

SHARED LEADERSHIP AND ACADEMIC OPTIMISM AMONG UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

¹Zhang Yalin

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Abstract

As traditional hierarchies in educational settings are increasingly being supplanted by inclusive frameworks, the concept of shared leadership has come to the forefront as a model capable of cultivating a dynamic and positive academic environment. This study explored the impact of shared leadership practices on academic optimism among educators and administrators, specifically examining the relationship between collaborative decision-making, distributed responsibilities, and an optimistic outlook in academia.

Employing correlation research methods, this study surveyed 276 faculty members from a university in China. Results showed strong agreement across the domains of adaptability and engagement, shared vision and rationality, facilitating context and environment, and empowerment and decentralization, with the highest levels of agreement in the empowerment and decentralization domain. Similarly, the domains of academic optimism, including positive outlook, educational drive, hope, and sense of coherence, all scored highly, indicating a prevalent optimistic sentiment.

The Pearson r Coefficient of 0.84 with a p-value of 0.000 signifies a strong, positive, and significant relationship between shared leadership and academic optimism. These findings have informed the development of the "EMMA: Enabling Mentorship and Mutual Advancement Leadership Program," designed to further these positive trends within academic institutions.

1. Introduction

The dynamics of leadership have undergone profound transformation in recent decades. Traditional hierarchies are giving way to more inclusive frameworks, epitomized by the concept of shared leadership. This model promotes decentralization, with leadership roles and decisions distributed among members. Notably, while the implications of this model have been studied extensively in the corporate world, its effects within the realm of education, particularly among university faculty, remain a burgeoning area of research.

¹ Adamson University

China's educational milieu, with its deep roots in Confucian traditions, offers a fascinating backdrop against which to study these dynamics. The historically centralized nature of the Chinese educational system is evolving, and the Hunan province, a region that intriguingly balances traditional and modern educational philosophies, stands as a paradigmatic focal point.

Within this context, this research delved into the potential relationship between shared leadership and academic optimism—a collective sentiment comprising a commitment to academic excellence, trust in students, and a firm belief in the teaching-learning process's efficacy.

In environments that prioritize shared leadership, faculties are likely to be empowered with a greater sense of autonomy and ownership over their roles. This empowerment, coupled with the cultivation of a shared belief in group capabilities, can pave the way for enhanced academic emphasis, trust-building, and an enriched teaching-learning experience. Hunan's universities, while deeply rooted in traditional Chinese educational values, are increasingly resonating with global educational trends, offering a unique vantage point from which to discern shared leadership's potential benefits and challenges.

1.1. Background of the study

The contemporary educational landscape emphasizes the significance of leadership roles, notably among school heads and teachers, in fostering effective teaching and learning.

Aquino, Afalla, and Fabelico (2021) endeavored to understand the correlation between the leadership practices of public-school heads and teacher performance. The study's results underline the fundamental importance of varied leadership practices among school heads, asserting their significant impact on teacher reactions.

Wasyhun (2019) examined the challenges surrounding shared leadership practices in public pre-preparatory secondary schools. The research highlights challenges such as principals' autonomy, communication skills, experience, commitment, and availability of educational resources. The recommendation emphasizes the necessity for leadership capacity building and the shift from a single leadership style to shared leadership.

Hata, Nor, and Hamid (2020) investigated the influence of distributed leadership on teachers' competencies. This leadership style, which encompasses inspiration, vision sharing, and empowerment, showed a positive correlation with teacher competency.

Sivalingam, Kadir, and Asimiran (2017) explored the increasing trend of collective leadership among Malaysian secondary school teachers. The study revealed that teachers with advanced education and those teaching at lower secondary levels demonstrated higher efficacy in collective leadership. No significant difference was observed between gender and subjects concerning collective leadership.

