

Psychological Capital and Employee Engagement Among Building Material Retailers

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ABSTRACT

The goal of the study was to identify the significant relationship between psychological capital and employee engagement among building material retailers. The study was conducted on 100 retail store managers, managing the retail stores from different districts of Kerala. The analysis of data was done using correlation and independent sample t test. The results of the study indicated that there is high positive correlation between psychological capital and employee engagement whereas there is a moderate positive relationship between the subscales of psychological capital - hope, self-efficacy, resilience and optimism towards employee engagement. Also, there is a significant difference in employee engagement based on age, marital status and work experience.

Keywords: *Psychological Capital, Employee Engagement, Building Material Retailers*

Retailing occurs at the end of the distribution chain and allows large volumes of products or services to be distributed in smaller quantities to end users spread across large or remote areas. It contributes to more than 10% of the country's GDP and employs approximately 8% of the workforce. India is currently the fifth-largest global retail destination (IBEF, 2022). A retailer is a businessman who sells goods to consumers for profit through multiple channels of distribution (Hudson, 2020). For building material retailers, studying the psychological capital of their employees can provide valuable insights into how to improve motivation, engagement, and resilience within the workforce. By identifying areas where employees may be lacking in psychological capital, retailers can implement targeted interventions to enhance these psychological resources and improve overall employee well-being and performance (Roemer & Harris, 2018). The study by Carrahar et al, (2009) indicates that retail workers with high psychological capital are more likely to exhibit positive behaviors and provide excellent customer service, which can lead to increased customer loyalty and satisfaction.

Psychological capital

Psychological capital is a relevant aspect in the success of the organization. It recognises the importance of employee positive behaviour and refers to a person's positive psychological state of development, which is characterised by self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience

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(Luthans et al., 2007). Organizations that pay close attention to their guests' expectations and needs create service environments that encourage positive employee behaviour (Schneider et al., 1998). Customer satisfaction and organizational climate also affects the sustainability of the organization, therefore, the employee outlook, mood and behavior needs to be pleasant (Carrahar et al., 2009).

The belief in one's own ability to plan and carry out actions to achieve a specific goal is referred to as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). These individuals are confident in their ability to overcome any challenges that may arise, and they do not back down from ambitious goals and are determined towards attaining them. Failures do not discourage people with high self efficacy because they believe they have the power to fix it and, believe in themselves (Bandura, 1997).

Optimism in research refers to a person's expectation of positive outcomes. It is a personality trait that serves as the foundation for positive thinking and serves a positive outlook towards one's future (Carver & Scheier, 2002). It was found to be strongly associated with goal setting and achievement, and inversely associated to goal abandonment and acceptance of fate.

Hope comes into effect when people with the will should be able to see the paths and perceive various ways to achieve a goal. When used alone, the will or the ways are insufficient to help people achieve their goals, as people must have both the will and the ways to sustain movement towards their life goals (Rand & Cheavens, 2009; Snyder & Lopez, 2001).

Resilience is the capacity to recoup from setbacks, challenges, failures, and such individuals are capable of adapting to novel and stressful situations. Resilient people effectively use their psychological resources to plan for adversity and minimise the influence of life's stresses on them (Fredrickson et al., 2008). They are skilled at coping with negative experiences and challenge their own presumptions by intentionally bounding and adapting to situations, thereby recognising alternative paths to prevent disengagement in dealing with problems at work (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005; Sweetman et. al, 2010).

People who have a high level of psychological capital suppose they have power over their future and work hard to achieve their objectives while also adapting to challenges and change (Luthans et al., 2007). When they fail, they recover quickly and change their approach to avoid failing again (Luthans et al., 2015).

