m'envoyer un e-mail: souleymane.kassoum@go.stcloudstate.edu.

Je vous remercie de votre temps et considération à participant à cette étude. Veuillez agréer, Mesdames et Messieurs, l'assurance de mes sentiments respectueux.

Souleymane Kassoum
500 12 Street South
Saint Cloud, MN, 56301
Phone: (417)-776-6617

Amy Christensen, Ed. D
Directrice de recherche
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Appendix H: Consent Form (English)

Teachers' Perceptions of Academic Optimism
Implied Consent

You are invited to participate in a research study on teachers' perceptions of academic optimism. You are selected as a participant because you are a part of the teaching staff at Myriam de Nazareth middle school. This research project is being conducted by Souleymane Kassoum for a graduate thesis. This study will fulfill requirements for a Master's degree in Educational Administration and Leadership at St. Cloud State University.

Background Information and Purpose
The purpose of this study is to examine teachers' perceptions of school academic optimism as it was demonstrated to reflect a type of school culture specific to high performing schools.

Procedures:
If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete a 28-item survey regarding your perceptions of the practices of the culture of academic optimism. The survey will take about 15 to 20 minutes. **The link to the survey is found at the bottom of this page**. Results from the survey will be anonymous and no persons will be able to identify a specific individual's data results. All results will be tallied as a summary of data by item only.

Risks:
There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

Confidentiality:
The data will be collected via WhatsApp application and Qualtrics. Data will be presented using a summary of results. To prevent identification of research subjects, data summaries will be presented in aggregate format. All personal contact information will be destroyed upon conclusion of the study.

Research Results:
At your request, I will provide a summary of the research results when the study is completed in May 2022. Results of the study will be available in the St. Cloud State University Repository.

Contact Information:
If you have questions concerning the study, please feel free to contact me at (417) 773-6617 and/or e-mail: souleymane.kassoum@go.stcloudstate.edu. or my advisor, Dr. Amy Christensen at (320) 308-3115 and/or e-mail: amchristensen@stcloudstate.edu

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal:
Participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect current or future relations with the researcher or St. Cloud State University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Acceptance to Participate:
Your completion of the survey indicates your consent to participation in the study and that you are at least 18 years old.

Please see the link to the survey below:
https://stcloudstate.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3q4Wy32K3mYiDCm

Appendix H: Consent Form (French)

La Perception des Enseignants de l'Optimisme Académique
Consentement Implicite

Vous êtes invités à participer à une étude sur la perception des enseignants de la culture de l'optimisme académique. Vous êtes sélectionnés pour participer à ce projet de recherche parce que vous enseignez au collège du CSP/Myriam de Nazareth qui est une performante. Cette étude est menée par Souleymane Kassoum pour son mémoire de Master en Administration et Leadership en Education à Saint Cloud State University (Minnesota).

But général du projet de recherche :
Le but de cette étude est d'examiner la perception des enseignants de la culture de l'optimisme académique comme cette culture a été démontrée de refléter un type de culture spécifique aux écoles performantes.

Procédures :
Si vous décidez de participer à ce projet, vous êtes sollicités à remplir un questionnaire à 28 items à propos de votre perception de la culture de l'optimisme académique. Ce remplissage du questionnaire prendra environ 15 à 20 minutes. **Le lien pour accéder au questionnaire se trouve en bas de cette page**. Toutes les réponses au questionnaire seront anonymes. Cela veut dire que personne ne pourra identifier les résultats des données d'un participant en particulier.

Risques :
Il n'y a pas de risques prévisibles liés à la participation à cette étude.

Confidentialité :
Les données vont être collectées via l'application WhatsApp et un logiciel de sondage appelé Qualtrics. Les données seront présentées à partir de la sommation de réponses de tous les participants. Cela constitue le résumé des données qui expliqueraient la culture de l'optimisme académique.

Résultats du projet de recherche :
A votre demande, je fournirai un résumé des résultats de la recherche à la conclusion de l'étude en mai 2022. Les résultats de l'étude seront aussi disponibles dans le Repositoire de Saint Cloud State University.

Contacts :
Si vous avez des questions sur quoi que ce soit à propos de cette étude, n'hésitez pas de me contacter sur ce numéro : (417)773-6617 ou e-mail : souleymane.kassoum@go.stcloudstate.edu ou ma directrice de mémoire, Dr. Amy Christensen sur le (320)308-3115 ou via e-mail: amchristensen@stcloudstate.edu.