Azcoitia, Carlson, and Purinton (2018) emphasized the importance of community school leaders in developing strong and meaningful partnerships with the broader community. Effective leadership fosters holistic growth within schools and the larger community. It accentuates the crucial roles of community leaders in bridging various stakeholders, from educators to parents and community members.

The interplay between teacher empowerment and principal effectiveness was explored by Mahmood and Hussain (2017). Their study underscores that teacher empowerment can significantly augment the effectiveness of principals, making it crucial for progressive school environments.

Rutten, Doyle, Wolkenhauer, and Schussler (2022) introduced the concept of emergent teacher leadership, focusing primarily on early-career teachers and teacher candidates. The study indicates that while these budding educators show potential for leadership, they often grapple with feelings of inadequacy, even as they are gradually integrated into leadership roles. The results advocate for teacher educators to facilitate leadership practices more effectively.

Rumeli et al. (2022) highlighted the vital role of distributive leadership in maintaining the efficiency of primary school teachers during the disruptive era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Their research set in Malaysia revealed the pivotal role of school leaders in transitioning teachers and students to online home teaching and learning environments. Through a qualitative approach, the study yielded themes such as the sharing of school missions, positive changes to teachers and students, and cooperation among education leaders and teachers. This research underscores the importance of distributive leadership in enhancing teacher knowledge and skills.

Hernández-Ramos and Martínez-Abad (2023) stressed the significance of professional development among secondary teachers. Their analysis of data from the PISA 2018 tests in Spain revealed a diverse commitment to professional growth among teachers. They found that intensive professional teacher development is positively correlated with factors like a better school climate, innovation, and leadership distribution. The conclusions highlight that ongoing teacher training directly affects educational quality.

Vecaldo's (2019) research focused on the beliefs of Filipino pre-service teachers regarding instructional leadership. The participants viewed instructional leadership as shared, learning-focused, conversation-driven, service-oriented, and a pursuit of equity. Such insights could catalyze instructional interventions, thereby enhancing the educational framework in the Philippines and the broader ASEAN region.

In summary, the related literature highlights various facets of leadership in educational institutions and how they impact both teacher performance and overall institutional functionality—topics that were explored in greater depth in this investigation.

1.2. Statement of the problem

This study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the assessment of the respondents on the level of shared leadership in their university in terms of
 - 1.1. Adaptability and Engagement
 - 1.2. Shared Vision and Rationality
 - 1.3. Facilitating the Context and Environment
 - 1.4. Empowerment and Decentralization
2. Is there a significant difference in the assessment of the respondents on the level of shared leadership in their university compared with their demographic profile?
3. What is the assessment of the respondents on the level of academic optimism in their university in terms of
 - 3.1. Positive Outlook
 - 3.2. Educational Drive
 - 3.3. Hope
 - 3.4. Sense of Coherence
4. Is there a significant difference in the assessment of the respondents on the level of academic optimism in their university compared with their demographic profile?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the assessed level of shared leadership and academic optimism?

1.3. Significance of the study

The significance of this study transcends various strata of the educational ecosystem.

For *educational leaders and administrators*, these insights can serve as a guidepost, enabling them to hone their leadership strategies in ways that not only promote shared responsibility but also foster an environment brimming with academic optimism.

Teachers stand benefitting immensely as the practice of shared leadership can bolster their sense of agency, potentially augmenting job satisfaction, professional development, and teaching efficacy.

Parents and the school community can experience the transformative power of shared leadership. Engaging with schools that champion these values can cultivate deeper ties of trust, collaboration, and mutual respect.

For *future researchers*, this paves the way for further inquiry, enhancing the existing body of knowledge on shared leadership and its myriad implications.

Policymakers equipped with data-driven evidence are better positioned to sculpt policies that prioritize effective leadership practices, ultimately driving optimal school performance and student outcomes.

1.4. Scope and delimitation

This study sought to decipher the relationship between shared leadership and academic optimism within educational settings. With a sample size of 276 respondents, this study provided a statistically robust understanding of the topic.