According to Karatepe and Karadas (2015), frontline employees with increased psychological capital have greater motivation, whereas Walumbwa et al. (2010) found that the leaders' psychological capital affects the supporters' state, behavior, and performance as well. Employers and employees both benefit from psychological capital, which can help them surpass their colleagues (Avey et al., 2011). It is a known factor that the organizations do care about employee performance. Therefore, it is advisable that the organizations should assist employees in developing their psychological capital and ensure a positive culture with supportive supervisors as it may add to employee performance (Luthans et al., 2007).

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is critical in the context of employees' psychological attachment and interaction with the company as well as among people within the organization. According to

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Schaufeli and Salanova (2007), based on many challenges that modern organisations face, engagement is 'indispensable', as well as Macey et al. (2009) argue that organisations may acquire an edge over their competitors through employee engagement. An engaged employee feels inspired beyond a paycheck and may believe that their overall well-being is linked to their work excellence and thus instrumental to the prosperity of their business (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008).

In accordance with recent research, organisations have a greater need for employees who stay in their jobs, achieve goals that go beyond their formally composed job descriptions, identify the organisational goal and are driven by a need to demonstrate devotion to their job (Macey et al., 2009). Employers can encourage worker engagement by clearly communicating expectations, recognising and encouraging excellent performance, and ensuring employees are updated on the company's performance by doing periodic evaluations (Harter et al., 2002). Employers might centre their employee engagement method upon three-tiered hierarchy of needs pyramid developed by Abraham Maslow, which includes survival and safety needs, psychological needs, and needs for self-fulfillment, also addressing all these needs can promote employee engagement along with job satisfaction and making attempts to ensure that employees feel respected and appreciated, as well as taking their ideas into consideration (Latham & Pinder, 2005).

Employee engagement, according to Macey and Schneider (2008), is a complex feeling that is difficult to quantify and reflected a psychological state of involvement or commitment, a performance construct and a disposition. It can be characterized by talking good about the organization towards customers and stakeholders, showing enthusiasm to involve in organizational activities doing activities other than those in job description and also taking efforts towards positive outcomes of the organization (Mone & London, 2018).

Employees who are emotionally attached to their work and the organisation are more inclined to focus on achieving the organization's goals (González-Romá et al., 2006). While every organisation defines employee engagement differently, some of the basic characteristics of an engaged employee include understanding their duty along with what it requires and wanting to accomplish it, being efficient and committed to their boss, being motivated to work towards their organization's success and understanding what success entails and how to achieve that, being rationally and emotionally linked to their company and inspired to execute well (Saks, 2006).

An organization's psychological contract should be reviewed to promote a sense of engagement. The emphasis here is on job layout, management, mentoring, supervisor support, and training to assist employees and facilitate engagement development, as well as psychological capital development, an advanced concept that may foster employee engagement. According to Chen et al., (2017), the concept of servant leadership can provide significant psychological capital to employees who interact with clients on a daily basis, by addressing their psychological needs and increasing their customer orientation.

Need and Significance of the study

Retailing is a dynamic industry where quality customer service adds value in generating revenue. Understanding the relationship between psychological capital and employee engagement helps employers identify methods to improve their employee's psychological resources and thereby enhance job satisfaction, productivity and employee retention.

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Again, the relationship of each psychological capital dimension, hope, self-efficacy, resilience and optimism, towards employee engagement provides a better idea in understanding what all activities or interventions need to be introduced to foster employee well-being and positive work environment along with opportunities for skill enhancement.

Specifically, while there is some research that suggests a positive relationship between psychological capital (such as, hope, self-efficacy, resilience and optimism) and employee engagement, there is a lack of understanding about how these constructs manifest in the context of building material retailers and thereby, increase the generalisability of the research under different geographical and cultural backgrounds.

Therefore, this research study could identify which specific psychological capital factors are particularly relevant for this industry and how they relate to employee engagement. Also, the study finds the significant difference in employee engagement according to marital status, age and work experience of employees.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The data was collected from 100 retail store managers from different districts of Kerala having proficiency in English and at least 1 year of experience in the field. No blue-collar workers were involved in the study.

