

# **Development of an Intervention Module of Psychological Capital to Enhance the Workplace Behaviors and Emotions of Employees**

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Guide:

Dr. Urmi Nanda Biswas

Professor

Department of Psychology

Faculty of Education and Psychology

Submitted by:

Kalpana Motanpotra

Department of Psychology

Faculty of Education and Psychology

## **Introduction**

India has 7.98 % share of world GDP based on purchasing power parity and is considered to be one of the growth engines (International Monetary Fund, 2019). How does one navigate and thrive in this fast paced disruptive world? What are the qualities that are and would be required to manage and thrive in this change? What are those special states or qualities which would help people bloom and flourish? These questions are answered by the field of positive Psychology. It has found its place in the twenty first century. The emphasis in positive Psychology is on personal resources of the individual. Using the lens of positive Psychology, human beings are now being viewed as a bundle of limitless possibilities.

The study focused on the positive psychological construct of Psychological Capital (PsyCap) made up of hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy. PsyCap is a second order construct. (Luthans & Youssef, 2004; Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007).

## **Objectives of the Study**

1. To develop an intervention module to enhance psychological capital and testify this module's effectiveness.
2. To study whether improving Psychological Capital (PsyCap) would help reduce negative workplace behavior i.e. Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB), Emotional Labor (EL) and enhance positive workplace behavior i.e. enhance Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCBs) and Work Engagement (WE).
3. To understand the relationship among dimensions of PsyCap and workplace behaviors and emotions (both positive and negative) i.e. OCB, CWB, WE and EL.
4. To study if there are any differences in PsyCap, OCB, CWB, WE and EL of employees from different sectors.

5. To explore the differential relationships among PsyCap dimensions and workplace behaviors and emotions across sectors.

To achieve the above objectives the study involved three stages. In the first phase of the study, a survey of 535 employees of different organizations was conducted. The data was collected from organizations belonging to different sectors. These were:

1. Industrial and Commercial Services sector
2. Manufacturing sector
3. Healthcare sector
4. Pharmaceutical manufacturing and research sector

It was speculated that the kind of sector that the participants belonged to, would influence the impact of PsyCap on workplace behaviors and emotions. The survey used PCQ 24 (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007), Podsakoff and MacKenzie's Questionnaire on OCB (1994), Bennett and Robinson (2000)'s Workplace Deviance scale, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003) and Naring, G Britt, M. and Brouwers, A. (Näring, Briët, & Brouwers, 2007)'s Questionnaire on Emotional Labor. After the survey, a median split was performed. Those employees who scored equal to or lower than the median score in PsyCap were included in the second phase.

In the second phase two types of interventions were administered after matching employees on their PsyCap. The focused intervention involved PsyCap development. The control intervention involved soft skills development. After the completion of intervention, post training retest measures of PsyCap and outcome variables were taken.

In the third phase, all those who had completed two days of training in Phase II were approached and administered the survey again after at least three months. This formed the follow up scores of the study.

### **1. The Metamorphosis Module**

The module involved four parts, one for each of the components of PsyCap. The icebreaker involved participants sharing their lifelines with each other. This session introduced the concept of PsyCap and how we tend to jump into the activity without identifying the final destination. The participants dwelled on their mission statement. After detecting it, they identified the goals that they wanted to achieve, pathways and alternate pathways to reach one's goal. This leads to development of PsyCap Hope.

The second sub module involved developing optimism using the learned optimism concept developed by Seligman (1998). It involved examining the way pessimists attribute a failure to internal, permanent and a pervasive cause and how participants can change the way they think by attributing a failure to external, temporary and specific causes. This can help them to think more optimistically.

The PsyCap Efficacy module involved identifying one's own strengths and talents in different life domains and then reflecting on how one developed them. The participants learnt from sharing of these experiences with each other leading to modeling and vicarious learning.

The PsyCap Resiliency module involved connecting the dots from the icebreaker to all the experiences shared. The participants realized that resilience was achieving challenging targets despite setbacks and occurrence of stressful events was possible. The focus on developing assets and reducing or managing the risk factors would help them thrive in difficult circumstances.

## **2. Sukriti Module**

This module also involved four parts, one for each of the soft skills commonly used in the industry. The icebreaker involved participants sharing their information with each other. The next session on communication made the participants understand and appreciate the process of communication as an important constituent of personal and professional effectiveness. It involved exposure to communication concepts of verbal and non verbal communication and how to diagnose and circumvent barriers to communication.

The Sukriti Team building skills module brought it to the participants' notice that teams are to be used only when an individual cannot handle a task and when interdependence is high. The model developed by Katzenbach and Smith (1993) of high performing teams was shared with the participants. Tips were given to create a common vision of the team, skills required for a Team to work smoothly and how to develop accountability and commitment among team members.

