Teacher Expectations' and Respect for Students, Growth Mindset, Resilience and Self-esteem Impact on Academic Motivation and Aspirations

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Abstract

Sources of Strength (*Sources)* is a peer-led high school program that has demonstrated efficacy in improving help-seeking and reducing suicidal behaviors (Espelage et al., 2023; Wyman et al., 2011). Data presented here are from the baseline survey of a program evaluation of *Sources* in one urban high school in North Carolina. Using structural equation modeling we examined the associations between teacher academic expectations and students' growth mindset, resilience, and self-esteem. Results indicated that teacher academic expectations was associated with higher growth mindset, student resilience, and student academic expectations. Student growth mindset was associated with higher academic expectations and academic aspirations. Student resilience was related to higher academic expectations, motivation and aspirations. Findings suggest that professional development for teachers that emphasize the development of student growth mindset, resilience and self-esteem can have a positive impact on academic outcomes.

Background

The classroom dynamic between teachers and students has been shown to have great influence on student mindset (Zhou, 2021) .

Therefore, to better understand the protective factors and predictors of academic outcomes, the current study had the following 3rhypothesis:

H1: Teacher academic expectations and teacher respect for students will be significantly associated with higher student self-esteem, growth mindset, and resilience.
H2: Teacher academic expectations and teacher respect for students will be significantly associated with higher student academic motivation and academic aspirations.
H3: Student self-esteem, growth mindset, and resilience will be significantly associated with higher student academic motivation and academic aspirations.
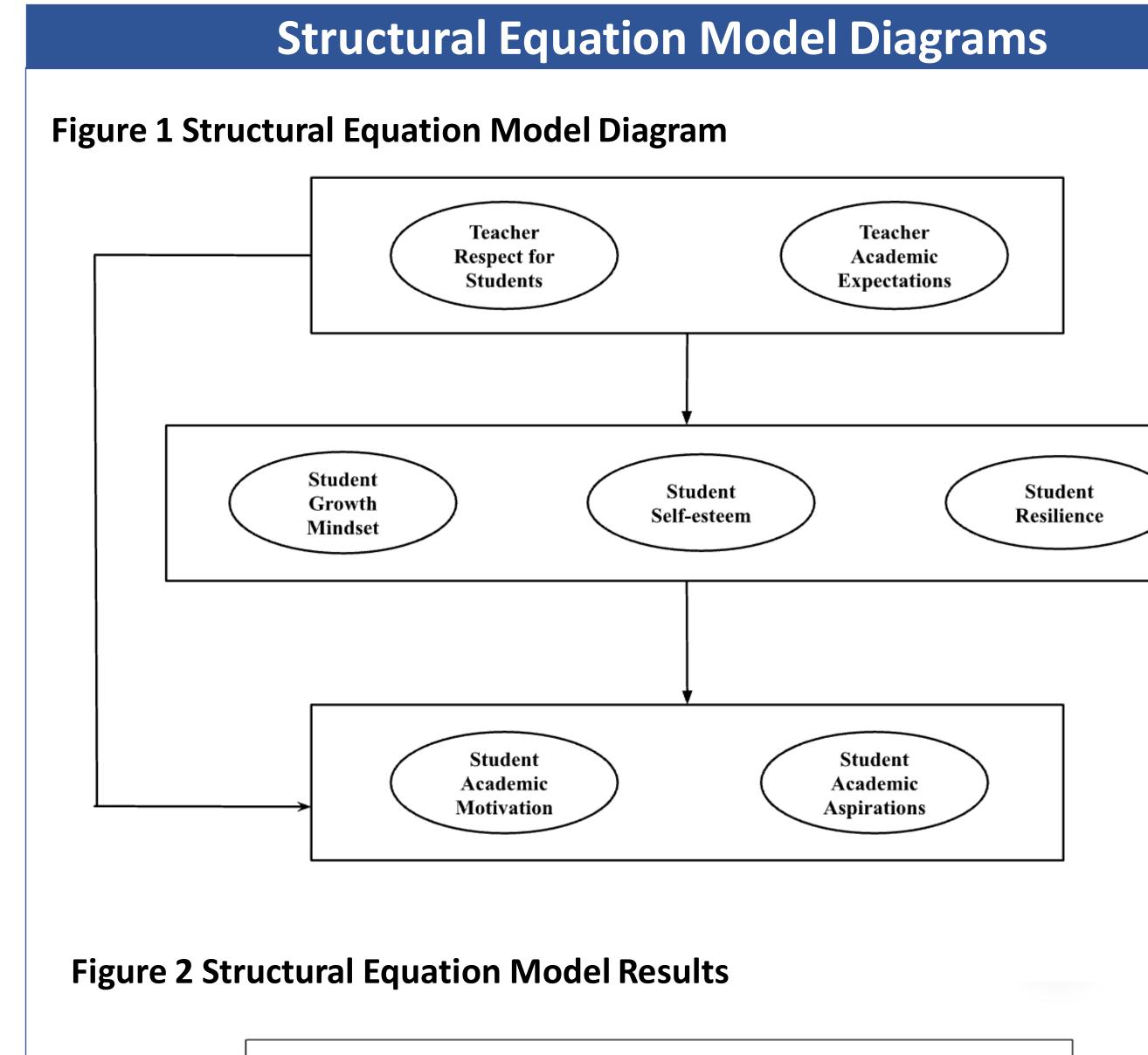
Methods

