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Research Paper

Assessment of the Relationship Between Psychological Capital and Leadership Skills Among Youth

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ABSTRACT

The present study was designed to assess the relationship between Psychological capital (PsyCap) and leadership skills among youth. PsyCap is "an individual's positive psychological condition of development marked by self-efficacy, hope, optimism and resilience". Leadership skills include the abilities or strengths shown by people in management roles that help them in guiding and encouraging their team toward achieving common organizational goals. For the present study, a sample of 100 youngsters in the age range of 19-22 years was drawn from three different colleges of Patiala city. The results suggest that psychological capital is significantly related with leadership skills. The findings have significant implications in the area of training youth to prepare them to become future leaders.

Keywords: Psychological Capital, Leadership Skills, Hope, Optimism

'Today's youth are tomorrow's leaders', given the significance of this statement, it is vital to investigate the underlying factors that facilitate leadership skills. A lot of research (Pitichat et al, 2018; Şeşen et al, 2019) has been done to identify factors that make effective leadership possible. Ever since the wave of 'Positive Organizational Behaviour'(POB) the role of Psychological capital (PsyCap)in effective leadership has been stressed upon. With this backdrop, the goal of the present research work was to find the relationship between positive psychological capacities (PsyCap) and leadership skills in young people.

Psychological capital (PsyCap) emerges from a substantial corpus of research initiated by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) in the aftermath of the positive psychology movement. Luthans and his colleagues developed the notion of Psychological Capital (PsyCap) by applying these findings to the workplace (Luthans et al., 2007). It combines the criteria of being positive, theory-based and research-based, and state-like open to development, change, and management in order to increase performance. They define PsyCap as "an individual's positive psychological condition of development marked by self-efficacy, hope, optimism and resilience". Four of these conditions were bundled into the higher-order construct "positive psychological capital (PsyCap)" by Luthans and Youssef (2004). Positive psychologist Csikszentmihalyi (as described in Kersting 2003) noted that such psychological capital is built by a pattern of investment of psychic resources that

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results in getting experience rewards from the present moment while also enhancing the possibility of future benefit.

Positive psychological constructs include self-efficacy, hope, resilience and optimism, also known as the **HERO** components of psychological capital (Luthans & Youssef, 2004).

- 1. Hope: Hope is a positive motivating state that is founded on an interactively acquired sense of success (Snyder et al., 1991). It also includes elements of agency and journey. Agency is goal-directed energy, while a route is a plan for achieving goals. It is a focused attention on personal goals and a way or alternative approaches to get people to the aim. Hope is a tool that drives people to complete their professional duties. It functions as a path to achieving the objectives (Snyder, 2000; Snyder et al., 1996).
- 2. Self-efficacy: The first and the most theoretically conceived and researched dimension of PsyCap is self-efficacy. This dimension has been best matched with all of the POB criteria (Luthans, 2002). It is an individual's conviction or belief about his or her skills to mobilise cognitive resources, motivation, and take that course of action required to successfully execute a specific task at work (Stajkovic and Luthans, 1998). It involves a person's general belief while performing, which goes beyond the real abilities that lead to task fulfilment.
- **3. Resilience**: Resilience is the developable ability to recover from adversity, disagreement, failure, or even positive occurrences, progress and more responsibility (Luthans, 2002). It is defined as the ability to rebound from adversity or a discouraging process, allowing people to look at overwhelming problems with optimism. It was demonstrated that resilient people can change for the better despite adversity. Overcoming challenges (Youssef & Luthans, 2007) and having good coping mechanisms to overcome setbacks and recover with a higher degree of motivation are characteristics of people with strong resilience (Richardson, 2002).
- **4. Optimism:** Optimism is a psychological intention and anticipation to hope for the greatest and most positive outcome attainable. It has a favourable impact on both mental and physical well being. This allows people to live their lives more easily and without stress. Optimists keep their distance from melancholy and gloom. It is a generic hope for a better future.

Leadership

Leadership is defined as the ability to lead. It is a set of characteristics, attributes, concepts, and skills required to persuade people to take ownership of a work, mission, or goal, regardless of the organization/institution. According to Murnane and Levy (1996), "Leadership is the ability and readiness to inspire, guide, direct or manage others." A good leader must be goal-oriented, cooperative, energetic, diligent, self-confident, tolerant of stress, willing to assume responsibility, conceptually skilled, diplomatic, cautious, and socially skilled.

Likewise, Aghdaei (2008) discusses the notion of "shadow of a leader," in which the leader shows the desired behaviour. He goes on to say that showing positive behaviour repeatedly drives people to follow. Furthermore, Newcomb (2005), Hesselbein, Goldsmith, and Somerville (2002) emphasise the importance of leaders in inspiring, engaging, and promoting an environment in which the team can generate new ideas and solutions to enhance the institution. A leader must explain clearly what is required (Weiss, 2000).