The Sukriti problem solving skills module was aimed at understanding the process of problem solving, stages of problem solving and common mistakes done while solving problems. The analytical and creative skills required to solve problems were demonstrated through different exercises.

The Sukriti conflict management skills module shared that people employ different conflict management styles. Participants identified their own conflict management style and the steps towards developing a collaborative style of managing conflict for important and significant issues.

## **Result**

The study has hypothesized that PsyCap and its dimensions would affect workplace emotions and workplace behaviors. In order to test the hypotheses, the data was subjected to correlation, ANOVA and ANCOVA. Given below are important findings from the study:

### **1. PsyCap and OCB**

Results indicated a positive significant relationship between OCB facets, sportsmanship and civic virtue and PsyCap efficacy and PsyCap optimism. This suggests that efficacious employees are likely to tolerate minor inconveniences and optimistic employees would manage the minor irritations and work in the interest of their organization. Thus, we can conclude that high PsyCap employees may not be very helpful but may display civic virtues and sportsmanship behaviors.

In order to test the explanatory power of PsyCap dimensions, regression analysis was performed. It was found that changes in PsyCap (Efficacy, Hope, Resilience and Optimism) scores were significantly able to explain the variance in organizational citizenship behavior (helping, sportsmanship and civic behavior) scores.

### **2. PsyCap and CWB**

It was found that PsyCap is negatively correlated to CWB. This inverse significant correlation leads us to the conclusion that higher the PsyCap, lesser are the behaviors which hurt colleagues and the organization as a whole.

### **3. PsyCap and WE**

It was found that PsyCap is significantly correlated to WE thus we can say that PsyCap affects WE positively. Thus, one can conclude that higher PsyCap efficacy, hope, resilience and optimism supports an employee's vigor, dedication and absorption.

#### **4. Psycap and EL**

It was found that PsyCap dimensions are significantly correlated with all dimensions of EL except surface acting. Only surface acting is negatively correlated. The strongest correlation amongst the dimensions of PsyCap and EL is between resilience and emotional consonance. Thus, one can conclude that higher the PsyCap, higher is emotional consonance and deep acting.

#### **Major Findings**

The major findings of the study were as follows:

##### **PsyCap and Workplace Behaviors**

PsyCap as an individual resource has been found to explain varied behaviors starting from work performance to protecting the information systems of the organization (Burns, Posey, Roberts, & Lowry, 2017). Thus, there are recommendations to develop PsyCap in plenty in the literature. This study first looked at the explanatory power of PsyCap in different sectors in India and then studied whether PsyCap can be developed using a focused intervention and whether it will impact workplace behaviors. Since PsyCap is agentic in nature (Luthans, Youssef-Morgan, & Avolio, 2015) it impacts the motivational make up of an individual.

##### ***PsyCap and Organizational Citizenship Behavior***

- Though PsyCap and OCB are correlated positively, high PsyCap employees may not be very helpful but may display civic virtues and sportsmanship behaviors.
- The regression results indicate that PsyCap explains sportsmanship and civic virtue of individuals in healthcare sector and sportsmanship in pharmaceutical research sector . This suggests that nurses when efficacious and optimistic will tolerate minor inconveniences of their work areas and will get involved constructively to promote their organization's overall welfare. In Pharmaceutical

research area too, efficacious employees will display sporting behaviour, will not complain when they are bothered by others and maintain a constructive attitude in face of challenges and do not take the refusal of their ideas personally. This has implications in research organizations particularly, for developing and nurturing PsyCap efficacy as well as culture in research organizations. If one takes negative feedback or challenges to one's ideas sportingly, it can lead to creative breakthroughs (Epstein, 2000).

- The results show that all the dimensions of OCB underwent a significant increase immediately after the intervention. Thus, the increased PsyCap efficacy and optimism led to higher levels of helping, sportsmanship and civic virtue behaviour.

### ***PsyCap and Counterproductive Workplace Behaviors***

- Higher the PsyCap, lesser are the behaviors which hurt colleagues and the organization as a whole because there is a significant negative correlation between PsyCap and CWB.
- The regression results indicate that PsyCap explains CWB I of individuals in healthcare sector and CWB O of individuals in service sector and pharmaceutical research sector.
- When nurses become pessimistic about the future and are not efficacious, may perform behaviours which are detrimental to their colleagues and patients. In Pharmaceutical research area too, less efficacious employees will display behaviour which would harm the organization.



- In case of service sector, PsyCap hope and PsyCap resilience explain the variance in CWB significantly. Thus building hope and resilience in service sector employees can lead to reduction of organizational leakages and improve productivity of the organization.
- It is possible to reduce CWB I as well as CWB O using PsyCap development. Thus, the increased PsyCap efficacy and optimism led to lower levels of CWB I and CWB O. But effect of the intervention was not sustained in the long term. This requires further research.

