

## Impact of Identity Style on Teachers' Academic Optimism Through Mediating Role Self-Management Strategies

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**Abstract:** The present study aimed to investigate the mediating role of self-management strategies in the relationship between identity style and teachers' educational optimism. This research is applied and correlational. The statistical population of this research was all male and female primary school teachers in Zahedan city in 2020. The participants were 334 people (67 men and 267 women) who were selected by stratified random sampling. Data were collected using Berzonsky's Identity Style Questionnaire (ISI-6G), Teacher sense of academic optimism scale and Self-management strategies scale (short form). The findings indicated there was a significant relationship between informational identity style and academic optimism ( $r=0.20$ ) and between normative identity style and academic optimism ( $r=0.30$ ). Also, there was a positive and significant relationship between self-management strategies and teachers' academic optimism ( $r=0.123$ ). In addition, path analysis revealed that the effect of normative identity style on academic optimism was positive and significant ( $\beta=0.29$ ). Also, the effect of informational identity style on self-management strategies was positive and significant ( $\beta=0.32$ ). Furthermore, the effect of avoidant identity style on self-management strategies was negative and significant ( $\beta = 0.27$ ). The effect of self-management strategies on teachers' academic optimism was also positive and significant ( $\beta=0.12$ ). Therefore, it can be concluded that identity styles affects teachers' academic optimism directly and through self-management strategies as well.

**Keywords:** Identity Styles, Academic optimism, Self-management strategies, Teachers

### Introduction

The teacher is one of the most basic pillars of the education system and has many roles, including the leader of the learning process, coach, role model and effective guidance for students. The level of competence, efficiency and scientific and professional mastery of a teacher determines the teaching and learning path of students' progress (Knaak & Knaak, 2013). No other person except the teacher can have a greater impact on what happens in schools, in other words, no transformation or innovation can be achieved in education unless teachers are first trained as real agents, equipped with the attitude favorable and effective beliefs (Esmaili et al., 2020). Academic optimism as a teacher's belief plays an important role in the effective regulation of behavior. Regarding learning optimism, it should be mentioned that this issue is actually a positive attitude towards the world around us, that a person with this attitude is trying to see the world in a better and more stunning way. In various researches, the positive effect of academic optimism on improving security and increasing the health of the community has been emphasized, and this is also effective in promoting the security and peace of the community (Iranmehr & Gitipasand, 2016). The new structure of academic optimism is dependent on positive psychology, which is based on scientific research that helps people's general health by trying to understand their individual traits (Gürol & Kerimgil, 2010). According to Bandura (1989) social

cognitive theory, people have different beliefs based on which they can control their thoughts, actions and feelings. Through this process, teachers actively create mental plans to face the events that occur, in other words, they have an active behavior ([Bandura, 2006](#)).

Academic optimism is an individual belief in teachers that consists of three components: teacher efficacy, trust in parents and students, and educational emphasis, which is related to students' academic progress despite the students' economic and social level ([Tschanen-Moran & Hoy, 1998](#)).

Conceptually, the teacher's feeling about academic optimism paints a rich picture of human agency that explains the teacher's behavior in three dimensions of reciprocal determination. The relationship between these three main dimensions of academic optimism is shown as a three-dimensional set of interactions in which each element is functionally dependent on other elements. The teacher's trust in parents and students strengthens the teacher's sense of efficacy, and the teacher's sense of efficacy promotes and strengthens trust ([Hoy et al., 2008](#)). In addition, when the teacher trusts the parents, he can set higher academic standards by ensuring that he is not neglected by them, and these higher academic standards in turn strengthen the teacher's trust ([Mazarei, 2010](#)). One of the topics based on researches; related to teachers' academic optimism and recently attracted the attention of researchers is identity styles ([Hejazieh et al., 2011](#)). In the current era, identity has become one of the most important and fundamental issues in various areas of people's culture and life, especially young people in new societies, especially in countries like Iran ([Lotfi, 2019](#)). Identity as the ontological foundation of a person is one of the most fundamental issues that today's generation is dealing with and is defined as a point of balance between oneself and other people who surround the person ([Beyers & Goossens, 2008](#)) and a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood. According to Erikson's psychosocial theory about personality, identity acts as a frame of reference that a person uses to interpret personal experiences and discuss the meaning, purpose, and direction of his life ([Berzonsky, 2003](#)).