Participation volontaire/Retrait de la recherche :
La participation est volontaire. Votre décision de participer ou non n'affectera pas les relations actuelles ou futures avec le chercheur ou Saint Cloud State University. Si vous décider de participer, vous êtes libre de vous retirer a tout temps sans pénalité.

Acceptation de participer :
Votre remplissage du questionnaire indique votre consentement à participer à cette étude et que vous avez au moins 18 ans.

Veuillez cliquer sur ce lien ci-dessous :

https://stcloudstate.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3q4Wy32K3mYiDCm

Appendix I: Frequency Counts of Overall Items

Subconstructs and items						Mean	SD
Collective Teacher Efficacy							
Q1. Teachers in this school are able to get through to the most difficult students.							
Strongly Disagree *f*= 1 (7.69%)	Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Somewhat Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Somewhat Agree *f*= 1(7.69%)	Agree *f*= 2 (15.38%)	Strongly Agree *f*= 9 (69.23%)	5.31	1.38
Q2. Teachers here are confident they will be able to motivate their students.							
Strongly Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Somewhat Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Somewhat Agree *f*= 1(7.69%)	Agree *f*= 2 (15.38%)	Strongly Agree *f*= 10(76.92%)	5.70	0.61
***Q3. If a child doesn't want to learn teachers here give up.**							
Strongly Disagree *f*= 12 (92.31%)	Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Somewhat Disagree *f*= 1(7.69%)	Somewhat Agree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Agree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Strongly Agree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	**5.90**	**0.55**
***Q4. Teachers here don't have the skills needed to produce meaningful results.**							
Strongly Disagree *f*= 10 (76.92%)	Disagree *f*= 3 (23.08%)	Somewhat Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Somewhat Agree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Agree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Strongly Agree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	**5.80**	**0.44**
Q5. Teachers in this school believe that every child can learn.							
Strongly Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Somewhat Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Somewhat Agree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Agree *f*= 3 (23.08%)	Strongly Agree *f*= 10(76.92%)	5.80	0.42
Q6. These students come to school ready to learn.							
Strongly Disagree *f*= 1(7.69%)	Disagree *f*= 1(7.69%)	Somewhat Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Somewhat Agree *f*= 4 (30.77%)	Agree *f*= 2 (15.38%)	Strongly Agree *f*= 5 (38.46%)	4.54	1.55
Q7. Home life provides so many advantages that students are bound to learn.							
Strongly Disagree *f*= 3 (23.08%)	Disagree *f*= 1(7.69%)	Somewhat Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Somewhat Agree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Agree *f*= 5 (38.46%)	Strongly Agree *f*= 4 (30.77%)	4.15	1.99

Table (cont'd)						**Mean**	**SD**
***Q8. Students here just aren't motivated to learn.**							
Strongly Disagree *f*= 8 (61.54%)	Disagree *f*= 2 (15.38%)	Somewhat Disagree *f*= 1(7.69%)	Somewhat Agree *f*= 1(7.69%)	Agree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Strongly Agree *f*= 1(7.69%)	**5.10**	**1.55**
***Q9. Teachers in this school do not have the skills to deal with student disciplinary problems.**							
Strongly Disagree *f*= 10 (76.92%)	Disagree *f*= 2 (15.38%)	Somewhat Disagree *f*= 1(7.69%)	Somewhat Agree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Agree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Strongly Agree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	**5.70**	**0.63**
***Q10. Learning is more difficult at this school because students are worried about their safety.**							
Strongly Disagree *f*= 10 (76.92%)	Disagree *f*= 3 (23.08%)	Somewhat Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Somewhat Agree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Agree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Strongly Agree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	**5.80**	**0.44**
Faculty Trust							
Q11. Teachers in this school trust their students.							
Strongly Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Somewhat Disagree *f*= 1(7.69%)	Somewhat Agree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Agree *f*= 5 (38.46%)	Strongly Agree *f*= 7 (53.85%)	5.40	0.84
Q12. Teachers in this school trust the parents.							
Strongly Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Somewhat Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Somewhat Agree *f*= 5 (38.46%)	Agree *f*= 3 (23.08%)	Strongly Agree *f*= 5 (38.46%)	5.00	0.88
Q13. Students in this school care about each other.							
Strongly Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Somewhat Disagree *f*= 2 (15.38%)	Somewhat Agree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Agree *f*= 4 (30.77%)	Strongly Agree *f*= 7 (53.85%)	5.23	1.05
Q14. Parents in this school are reliable in their commitments.							
Strongly Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Somewhat Disagree *f*= 1(7.69%)	Somewhat Agree *f*= 3 (23.08%)	Agree *f*= 5 (38.46%)	Strongly Agree *f*= 4 (30.77%)	4.92	0.92
Q15. Students in this school can be counted upon to do their work.							
Strongly Disagree *f*= 1(7.69%)	Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Somewhat Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Somewhat Agree *f*= 2 (15.38%)	Agree *f*= 5 (38.46%)	Strongly Agree *f*= 5 (38.46%)	4.92	1.33