However, certain delimitations need to be underscored. The investigation was strictly confined to the realm of educational institutions and exclusively focused on the shared leadership model, deliberately sidelining other potential leadership paradigms. While demographic details were gathered to enhance the study's context and depth, they do not constitute the central axis of the research. Given that the findings were heavily influenced by the cultural and geographical context of the 276 respondents, extrapolating the results to wider settings necessitates prudence and discernment.

1.5. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework that underpins this study draws upon concepts from shared leadership and organizational psychology, with a specific focus on academic optimism as the dependent variable. Shared leadership, as established through the works of Max Freund (2017) and Richard Bolden et al. (2015), serves as the overarching framework within which the exploration of academic optimism is situated.

Academic optimism, in this context, represents a psychological construct that captures a positive outlook, confidence, and belief in the potential for success and improvement within educational settings. It encompasses a shared collective optimism among educators, administrators, and stakeholders that their efforts can lead to positive outcomes and enhanced learning experiences for students.

The connection between shared leadership and academic optimism lies in their synergistic relationship. Shared leadership practices create an atmosphere of collaboration and open communication, where individuals collectively contribute to decision making and problem solving. This participatory approach cultivates a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for the institution's success. As teachers, administrators, and stakeholders engage in shared leadership, they contribute to the development of academic optimism. The mutual empowerment and collaborative nature of shared leadership foster a positive environment where individuals collectively believe in their ability to overcome challenges and achieve educational goals.

This study explored the extent to which shared leadership practices influence academic optimism within educational institutions. By examining the interplay between these two constructs, the research aimed to uncover how the collaborative and inclusive nature of shared leadership contributes to nurturing a sense of optimism among educators and stakeholders. In addition, the study intends to identify the specific dimensions of shared leadership that have the most significant impact on shaping academic optimism. Through this exploration, the

research endeavors to provide insights into the mechanisms through which shared leadership practices can enhance educators' outlook on their roles and contribute to a more positive overall educational environment.

2. Methodology

The methodology section delineates the approach used in this study and identifies the research locality, sample and sampling method, and data gathering and analysis procedures.

2.1. Research locale

The chosen locale for this study was the Hunan University of Humanities and Science, a prestigious academic institution with a rich history that dates back to 1978. Initially founded as a school, the institution was elevated to an undergraduate college in 2004. Hunan University currently stands out with its 14 secondary colleges, providing education in 53 full-time undergraduate majors and a master's program that spans a diverse range of disciplines, including economics, law, education, literature, history, science, engineering, agriculture, management, and art.

2.2. Sample and sampling technique

The participant pool consisted of 966 faculty members from the Hunan University of Humanities and Science. To determine the sample size, a RaoSoft online calculator was employed. Utilizing the following parameters: population size of 966, margin of error set at 5%, confidence level of 95%, and distribution rate of 50%, the recommended sample size was calculated to be 276 respondents. This size ensured that the study's findings were both statistically significant and reflective of the broader faculty population, given the parameters chosen.

The selection of these 276 respondents was performed using the proportionate stratified sampling technique. This technique divides the entire population into smaller, non-overlapping subgroups or strata based on specific characteristics.

2.3. Data gathering procedure

The data-gathering procedure involved a systematic and comprehensive approach to ensure the collection of accurate and reliable information from the participants. The steps were as follows:

1. Preparation Phase:

The researcher secured the necessary permissions and approvals from the relevant authorities, such as the school administration and ethics committee, to conduct the study within the chosen research locale.

The researcher collaborated with school administrators and coordinators to establish a suitable schedule for data collection, ensuring minimal disruption to academic activities.

2. Questionnaire Development and Validation:

Expert review and validation were sought to ensure the content validity of the questionnaires. Feedback from educational experts and faculty members helped refine the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the items.

3. Questionnaire Administration:

The questionnaires were administered to the identified sample of teachers across the various colleges using proportionate stratified sampling. Participants were briefed about the purpose of the study, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to decline participation without any repercussions.