The formation of identity begins with the creation of a specific mental image of the body, and this mental image of the body gradually turns into a mental image of one's existence and the formation of one's concept (self-concept), which expresses one's characteristics and capabilities, and the perception that a person has of how he relates to others. And it has an environment and it is composed of the goals and ideals of the individual ([Piri, 2018](#)). Finally, the development of the concept of self leads to the formation of personal identity, which includes the perception of the body and the ways of thinking and opinions that represent the individual and convey the way he communicates with others ([Hejazi & Fartash, 2006](#)). The newest theory in the field of identity is Berzonsky's theory of identity styles, which has a social cognitive model. Identity styles are the relative preference of people to use specific ways of solving identity problems and processing information about themselves. From Berzonsky's point of view, identity is considered as a personal framework that is used as a source for changing experiences. Berzonsky has identified three identity styles to study the similarity or difference of people in shaping the identity process which consists of information style, normative style and confusion/avoidance style ([Berzonsky, 2003](#)). People with informational style have problem-oriented strategies, active decision-making and high self-exploration, are firm and committed to their goals and

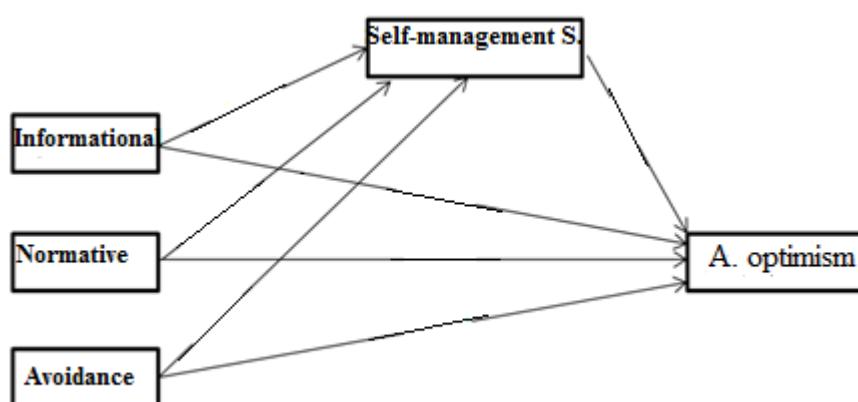
go towards different experiences, have a sense of unity in themselves, usually postpone judgments, have clear career and academic goals and expect high academic performance. People with a normative style have a mechanistic view of the world, internalize the standards of others, need external organization, desire information that is consistent with their values, are closed-minded, inflexible, have conservative opinions, and follow advice of power sources. On the other hand, people with a confused/avoidant identity style use an emotion-oriented strategy, avoid decision-making situations, and use any means to achieve their goals. They have low self-esteem and variable self-efficacy and are indifferent to the future ([Berzonsky et al., 1999](#)). Based on this, many researches have shown that academic optimism is related to identity styles. In this regard, [Salehi Marzijarani \(2012\)](#) showed that the correlation between successful identity with the overall score of the optimism scale is positive and significant, and the relationship between confused identity with the overall score of the optimism scale is negative and significant. [Hejazieh et al. \(2011\)](#) showed that among the identity styles (normative, informational and confused/avoidant), the informational identity style has the greatest contribution in predicting teachers' academic optimism. [Tanhaye Reshvanloo et al. \(2012\)](#) showed that the level of optimism of girls at different ages did not differ from each other, but based on the identity style, a difference was observed in their level of optimism. [Mazarei \(2010\)](#) reached the conclusion that in predicting academic optimism of male and female teachers and its components, informational identity style and commitment have a greater share.

Self-management strategies can be mentioned among other factors that affect identity style. Determining mastery goals by the teacher and persistently pursuing these goals, using a kind of self-regulation and self-management mechanism, is beneficial for achieving educational goals and has a significant relationship with the teacher's high educational performance ([Hoy et al., 2008](#)). But if there are no self-regulation and self-management beliefs as effective strategies for professional success in teachers, there is a possibility that future teachers will become unrealistic and unsuccessful optimists in their teaching ([Mazarei, 2010](#)). Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to have such strategies. Self-management strategies include controlling mood, following rules, compromising with others when appropriate, accepting criticism, and participating in various affairs according to abilities ([Jaliliabkonar, 2010](#)).