### **PsyCap and Workplace Emotions**

Morris and Feldman (1997) brought attention to the way employees express emotions in different work settings. Today delivering the ‘service with a smile’ and being ‘engaged with your work’ have become buzzwords. In fact, it has led to burgeoning of popular literature on emotional intelligence (Cooper & Sawaf, 1997; Goleman, 2004) and being present. The current study looked at how PsyCap affects the desirable emotion of work engagement and undesirable emotion of emotional labor.

### ***PsyCap and Work Engagement***

- PsyCap and its dimensions and WE and its components have been shown to be strongly correlated (See **Error! Reference source not found.**). Hence one can say that increasing PsyCap can lead to increase in WE.
- PsyCap dimensions explain WE variance well in vigor, dedication and absorption. PsyCap efficacy, and hope contribute all the WE components while resilience contributes to vigor and absorption and PsyCap optimism contributes to dedication. Thus, one can say that efficacious and hopeful employees would be

vigorous, dedicated to their work and it would be easy for them to plunge themselves in their work.

- In the industrial and commercial services sector PsyCap explains almost one third of the vigor experienced by the employees. Hope and resilience are significant predictors of vigor, implying that employees who are flexible at finding different solutions for customer delight will be ambassadors of customer delight. This can be an important asset in the service sector which is an important constituent of growth for an emerging economy like India.

### ***PsyCap and Emotional Labor***

Emotional Labor (EL) is a stark reality particularly where interactions with customers, patients, students are involved. The present study has some pointers for reducing this.

- PsyCap and its dimensions have been shown to negatively affecting all components of EL except surface acting.
- PsyCap resilience has been shown to play a significant role in explaining the variance in deep acting.
- PsyCap efficacy, resilience and optimism have been shown to play a significant role in explaining the variance in emotional consonance.
- In industrial and commercial services sector, PsyCap efficacy and resilience explain the variance in emotional consonance.
- In manufacturing sector PsyCap efficacy, hope and resilience have been shown to play a significant role in explaining the variance in emotional consonance and PsyCap resilience explains the variance in deep acting.

- In healthcare sector, PsyCap resilience has been shown to play a significant role in explaining the variance in deep acting.
- In pharmaceutical and medical research sector, PsyCap efficacy has been shown to play a significant role in explaining the variance in emotional consonance.
- The focused intervention has not been able to make a reduction in the EL of employees.

## **PsyCap and Socio demographic Variables**

### ***Gender and PsyCap***

- PsyCap efficacy was higher in Men as compared to women. In other PsyCap components there was no significant difference.
- In helping, sportsmanship and civic virtue men scored significantly higher than women.
- In CWB I and CWB O, women scored significantly higher than men.
- In vigor component of WE, women scored significantly higher than men. In other WE components dedication and absorption there was no significant difference between men and women.
- Women experienced higher emotional suppression, emotional consonance and performed more deep acting than men. There was no significant difference between men and women in surface acting.

### ***Age and PsyCap***

- The maturational impact of age on all dimensions of PsyCap was suggested by the data with the older employees having an upper hand as far as efficacy, resilience and maturity in handling self is concerned.

### ***Sector and PsyCap***

- Efficacy, hope and optimism are significantly higher in employees from pharmaceutical research sector as compared to other sectors. Resilience is significantly higher in healthcare sector as compared to other sectors.
- Helping, sportsmanship and civic virtue are significantly lower in employees from healthcare sector as compared to other sectors.
- Interpersonal as well as organizational CWB are significantly higher in employees from manufacturing sector as compared to other sectors.
- Vigor is significantly lower in employees from service sector as compared to other sectors. Dedication is significantly higher in healthcare sector and pharmaceutical research sector as compared to other sectors. Absorption is significantly higher in pharmaceutical research sector as compared to other sectors.
- Surface acting, deep acting and emotional suppression are significantly higher in employees from healthcare sector as compared to other sectors.

### **Developing PsyCap**

A focused intervention was tested to develop PsyCap which got mixed results.

- PsyCap efficacy was malleable to growth and development through this intervention.

- PsyCap hope, resilience and optimism require further emphasis and they changed but did not reach significance level.
- In case of OCB, helping, sportsmanship and civic virtue, all the dimensions underwent a significant change but the change did not sustain for too long.
- In case of CWB, the intervention was successful immediately after the training. But the effect could not be sustained.
- Absorption facet of WE increased significantly. But WE facets of vigor and dedication did not reach significance level.
- EL component of deep acting approached significance. But surface acting, emotional consonance and emotional suppression did not reach significant level.

One can say that outcomes of positivity are distant, vague, uncertain and underspecified (Wright & Quick, 2009). Hence to make up for this negative bias, one can intensify the frequency of positive experiences and interactions. It takes a lot of energy to raise even water from one level to another. Flowing from a higher to lower level does not take any effort. So is the case here. Some more effort, intensity and depth would have to be added to the current intervention.