4. Data Collection:

Participants were given ample time to complete the questionnaires. Clear instructions were provided to ensure accurate and consistent responses. Completed questionnaires were collected in sealed envelopes to maintain the confidentiality of the responses.

5. Data Validation and Quality Assurance:

Data collected were reviewed for completeness and accuracy. Any missing or inconsistent responses were flagged for follow-up with the respective participants. Data were encoded to facilitate analysis and maintain participant anonymity.

6. Data Management:

A secure digital database was set up to store the collected data. The database was password protected and accessible only to authorized personnel.

2.4. Statistical analysis

The collected data were subjected to a comprehensive analysis approach, ensuring a thorough exploration of the research objectives. The mean and standard deviation calculations provided a clear picture of the shared leadership and academic optimism scores obtained from the researcher-made Likert-scale questionnaires. Furthermore, the study employed independent t-tests and ANOVA to discern potential variations in shared leadership and academic optimism across demographic variables like age, sex, teaching experience, and educational attainment. In addition, the relationship between shared leadership and academic optimism was quantified using the Pearson correlation coefficient (r).

To facilitate the interpretation of the mean scores for shared leadership and academic optimism, the following scale was used:

Score Range	Verbal Descriptor	Interpretation
3.51 – 4.00	Strongly Agree	Highly Manifested
2.51 – 3.50	Agree	Moderately Manifested
1.51 – 2.50	Disagree	Slightly Manifested
1.00 – 1.50	Strongly disagree	Poorly Manifested

3. Results and analysis

This section provides a detailed analysis of the information gathered from those who participated in the research. This section details the findings and their significance in relation to the research questions that were developed.

Table 1.

Summary of the Level of Shared Leadership

Domains	Mean	SD	Verbal Description and Interpretation	Rank
Adaptability and Engagement	3.45	0.31	Agree/Manifested	4
Shared Vision and Rationality	3.46	0.29	Agree/Manifested	3
Facilitating the Context and Environment	3.50	0.28	Agree/Manifested	2
Empowerment and Decentralization	3.51	0.27	Strongly Agree/Highly Manifested	1
Shared Leadership	3.48	0.25	Agree/Manifested	-

Table 1 examines the overall perception of shared leadership across different domains within an educational institution. Each domain is scrutinized through its mean score and standard deviation (SD) and ranked based on the level of agreement or manifestation perceived by the respondents. A verbal description is also offered to interpret these scores.

The highest agreement was observed in the domain of Empowerment and Decentralization, with a mean score of 3.51 and the smallest SD of 0.27, ranked first. It is described as "Strongly Agree/Highly Manifested," indicating that respondents feel that shared leadership greatly empowers them and is decentralized in nature.

Overall, the general concept of Shared Leadership across all domains has a mean score of 3.48 and an SD of 0.25. Although no specific rank is assigned to this composite score, the "Agree/Manifested" description signifies a positive and noticeable presence of shared leadership as perceived by the faculty members.

The assessment results indicate that "Empowerment and Decentralization" is the most strongly agreed upon domain, with a mean of 3.51. This is in line with Aquino et al. (2021), who found that leadership practices significantly impact teacher reactions, and Hata et al. (2020), who noted a positive correlation between distributed leadership and teachers' competency. These studies suggest that when teachers feel empowered and are part of the decision-making process, their performance and sense of ownership improve.

The domain "Facilitating Context and Environment," with a mean of 3.50, echoes the findings of Wasyhun (2019), who underscored the importance of leadership capacity building and the shift to shared leadership in addressing challenges such as autonomy and communication. Furthermore, Freund (2017) underlined the importance of a supportive environment for shared leadership is underlined by Freund (2017), who emphasized the need for an environment characterized by trust and a shared mission.