Self-management in different areas of life is a process that includes determining the appropriate goal according to internal and external resources, action and reflection. Foresight, goal setting and planning are strategies for optimal management. Following this goal selection (s: goal selection), a person engages in purposeful actions and seeks to find suitable tools and investments (such as time and energy) in the form of traits such as persistence and emphasis on the goal, focused attention, postponing pleasure and happiness, learning and practicing some new skills to achieve better results (o: optimization). At the same time, it receives feedback from inconsistencies between goals or from obstacles and problems, reduction of resources and facilities, interruptions and various disturbances. With this information in hand, he re-evaluates and reviews the situation and thinks about it. This reflection helps him to either reconsider his goals (choice based on resource depletion) or to search for

another effective method such as activating other available resources (c: compensation) (Hejāzi & Amini Pour, 2014). Regarding the relationship between identity styles and self-management strategies, the following studies can be mentioned. Loh (2018) showed that the relationship between cognitive, metacognitive and resource management components with scientific optimism is positive and statistically significant. Mahdavi Zahed (2017) showed in a research that informative and normative identity style is a positive predictor and confused/avoidant identity style is a negative predictor of self-regulation. Abdi (2017) showed in a research that there is a significant positive relationship between academic self-regulation and academic optimism of students. Hofer et al. (2011) showed in their research that identity styles are related to educational optimism. In examining the effectiveness of identity on self-regulation, they showed that people who have achieved a strong and successful self-identity, self-regulation and self-monitoring processes have been internalized more effectively. Also, in another study, Berzonsky and Kuk (2005) showed that compared to students with normative and confused identity styles, students with informational style scored higher in the scales of self-sufficiency, effective life management skills, respect and tolerance of people different from themselves, and creating intimate relationships.

Teachers are one of the most important components of educational systems, whose performance is of particular importance as the basic element of the education system. Therefore, it is necessary to know and deeply understand the elements that influence the performance of teachers. Therefore, according to the mentioned materials, the aim of the current research is to examine the relationship between identity styles and teachers' academic optimism with the mediating role of self-management strategies. The researches carried out so far have shown a significant relationship between identity style and academic optimism, as well as academic optimism and self-management strategies. It seems that people's self-management strategies affect the relationship between identity style and teachers' academic optimism. Therefore, the main issue of the research is whether identity style has an effect on teachers' academic optimism through the self-management strategies? Based on this, the following model is designed and tested (figure 1).



**Fig. 1.** The proposed model

## Material and Methods

The current research is a quantitative, applied and correlational study (path analysis). Using the Krejcie & Morgan (1970) table, 334 people were selected by stratified random sampling according to region and gender. The participants were 180 teachers of district 1 (40 men and 140 women) and 154 teachers of district 2 (27 men and 127 women) who completed the informed consent form before starting the study. Pearson's correlation coefficient and path analysis were used to examine the research hypotheses. The following questionnaires were used to collect data:

**Educational optimism questionnaire:** [Beard et al. \(2010\)](#) academic optimism questionnaire was used to evaluate teachers' academic optimism. This scale includes 11 items. The first 3 items measure teachers' self-efficacy. The next 4 items (from items 4 to 8) evaluate the trust in students and parents, and the last 4 items of the questionnaire are dedicated to the teacher's academic emphasis. Subjects' answers to the questions are in the form of a 4-point Likert scale, including never = 1 to always = 4. [Beard et al. \(2010\)](#) reported the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire through Cronbach's alpha as 0.78 for the entire questionnaire and for the components of teachers' sense of self-efficacy as 0.73, academic emphasis as 0.79 and trust in parents and students as 0.71. The content validity of this questionnaire has been confirmed based on the opinion of experts. The reliability of this questionnaire in the present study was obtained through Cronbach's alpha for the entire questionnaire at 0.75.

**White, Wampler & Winn (1998) identity style questionnaire:** The identity style questionnaire ([White et al., 1998](#)) is a scale of 40 questions, of which 11 questions are related to the information scale, 9 questions are related to the normative scale, 10 questions are related to the diffuse or avoidance scale and 10 other questions are related to the commitment scale, which is used for secondary analysis, is not considered an identity style, and for this reason, it has been omitted in the present study. Subjects' answers to the questions are in the form of a 5-point Likert scale, including completely disagree = 1 to completely agree = 5. [Berzonsky \(2003\)](#) reported the internal reliability (alpha coefficient) of the information scale as 0.62, the reliability of the normative scale as 0.66, and the reliability of the avoidance scale as 0.73. The content validity of this questionnaire has been confirmed based on the opinion of experts. The reliability of the questionnaire in the present study was estimated using Cronbach's alpha method of 0.80.