Instruments

Two instruments were used in this study,

1. ***Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PsyCap) - (Luthens, Avey, Avolio, Norman & Combs, 2007)*** The PCQ consists of four sub-scales, which are self-efficacy, hope, resilience and optimism. The test consists of 24 items that assess a person's PsyCap. The PCQ instrument's subscales have all demonstrated psychometric validity and are widely used in organizational behavior research (Luthans et al., 2007). The internal consistency reliability for this scale is 0.95. The minimum score can be 24 and the maximum score can be 144. The convergent validity shows a positive relationship with core self-evaluations, moderate relationship with extraversion and conscientiousness for PsyCap, whereas it is discriminated from age or education demographics.
2. ***Ultratech Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) - (Wilmer Schaufeli & Arnold Bakker, 2006)*** The UWES-9 has three dimensions to measure employee engagement and are vigor, dedication and absorption. The scale has 9 items and the respondents were assessed on a four point likert scale ranging from 0 to 4, where (0=very low to 4=very high). The Cronbach alpha for this scale is 0.92. And validity measure shows the work engagement is negatively associated with burnout, engagement is discriminated from workaholism.

Procedure

Many retail store managers were contacted individually and the consent to participate in the study was taken by ensuring them confidentiality. The instruments were then sent to each of the participants as Google forms for their convenience. This self-report questionnaire helped obtain the relevant information for the study. The sampling technique used in the study was convenient sampling technique.

IBM SPSS Statistics version 25 was used for conducting the statistical analysis on the data. The statistical techniques used were descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The

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descriptive statistics was used to find the central tendency and variability measures. The inferential statistics used was pearson correlation and independent sample t-test.

RESULTS

Table 1: Descriptive analysis and Correlations

	N	M	SD	Employee Engagement
Psychological Capital	100	194.66	21.23	0.635**
Hope		28.91	4.01	0.546**
Self-Efficacy		29.97	3.99	0.485**
Resilience		25.54	3.79	0.454**
Optimism		25.82	3.96	0.447**
Employee Engagement		27.47	5.31	—

M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation

***Correlation is significant at 0.01 level*

The results obtained from the descriptive statistics data showed that the mean of Psychological Capital is 194.66 and the standard deviation is 21.23. From the subtests of Psychological Capital, Hope obtained a mean score of 28.91 and standard deviation of 4.01, Efficacy had a mean score of 29.97 and standard deviation of 3.99, Resilience obtained a mean of 25.54 along with a standard deviation of 3.79 and Optimism had a mean of 25.82 with a standard deviation of 3.96. In Employee Engagement, the mean score was found to be 27.47 with a standard deviation of 5.31.

The Pearson correlation test was conducted and the results produced a correlation coefficient 'r', statistically significant at 0.01 level. The obtained correlation coefficient, 0.63 indicates a significant and strong positive correlation between psychological capital and employee engagement, that is, as the psychological capital increases employee engagement also increases. The obtained r value, 0.54 showed a moderate positive correlation between hope and employee engagement, 0.48 indicated a moderate positive correlation between self-efficacy and employee engagement, 0.45 indicated a moderate positive correlation between resilience and employee engagement and 0.44 showed that there was a moderate positive correlation between optimism and employee engagement. This implies that as hope, self-efficacy, resilience and optimism increases, employee engagement moderately increases.

Table 2: Independent sample t test based on age, marital status, work experience

Employee Engagement						
		N	M	SD	t	p
Age	Early adulthood	58	25.90	5.546	3.697	0.00
	Middle adulthood	42	29.64	4.125		
Marital Status	Married	56	30.13	3.56	6.810	0.00
	Unmarried	44	24.09	5.27		
Work Experience	Middle level	54	25.81	5.710	-3.571	0.001
	Senior level	46	29.41	4.064		