The domain "Shared Vision and Rationality," with a mean of 3.46, is supported by the insights of Halpern et al. (2020) and Yue and Feng (2020), who highlighted the importance of vision-driven and collaborative leadership. This is further corroborated by the findings of Sivalingam et al. (2017 & 2018), who found that teachers with advanced education and those teaching at lower secondary levels demonstrated higher efficacy in collective leadership.

"Adaptability and Engagement," with a mean of 3.45, resonates with the studies of Rutten et al. (2022) and Jong et al. (2020), which emphasized the potential for leadership among early-career teachers and the need for collaboration in educational innovation. The results suggest that shared leadership enhances adaptability and engagement, which aligns with the focus of these studies on inclusive and democratic leadership models.

Finally, the overall "Shared Leadership" mean of 3.48 reflects the collective findings from the literature, particularly the work of Azcoitia et al. (2018) and Mahmood and Hussain (2017), which underscore the importance of partnerships and teacher empowerment in leadership. Research by Rumeli et al. (2022) during the COVID-19 pandemic also emphasizes the role of distributive leadership in maintaining teacher efficacy during challenging times.

Table 2.

Level of Academic Optimism

Domains	Mean	SD	Verbal Description and Interpretation	Rank
Positive Outlook	3.50	0.29	Agree/Manifested	4
Educational Drive	3.50	0.28	Agree/Manifested	3
Hope	3.50	0.28	Agree/Manifested	2
Sense of Coherence	3.53	0.27	Strongly Agree/Highly Manifested	1

Academic Optimism	3.51	0.25	Strongly Agree/Highly Manifested	-
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Table 2 provides a summary of the levels of academic optimism within an educational institution, broken down into four distinct domains: Positive Outlook, Educational Drive, Hope, and Sense of Coherence. Each domain is evaluated on the basis of the mean scores, standard deviations (SD), and a ranking that reflects the level of agreement among faculty members. Additionally, a verbal description is provided to interpret these statistics.

The domain of "Positive Outlook," which assesses the general positivity regarding the future and potential of the school, has a mean score of 3.50 and an SD of 0.29, ranked fourth and described as "Agree/Manifested." This suggests that faculty members generally feel positive about the school's trajectory.

"Educational Drive" measures the motivation and inspiration faculty members gain from a collaborative environment to improve teaching methods and engage in professional development. It also has a mean score of 3.50 but with a slightly lower SD of 0.28, ranking third. The rank and description indicate a slightly stronger consensus on this domain compared with "Positive Outlook," but still within a general agreement.

"Hope" reflects the optimism of staff members in overcoming challenges and achieving school goals through collective action. It shares the same mean score of 3.50 with an SD of 0.28, but it is ranked second. This indicates a high level of concurrence regarding the presence of hope within the academic environment.

The "Sense of Coherence" domain received the highest mean score of 3.53 and the lowest SD of 0.27, ranked first and verbally interpreted as "Strongly Agree/Highly Manifested." This rank signifies the strongest agreement among faculty members that their collective approach provides clarity and understanding, fostering a clear sense of purpose and aligning school goals.

The overall concept of "Academic Optimism," which encompasses all these domains, has a mean score of 3.51 and an SD of 0.25. Although not given a specific rank, it is described as "Strongly Agree/Highly Manifested," illustrating a strong, collective sentiment of optimism within the academic setting. This overarching sentiment points to a robust belief in the power of shared efforts and a coherent strategy for fostering an optimistic and forward-looking academic environment.

Interpreting the results from Table 2 considering the extensive literature review presents a holistic understanding of academic optimism within the educational context.

The results, which reflect a strong level of agreement across various domains of academic optimism, align with those of Scott et al. (2023), who emphasize the role of academic optimism and institutional support in promoting continuous professional development (CPD) in Chinese higher education. The high rank for "Sense of Coherence" resonates with their findings, illustrating that a clear institutional direction and support system can significantly enhance academic optimism and drive CPD.