- Data were collected from one urban high school in North Carolina (N = 1017; mean age= 15.38, Sd= 1.16, 57% Back, 2.8% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 7.2% Asian, 5.0% Mutiracial, 0.7% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 4.6% White, 21.3% Hispanic/ Latino/a
- Youth completed a self-report measure assessing teacher expectations, resilience, and academic motivation. All measures had acceptable internal consistency and construct validity.
- Path analyses were conducted to evaluate the research questions.
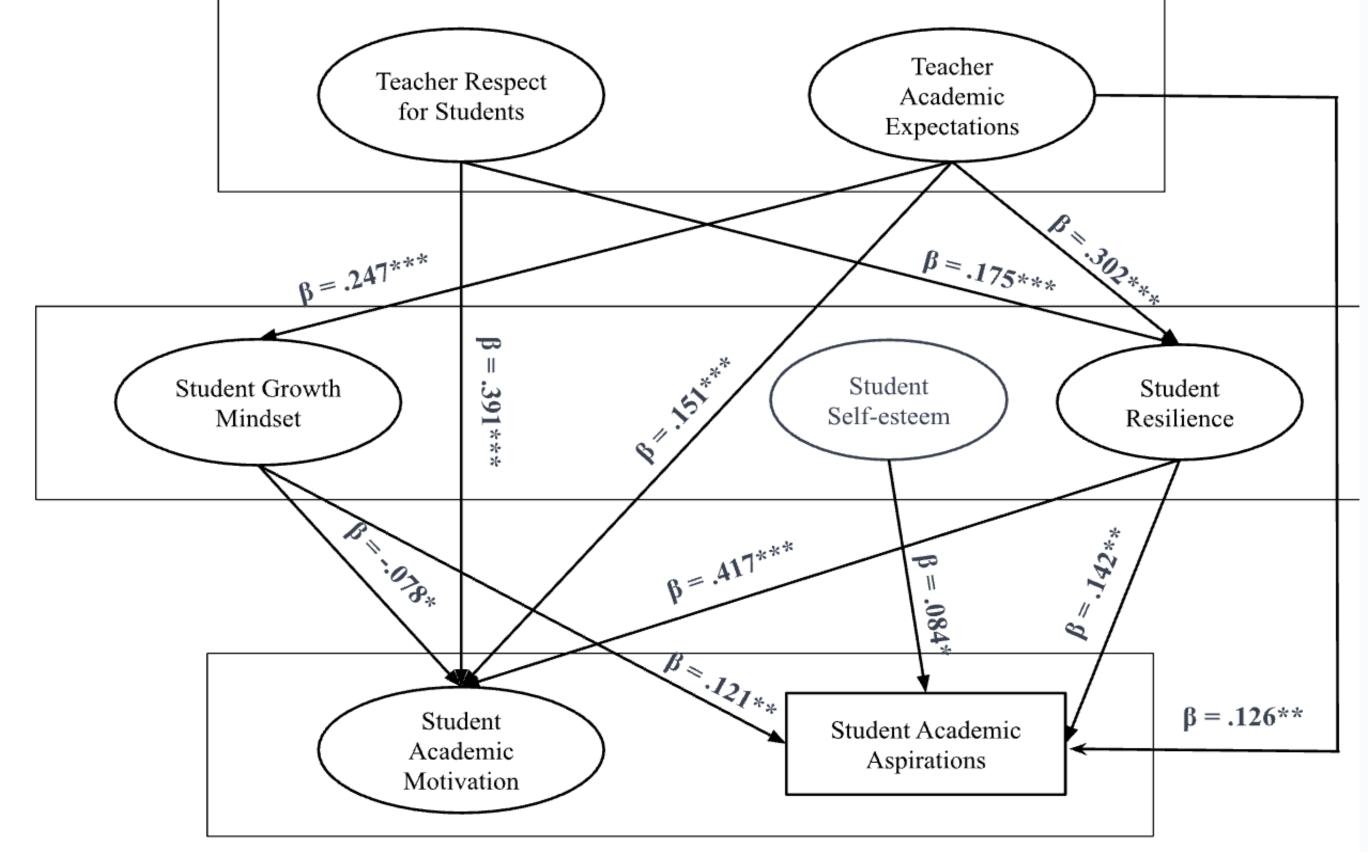
Measures	Examples Questions
Teacher Expectations	"Most teachers and other adults at this school … want all students to do well."
Resilience	"How true are these statements for you? I think of myself as a strong person when dealing with life's challenges and difficulties."
Growth	"How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? You have a certain amount of intelligence, and you can't really do much to change it."
Self-esteem	"Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements: I feel that I'm a person of worth."
Academic Expectations	"How much do you agree or disagree with these statements? My teachers really want me to learn a lot."
Academic Motivation	"These questions ask you about your experiences at school. For each of the following statements, please select the choice that best represents your answer. I like the challenges of learning new things in school."
Teacher Respect	"Most teachers want students to do well."