**Questionnaire of self-management strategies Freund & Baltes (2002):** Questionnaire of self-management strategies ([Freund & Baltes, 2002](#)) was carried out based on two research works under the supervision of the Max Planck Institute for Transformational Research in Berlin. One of these researches is the successful aging study called ALLEE, which was conducted by [Baltes and Kliegl \(1992\)](#), and the other is a research called BASE, which [Freund and Baltes \(2002\)](#) conducted on the subject of the aging study in Berlin. In this research, the short and 12-item form of this tool was used. The way to answer the questions of this questionnaire is that the subject chooses an option from options A and B according to the goals he has in his career, and a score of one is given for the answers to A in all items, and a score of zero is considered for the answers to B. [Freund and Baltes \(2002\)](#) estimated the reliability of elective selection, loss-based selection, optimization, and compensation

scales with Cronbach's alpha method as 0.78, 0.72, 0.68, and 0.67, respectively. In addition, they checked the validity of the questionnaire with the factor analysis method, and the results support its 4 main factors. The reliability of the questionnaire in the present study was estimated using Cronbach's alpha method of 0.64.

## Results

The average, standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores of the research variables are presented in Table 1 and the correlation matrix is presented in Table 2.

**Table 1.** Descriptive indicators of research variables

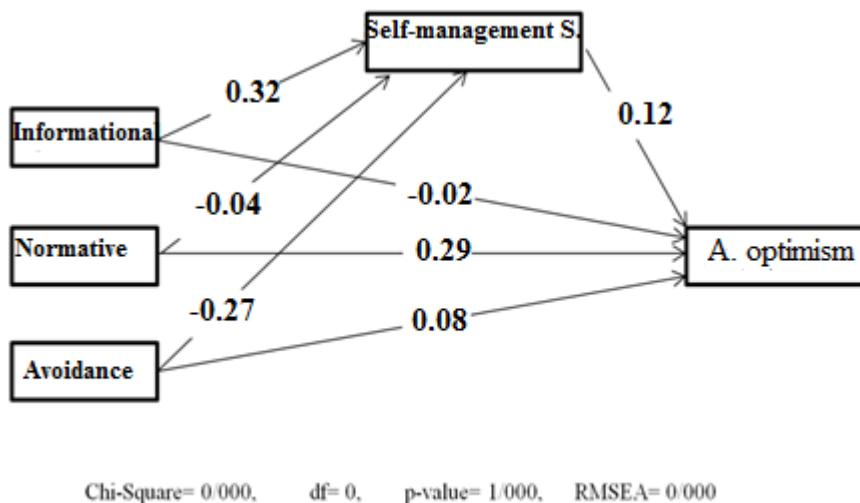
Variable	Subscale	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Identity styles	Informational	11	55	41.74	6.82
	Normative	14	45	35.16	5.41
	Avoidance	10	49	28	8.03
Academic optimism	Self-efficacy	6	12	10.22	1.20
	Trust	4	16	12.36	2.32
	Academic emphasis	5	16	13.06	1.93
Self-management strategies	Elective selection	0	3	1.89	0.95
	Loss-based selection	0	3	1.99	0.92
	Compensation	0	3	2.44	0.82
	Optimization	0	3	2.38	0.82

**Table 2.** The correlation matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Informational	1				
2. Normative	0.61**	1			
3. Avoidance	0.16**	0.16**	1		
4. Self-management strategies	0.25**	0.10	-0.22**	1	
5. Academic optimism	0.20**	0.30**	0.10	0.123**	1

\*\* p < 0.01

Table 2 shows that there is a significant relationship between teachers' academic optimism and informational identity style ( $r=0.20$ ) and teachers' academic optimism with normative identity style ( $r=0.30$ ) at the 99% confidence level ( $P<0.01$ ). Also, there is a significant relationship between self-management strategies with informative identity style ( $r=0.25$ ) and self-management strategies with confused/avoidant identity style ( $r=0.22$ ) at the 99% confidence level. In order to examine research hypotheses and evaluate the proposed model, path analysis method was used using LISREL 8.80 software. The proposed model of the current research consists of 5 variables including: exogenous variables of informative identity style, normative identity style and avoidant identity style and endogenous variables of self-management strategies and academic optimism. The results of path analysis and standardized path coefficients are reported in Figure 2.