Jeong et al. (2019) and Azila-Gbettor et al. (2022) discuss the relationship between academic optimism and intellectual engagement, with the latter suggesting that optimism mediates this relationship. The high levels of "Educational Drive" and "Hope" within the assessed institution are consistent with this notion, indicating that optimism fosters a sense of engagement and motivation among faculty members.

The top-ranked "Sense of Coherence" in Table 2, which is emphasized as essential by Vizoso Gómez et al. (2019), suggests that a clear understanding of roles and a unified approach are strongly present in the institution, which may contribute to positive academic outcomes.

Barrett's (2019) research on the importance of cultural identity and self-esteem in fostering academic optimism also provides context for the "Positive Outlook" domain. While Barrett focuses on culturally based education

programs, the presence of a positive outlook in the table suggests that a supportive and inclusive school culture may play a similar role in enhancing optimism.

Ge et al. (2023) link individual hope with academic performance, a finding that could explain why "Hope" is ranked highly in Table 2. The notion that internal hope correlates with academic success is mirrored in the belief of the faculty members surveyed that their collective efforts and optimism directly contribute to the school's success.

Saadat et al. (2019) discussed the positive relationship between psychological capital, which includes hope and optimism, and academic commitment. The results underscore this relationship, with high levels of optimism possibly contributing to a strong commitment to the institution's vision and goals.

Shawahneh and Al Khateeb (2020) found that higher levels of optimism are associated with greater achievement motivation, which may be reflected in the "Educational Drive" domain's strong ranking.

Hyun Ju and Young-Mi Lee (2020) highlight optimism as a predictor of major satisfaction among nursing students, which is echoed in the overall high level of "Academic Optimism" in Table 2, suggesting that optimism is a crucial trait for academic contentment and performance. Lastly, the "Sense of Coherence" ranking is supported by Shankland et al. (2019), who asserted the importance of coherence in combating academic burnout, a significant concern in academic settings. The high ranking of this domain suggests that faculty members at the institution may be better equipped to handle stress and burnout, thus contributing to an optimistic academic environment.

In summary, the assessment results indicate a strong sense of academic optimism, characterized by a positive outlook, educational drive, hope, and particularly, a sense of coherence, which may collectively support continuous professional development, increase intellectual engagement, and promote resilience against academic burnout. These findings corroborate the literature, highlighting the multifaceted impact of academic optimism on faculty well-being, motivation, and the broader educational landscape.

Table 15.

Relationship between Shared Leadership and Academic Optimism

Variables		Adaptability and Engagement	Shared Vision and Rationality	Facilitating the Context and Environment	Empowerment and Decentralization	Shared Leadership
Positive Outlook	Pearson <i>r</i>	0.60	0.66	0.73	0.75	0.79
	p-value	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Educational Drive	Pearson <i>r</i>	0.63	0.65	0.70	0.74	0.78
	p-value	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Hope	Pearson <i>r</i>	0.55	0.58	0.67	0.66	0.71
	p-value	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sense of Coherence	Pearson <i>r</i>	0.57	0.58	0.67	0.64	0.71
	p-value	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Academic Optimism	Pearson <i>r</i>	0.66	0.70	0.78	0.79	0.84
	p-value	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

**Level of Significance = 0.05*

Table 3 presents a detailed analysis of the relationship between various dimensions of shared leadership and academic optimism. Each row of the table is dedicated to a specific aspect of academic optimism—Positive Outlook, Educational Drive, Hope, Sense of Coherence, and overall Academic Optimism—correlating these with

five dimensions of shared leadership: Adaptability and Engagement, Shared Vision and Rationality, Facilitating Context and Environment, Empowerment and Decentralization, and overall Shared Leadership.