Independent Sample t test was conducted to understand the difference in employee engagement based on age, marital status and work experience among building material retailers. It was found that the retailers in middle adulthood have a higher value of employee engagement than those retailers in their early adulthood with a t-value of 3.697 and married retailers tend to have higher level of employee engagement when compared to unmarried

retailers with a t-value of 6.810. The results also revealed that the retailers in senior level possess higher employee engagement when compared to those retailers in their middle level work experience with a t-value of -3.571. The p value obtained was less than 0.05, which concluded that there exists a significant difference in the scores of employee engagement among building material retailers based on age, marital status and work experience.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the research study was primarily to identify the relationship between psychological capital and employee engagement and also the relationship between the subtests of psychological capital - hope, self-efficacy, resilience and optimism, and employee engagement. The study also identified whether there was any significant difference in employee engagement based on age, marital status and work experience. The correlation was conducted to understand the relationship between psychological capital and its subscales - hope, self-efficacy, resilience, optimism towards employee engagement. From the results obtained, there exists a significant relationship between psychological capital and employee engagement that marks a strong positive correlation. This indicates that as the psychological capital increases employee engagement increases. This can be supported using the previous study being done that depicted the individual's high psychological capital was positively related to the employee engagement and performance at different work roles (Chaurasia & Shukla, 2014). Employees with high level of engagement and positive behaviour towards work are alert, energetic and know how to control stressful situations at work. They gel with new changes at work and enhance employee retention (Kanten, 2012).

According to the results obtained from the study, there is a significant relationship, that is, there exists a moderate positive association between hope and employee engagement. This implies that as hope increases employee engagement moderately increases. These findings are consistent in par with the previous studies, where hope acts as mediator to enhance the engagement of workers in remote areas (Bareket-Bojmel et.al, 2023). Hope is a cognitive state that allows people to realise their expectations through self-determination and motivates them to work hard to find the best solution (Soni & Rastogi, 2019).

From the study, it is understood that there exists a significant relationship between self-efficacy and employee engagement, with a moderate positive correlation. This finding indicates that as self-efficacy increases employee engagement also moderately increase. It can be supported by the early studies, where there exists a moderate positive relationship between occupational self-efficacy and the various constructs of employee engagement, vigour and absorption, and also a slightly low positive correlation with the dimension dedication (Pati & Kumar, 2010). A disparity will be observed in the levels of engagement in workers of analogous working conditions, therefore right perception of received organizational support and high self-efficacy helps them tackle different challenges and goals (Adil et al., 2020)

The study conducted revealed that there exists a significant relationship, that is, there exists a moderate positive correlation between resilience and employee engagement. This result concluded that as resilience increases employee engagement also increases moderately. These results add further information to the previous studies, which revealed that resilience had a strong direct effect on employee engagement (Cooke et.al, 2020). But in contradiction another study suggests that, on competitive sales environment resilience do not have much impact on employee engagement than perceived organisational support (Meintjes & Hofmeyr, 2018).

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The results of the current study points out that there exists a significant relationship between optimism and employee engagement in the form of a moderate positive correlation. The findings therefore depicts, as the optimism increases there will be a moderate increase in the employee engagement or vice versa. This can be grounded through previous studies observed, which state that higher levels of employee engagement enhance employee optimism and inturn improves the workplace performance of employees (Medlin & Green, 2008). Optimistic employees view completion tasks with best possible outcomes under any circumstance, which adds to their willingness to work to the core, marks enhanced organisational commitment along with greater impact on employee engagement (Ashraf et.al, 2012).

The independent samples t test was done on employee engagement based on marital status and the findings indicated that there exists a significant difference in the scores of employee engagement on building material retailers based on marital status. The studies revealed that the married retailers have more employee engagement than the unmarried retailers. This study can be supported by previous studies stating that risk aversion tendency is more after marriage, therefore the employees will be more engaged to achieve the desired goals to attain success in the field (Kang et al., 2021). The contradicting studies showed that single or unmarried employees tend to have strong employee engagement whereas married employees depicts weaker employee engagement (Vuong & Sid, 2019).