**Fig. 2.** The standardized beta weights of research model

According to the examined model, there is a significant positive path from informational identity style to self-management strategies ( $T$ -value=4.87;  $\beta$ =0.32). The path coefficient of informational identity style to academic optimism is negative ( $\beta$ =0.02) and the  $t$  significance test showed that this value is not statistically significant ( $T$ -value=0.25). Also, the path coefficient of normative identity style to self-management strategies is (-0.04), which is negative, and the significance test of  $t$  also showed that this value is not statistically significant ( $T$ -value = -0.68). However, the path coefficient of normative identity style to academic optimism is positive and significant ( $T$ -value=4.36;  $\beta$ =0.29). Avoidant confused identity style also has a negative and significant relationship with self-management strategies ( $T$ -value = -5.17;  $\beta$  = -0.27).

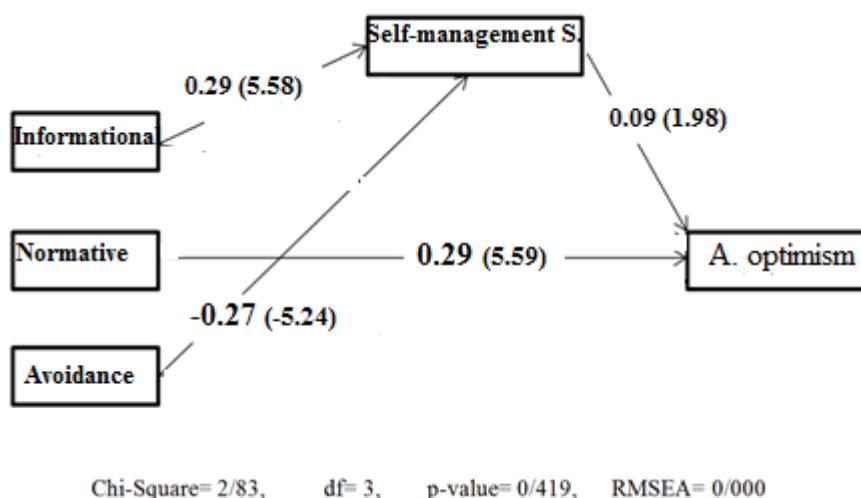
On the other hand, the path coefficient of avoidant identity style to academic optimism is 0.08, which is not statistically significant ( $T$ -value=1.53). In addition, the path of self-management strategies to academic optimism is positive and significant ( $T$ -value=2.07;  $\beta$ =0.12). As mentioned, some paths of the tested model were non-significant; therefore, after removing the non-significant paths, another analysis was performed on the data. The results of some model fit indices before and after modification are shown in the table 3.

**Table 3.** Fit indices of the proposed and final model

Fit statistics	$\chi^2$	DF	GFI	AGFI	CFI	IFI	RMSEA
Proposed model	0.00	0	1	1	1	1	0.00
Final model	2.83	3	1	0.98	1	1	0.00

According to Table 3, the final model has a very favorable fit. According to [Hu and Bentler \(1998\)](#), the root mean square error of estimation (RMSEA) is sensitive to the inappropriate formulation of a

model and provides a confidence interval and appropriate calculations about the quality of a particular model. In fact, the RMSEA index alone is sufficient to determine the fit of a model. In this model, RMSEA was equal to 0.00. Therefore, the model obtained in this research has high statistical reliability and fit, and as a result, provides an acceptable explanation of the findings. Figure 3 shows the final model of the current research and the paths. The numbers on the paths are standardized parameters.



**Fig. 3.** The final model of the research along with the standard coefficients of the paths

In Table 4, the standardized coefficients of the direct and indirect effect and the accounted variance of the research variables in the final model are given. According to Table 4, 10% of the variance of academic optimism and 13% of the variance of self-management strategies are explained by the research model.