Table 3 uses Pearson correlation coefficients to quantify the strength of the relationship between each pair of variables, accompanied by p-values to test the statistical significance of these correlations. Each correlation coefficient is accompanied by a p-value of 0.00, indicating that the relationships are statistically significant at conventional levels. This suggests strong evidence against the null hypothesis of no association, affirming that as shared leadership qualities in various dimensions increase, aspects of academic optimism also tend to increase. For example, the correlation coefficient between Shared Leadership and Academic Optimism is notably high at 0.84, illustrating a strong, positive linear relationship. Similarly, correlations for other pairs like Empowerment and Decentralization with Academic Optimism at 0.79 and Facilitating Context and Environment with Academic Optimism at 0.78, highlight substantial positive relationships.

Table 3 effectively demonstrates that higher levels of shared leadership are associated with increased levels of academic optimism. This finding underscores the importance of shared leadership practices in fostering an optimistic academic environment, suggesting that efforts to enhance shared leadership within educational institutions may directly contribute to higher academic optimism, thereby potentially improving overall educational outcomes.

Max Freund's theory on shared leadership emphasizes the collective leadership model within organizations. This model suggests that leadership is a dynamic, interactive, and distributed process among individuals in a group rather than a single leader's role or responsibility. According to Freund, shared leadership can lead to greater empowerment, increased group collaboration, and better decision-making as the diversity of knowledge and expertise is fully used.

The findings presented in Table 3, which indicate a strong, positive correlation between shared leadership and academic optimism, are consistent with Freund's shared leadership theory. The Pearson r coefficient of 0.84, coupled with a p-value of 0.000, strongly suggests that shared leadership practices within an educational institution have a significant impact on academic optimism. This could be interpreted as follows in the context of Freund's theory:

1. *Empowerment*: Shared leadership likely empowers faculty members, leading to increased optimism as they feel more control and ownership over their work and the academic environment.
2. *Collaboration*: The strong correlation suggests that the collaborative environment fostered by shared leadership contributes to a positive outlook among faculty, where teamwork and shared responsibilities are correlated with a belief in the school's successful future.
3. *Diversity of Knowledge*: Shared leadership enables various perspectives to be brought to the table, improving problem-solving and innovation. This diversity may contribute to academic optimism by creating a sense of efficacy and competence among faculty members.
4. *Adaptability and Engagement*: Shared leadership is characterized by adaptability and engagement, which can lead to an optimistic view of the school's ability to navigate challenges and change.
5. *Distributed Decision-Making*: With shared leadership, decision-making is distributed among various stakeholders, which can enhance the sense of coherence and collective purpose, further fueling academic optimism.
6. *Cultural Shift*: Implementing shared leadership could signify a cultural shift within the institution toward more inclusive and participatory practices, which aligns with increased optimism about the institution's direction.

7. *Professional Development*: As part of shared leadership, continuous professional development is encouraged, which could explain the increased academic optimism due to opportunities for growth and learning. This study encapsulates the intricate relationship between shared leadership and academic optimism within an educational context. The comprehensive assessment revealed several key findings that contribute to the discourse on leadership dynamics and their impact on academic environments.

Moreover, the study considered the theoretical underpinnings of shared leadership, particularly referencing Max Freund's theory, which posits that shared leadership can lead to increased empowerment, better decision-making, and more effective collaboration. The findings of this study lend empirical support to this theory, suggesting that shared leadership practices within institutions are likely to enhance academic optimism.

The evidence from the study suggests that educational institutions could benefit from fostering shared leadership as a strategic approach to improve not only the professional development of faculty members but also the overall academic climate. The significant correlation between shared leadership and academic optimism implies that initiatives designed to promote shared leadership are likely to have a positive impact on the school's vision, the collective morale of the staff, and the institution's capacity to face future challenges with a constructive and hopeful outlook.

In conclusion, this study affirms that shared leadership is a valuable asset in the realm of education, serving as a powerful driver of academic optimism. It encourages educational leaders and policymakers to consider shared leadership as a key component of institutional development strategies aimed at nurturing a thriving academic atmosphere conducive to innovation, growth, and a shared sense of purpose.

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