Table (cont'd)						**Mean**	**SD**
Q16. Teachers can count upon parental support.							
Strongly Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Somewhat Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Somewhat Agree *f*= 4 (30.77%)	Agree *f*= 2 (15.38%)	Strongly Agree *f*= 7 (53.85%)	5.23	0.89
Q17. Teachers here believe that students are competent learners.							
Strongly Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Disagree *f*= 1 (7.69%)	Somewhat Disagree *f*= 0 (0.00%)	Somewhat Agree *f*= 1 (7.69%)	Agree *f*= 4 (30.77%)	Strongly Agree *f*= 7 (53.85%)	5.23	1.12
Q18. Teachers think that most of the parents do a good job.							
Strongly Disagree *f*= 1 (7.69%)	Disagree *f*= 2 (15.38%)	Somewhat Disagree *f*= 1(7.69%)	Somewhat Agree *f*= 2 (15.38%)	Agree *f*= 1 (7.69%)	Strongly Agree *f*= 6 (46.15%)	4.40	1.78
Q19. Teachers can believe what parents tell them.							
Strongly Disagree *f*= 2 (15.38%)	Disagree *f*= 1 (7.69%)	Somewhat Disagree *f*= 2 (15.38%)	Somewhat Agree *f*= 1 (7.69%)	Agree *f*= 4 (30.77%)	Strongly Agree *f*= 3 (23.08%)	4.00	1.75
***Q20. Students here are secretive.**							
Strongly Disagree *f*= 3 (23.08%)	Disagree *f*= 2 (15.38%)	Somewhat Disagree *f*= 2 (15.38%)	Somewhat Agree *f*= 2 (15.38%)	Agree *f*= 1 (7.69%)	Strongly Agree *f*= 3 (23.08%)	**3.62**	**1.86**
Academic Emphasis							
Q21. The school sets high standards for performance.							
Rarely *f*= 0 (0.00%)		Sometimes *f*= 3 (23.08%)		Often *f*= 1 (7.69%)	Very Often *f*= 9 (69.23%)	3.50	0.88
Q22. Students respect others who get good grades.							
Rarely *f*= 0 (0.00%)		Sometimes *f*= 2 (15. 38%)		Often *f*= 2 (15. 38%)	Very Often *f*= 9 (69.23%)	3.54	0.78
Q23. Students seek extra work so they can get good grades.							
Rarely *f*= 1 (7.69%)		Sometimes *f*= 4 (30.77%)		Often *f*= 5 (38.46%)	Very Often *f*= 3 (23.08%)	2.80	0.93

Table (cont'd)				**Mean**	**SD**
Q24. Academic achievement is recognized and acknowledged by the school.					
Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	3.70	0.63
f= 0 (0.00%)	*f*= 1 (7.69%)	*f*= 2 (15.38%)	*f*= 10 (77.00%)		
Q25. Students try hard to improve on previous work.					
Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	3.10	0.86
f= 0 (0.00%)	*f*= 4 (30.77%)	*f*= 4 (30.77%)	*f*= 5 (38.46%)		
Q26. The learning environment is orderly and serious.					
Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	3.80	0.44
f= 0 (0.00%)	*f*= 0 (0.00%)	*f*= 3 (23.08%)	*f*= 10 (76.92%)		
Q27. The students in this school can achieve the goals that have been set for them.					
Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	3.23	0.93
f= 1 (7.69%)	*f*= 1 (7.69%)	*f*= 5 (38.46%)	*f*= 6 (46.15%)		
Q28. Teachers in this school believe that their students have the ability to achieve academically.					
Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	3.62	0.51
f= 0 (0.00%)	*f*= 0 (0.00%)	*f*= 5 (38.46%)	*f*= 8 (61.54%)		

**Bold-faced items were reversed*

Note: Collective Teacher Efficacy and Faculty Trust (Q1 through Q20) are scaled as follows:

1= Strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=somewhat disagree, 4=somewhat agree, 5=agree, 6=strongly agree

Academic Emphasis (Q21 through Q28) are scaled as follows:

1=Rarely, 2= Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very Often