**Table 4.** Estimation of standardized coefficients of direct, indirect, total and explained variance of the final model

Variable	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect	Variance accounted
To academic optimism				
Self-management strategies	0.09*	-	0.09	0.10
Informative style	-	0.03	0.03	
Normative style	0.29**	-	0.29	
Avoidance style	-	-0.02	-0.02	
To self-management strategies				
Informative style	0.29**	-	0.29	0.13
Normative style	-	-	-	
Avoidance style	-0.27**	-	-0.27	

\*p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01

## Discussion

This research aimed to investigate the effect of identity style on teachers' academic optimism through the mediation of self-management strategies, and investigates the relationship between exogenous variables (identity style) and endogenous variables (teachers' academic optimism through the mediation of self-management strategies). Based on the results, avoidant identity style does not have a direct and significant effect on academic optimism. The research results in this section are in line with the research results of [Iranmehr and Gitipasand \(2016\)](#), [Mazarei \(2010\)](#), [Berzonsky and Kuk \(2005\)](#) and [Farsinejad \(2004\)](#). In explaining this finding, it can be said that people with an avoidant identity style delay the effort to resolve identity conflicts as much as possible, and when they are forced to act, their behavior is mainly guided by requests and external personal consequences. Therefore, avoidant identity style has no significant effect on academic optimism.

Our findings showed that informational identity style has no significant effect on academic optimism. This finding is not consistent with the findings of [Mazarei \(2010\)](#). In explaining this finding, it can be said that people with informational identity style tend to self-interpretation and are skeptical about self-constructions and always have a tendency to doubt about themselves. Therefore, informational identity style does not have a significant effect on academic optimism. Also, in this research, it was found that the normative identity style has a positive and significant effect on academic optimism; this finding is in agreement with the research results of [Mazarei \(2010\)](#), [Berzonsky and Kuk \(2005\)](#), [Farsinejad \(2004\)](#) and [Salehi Marzijarani \(2012\)](#). In explaining this finding, it can be said that normative people are conscientious and adaptable, show a clear sense of direction, and have a positive sense of well-being. Therefore, normative identity style has a positive and significant effect on academic optimism.

According to the findings, identity styles have an indirect effect on teachers' academic optimism through self-management strategies. This finding is supported by studies that show a positive relationship between identity styles and teachers' educational optimism. Our findings in this section are consistent with the findings of [Iranmehr and Gitipasand \(2016\)](#), [Salehi Marzijarani \(2012\)](#), [Mazarei \(2010\)](#), [Hejazieh et al. \(2011\)](#), [Phillips and Pittman \(2007\)](#) and [Berzonsky and Kuk \(2005\)](#). In explaining this finding, it can be stated that teachers with informational identity style have more adaptability and acceptance towards people and external conditions, show compromise towards new values and ideas, and have high growth of interpersonal relationships. People in this type of style tend to work and help all students due to self-reasoning, logical epistemological style, planning in decision-making, clear and stable educational and career goals ([Berzonsky & Kuk, 2005](#); [Berzonsky et al., 1999](#)). Therefore, they organize and implement the learning process in such a way that the learning of all students is maximized. Teachers with high academic optimism are committed, energetic, flexible, and conscientious in the academic success of students, and tend to cooperate and bond instead of applying pressure and punishment. Due to inefficiency and inability to communicate with students, teachers with avoidant identity style only focus on the educational tasks of students in a commanding and serious manner and try to manage and control the class only in order to keep their jobs. Therefore,

the avoidant confused identity style has a negative and significant effect on self-management strategies.

Among the limitations of the research, we can mention the large number of questions in the questionnaire, which led to the lengthening of its implementation time, which may affect the accuracy of the participants' answers. The results of this research is related to a sample of teachers in Zahedan city, and the generalization of the findings of this research to teachers in other regions or different cultural contexts and to samples other than teachers should be done with caution. Also, another limitation of this research was the limitation in assigning internal and external validities, which was considered as one of the factors that was not fully within the researcher's control.

The results of the current research show a positive and significant relationship between self-management strategies and teachers' academic optimism. Therefore, it is suggested to teach self-management strategies as one of the goal-based self-regulation skills to teachers in the form of educational workshops with emphasis on the correct methods of choosing goals, optimal use of abilities, and the use of compensation mechanisms in case of facing obstacles and lack of resources. By clarifying as much as possible the unknown aspects of teachers' academic optimism structure, it is possible to teach teachers about its concepts and content through the programs of Farhangian University, in order to increase familiarity and increase this positive belief in teachers, and as a result, teachers' efficiency and performance.

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