The independent sample t test was conducted on employee engagement based on age level and there exists a significant difference in the scores of employee engagement on building materials retailers based on age. The findings of the study concluded that retailers in their middle adulthood tend to have more employee engagement when compared to those in their early adulthood. This can be supported by previous studies which states that employees in middle adulthood embrace more job security, enjoy their work and have regular pay increase in return of loyalty, thereby tend to have higher employee engagement compared to younger employees (D'Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008). In contradiction to this results, employees in their older age is less engaged if they have fulfilled their bargains at work, have reached retirement age or due to health issues, compared to those in early adulthood (Kite et al., 2005). Moreover, the employee engagement in employees at early adulthood or middle adulthood or older ages depends on job conditions and greater engagement from their parts (James et al., 2011).

The independent sample t test done on employee engagement with respect to the work experience and there exists a significant difference in the scores of employee engagement on building material retailers based on work experience. The results of the current study revealed that retailers at their senior level of working years tend to have more employee engagement compared to those at their middle level or entry level of work. It can be grounded by early studies which stated, employees with longer experience have greater sense of job security, organization and its culture, thus depicting increased organizational commitment and engagement (Tims et al, 2013).

CONCLUSION

The study's main aim or goal was to analyze, identify, and comprehend whether there was a link between psychological capital and its dimensions', hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism, and employee engagement and the scores or level of employee engagement among building materials retailers. The analysis was also done on the level of employee engagement based on various socio-demographic variables chosen for analysis such as, marital status, age and work experience.

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According to the findings obtained from this study, there exists a significant relationship between the scores of psychological capital and employee engagement, exhibiting a high positive correlation. On analyzing the dimensions of psychological capital, it was found that there exists a significant relationship between the scores of hope, self-efficacy, resilience and optimism towards employee engagement with a moderate positive correlation.

According to the results obtained or findings of the study, there exists a significant difference in the scores or levels of employee engagement based on marital status, age and work experience.

Implications

The major implications of the study focus upon the benefits of employee engagement in the retail sector, to enhance the productivity and commitment of the frontline employees in effectively managing the organization with the help of psychological constructs. This might be made possible through constant effort from the part of management, by introducing development programs, engagement activities, and suggestion sessions to make them develop a feeling of belongingness. Developing psychological constructs like hope, self-efficacy, resilience and optimism in employees may also reduce the efforts to supervise, control, direct or evaluate them, due to enhanced employee engagement. Also, it helps employees achieve the existing goals, thrive through different challenges, enhance their dedication and commitment towards the organization leading to development and growth of the organization. This study may also help the store managers in understanding their colleagues, develop different strategies to enhance positive work behaviour in subordinates and make a task routine, and also improve the service climate for employees, stakeholders and customers. And most importantly, a better perceived organizational support might be provided by using these psychological constructs and thereby enhance engagement and performance of employees.

Limitations

1. The data was not collected uniformly from all parts of Kerala, it involved only retail stores in five districts.
2. The study was done using convenient sampling technique and hence the results cannot be generalized to a larger population.
3. The sample size of female store managers were relatively low, therefore gender studies was not possible.
4. The results self report questionnaires can be highly biased by the need of social desirability.

Future suggestions

From the previous literature, most of the researches were conducted on retail employees from clothing stores or other departmental stores and limited researches have been conducted on building material retail stores, especially among the store managers. Further research can be conducted on entrepreneurs in retail sector, in order to understand the level of psychological capital and motivation they have, to manage the overall business, conflict between employees and to ensure organisation citizenship behaviour. Qualitative research study and experimental study using different intervention techniques can be done to explore the wider possibilities of the study. Various other small scale business groups, including frontline management employees and blue collar workers can also be analysed to understand different aspects of the study. Different sociodemographic variables can also be used to

determine the significance difference in psychological capital, employee engagement and their subscales.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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