Discussion & Implications

- Findings from this cross-sectional analysis points to the importance of students' perceptions that their teachers supporting them in their academic pursuits.
- The data shows that teacher academic expectations (student self-report) is associated with higher levels of growth mindset and resilience, as well as higher student academic motivation and aspirations.
- that teachers' respect for their students and academic expectations may cultivate more adaptive frameworks, strengthening growth mindset and resilience (Gouëdard & Valle, 2021).
- Teachers should be provided the training and ongoing professional development to foster student growth.
- More research is needed to understand how teacher expectations impact student SEL skills and their academic outcomes, preferably using longitudinal and observational data.

Structural Equation Model Diagrams

Figure 1 Structural Equation Model Diagram

Figure 2 Structural Equation Model Results

Results

- Teacher academic expectations were associated with higher growth mindset (β = 0.247, *p* < .001), resilience (β = 0.302, *p* < .001).
- Teacher academic expectations were associated with student academic aspirations (β = 0.45, *p* < .001).
- Teacher respect was associated with higher student resilience expectations (β = 0.175, *p* < 0 .001) and higher student academic motivation (β = 0.391, *p* < 0 .001).
- Higher academic aspirations were associated with Growth mindset (β = 0.121, *p* < 0.01), self-esteem (β = 0.084, *p* < 0.05) and resilience (β = 0.142, *p* < 0.01)

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