Leaders must also understand and address failure. "Failure can become the next stage of learning, the beginning of another new creative concept," Hesselbein, Goldsmith, and

Somerville (2002) noted. Failure can be a valuable learning experience and should not be punished. In addition, by punishing failure, followers may be more hesitant to promote novel ideas for fear of failing. Followers must be organised and managed by leaders. While innovation requires the coordinated actions of others to be successful (Hesselbein, Goldsmith, and Somerville, 2002), not incorporating everyone might result in increased resistance to change. According to Gratton and Erickson (2007), the success or failure of a team's collaboration reflects the philosophy of the organization's top executives. When executives invest in strengthening social bonds and model collaborative conduct, teams do better.

Leaders must be able to adapt to "changing circumstances" and deal with them. They are critical for promoting ethical norms, as well as demonstrating and advocating ethical behaviour to staff (Stansbury, 2009). The leadership skills in the present study have been assessed using a questionnaire developed by Peter Northouse (2011). The skills approach is a leader-centered perspective that stresses leadership competencies. In the three-skill approach, effective leadership depends on three basic personal skills:

- **1.** Administrative Skills: These are the abilities required by a leader to operate an organisation and carry out its purposes and goals. It is separated into three sets of skills: people management, resource management, and technological competency.
- 2. Interpersonal Skills: These are the abilities that enable a leader to work effectively with subordinates, peers and superiors to achieve the goals of the organisation. It is divided into three (3) parts: being socially perceptive, showing emotional intelligence, and managing interpersonal conflicts.
- **3.** Conceptual Skills: These involve the thinking or cognitive aspects of leadership and are critical to such things as creating a vision or strategic plan for an organization. It is divided into three parts: problem solving, strategic planning, and creating a vision.

Although all the three talents are vital for leaders, their importance varies according to the management level. Technical and interpersonal abilities are particularly significant at lower management levels. The three separate competencies are equally crucial for middle managers. At the highest levels of management, conceptual and interpersonal abilities are more crucial than technical talents. Leaders are more effective when their abilities correspond to their management level (Mumford, et al., 2000).

Psychological capital aids in the development of young adolescents' knowledge and essential life skills, allowing them to deal effectively with risky situations in their daily lives. Similarly, leadership skills prepare the youngsters to assume important roles in their professional lives. It is important to assess the relationship between Psychological Capital and leadership skills in order to plan training programs for the youth and help them develop skills that are essential to succeed in life.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The proponents of PsyCap claim that it forces individuals to confront the question of "who you are" (Luthans and Youssef, 2004), resulting in increased self-awareness, which is essential for the growth of leadership (George & Sims, 2007). According to research, PsyCap is a basic asset of authentic leadership (Luthans and Avolio, 2003; Walumbwa et al., 2008) that is unique and critical for modern businesses (George & Sims, 2007, Toor, 2008). Jensen and Luthans (2006) investigated the link between Positive Psychological Capital (PPC) and Authentic Leadership (AL). This study was the first preliminary and exploratory step toward applying and comprehending PPC and AL to discover small company

entrepreneurs. The preliminary findings imply that positive psychological capital has the ability to recognise and nurture entrepreneurs so that they can truly lead their budding businesses to desired successful outcomes. It was also discovered that PPC and Authentic Leadership are favourably connected.

Correspondingly, Rego et al. (2012) proposed that psychological capital variables such as optimism, self-efficacy, resilience, and hope work as moderators in the relationship between leadership and ensuing creativity. Similarly, Gupta and Singh (2014) conducted a study in the Indian R&D sector, focusing on the interaction between employee innovation, leadership, and psychological capital. The results of data collection from 496 government employees revealed that the relationship between leadership and innovative behaviour was totally mediated by psychological capital.

Authentic leaders are filled with self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience (Jensen and Luthans, 2006). With these characteristics, authentic leaders are well prepared to handle the obstacles of commercial initiatives by knowing their followers and realising the full potential of their vision, developing organisational trust (Norman, 2006), and recognising the situation's complexity (Avey, 2014). They can also grow their followers into authentic leaders (Luthans and Avolio, 2003; George and Sims, 2007) through role modelling, monitoring, teaching, and coaching (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). According to research, the transformational leader plays a crucial influence in increasing organisational members' psychological performance (Ghafoor et al., 2011) and well-being (Kelloway et al., 2013). The study was a quantitative one that presented a model in which the four aspects of positive psychological capital (optimism, resilience, self-efficacy, and hope) were viewed as variables mediating the relationship between authentic leadership and organisational commitment. According to the findings of the study, PPC mediates the association between authentic leadership and organisational commitment. However, it was also said that mediation is only used for three of the four components of positive psychological capital (self-efficacy, hope and optimism).

Leonard (2016) attempted to explore the interaction of leadership styles, Psychological Capital and productivity in a quantitative study. According to the study, executives that are more transformational and produce satisfaction have higher sales performance. The investigation also revealed that transformative leaders have sales teams with stronger self-efficacy.

Ishaque et al. (2017) used multiple studies and data methodologies to investigate the relationship between psychological capital (comprised of hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience) and employee performance while preserving leader behaviour as a moderator. The study results show that there is a positive association between psychological capital and employee performance. The importance of leader behaviour in mediating the relationship between psychological capital and employee job performance was also validated.

Thus, the review of literature reveals a strong association between Psychological Capital and leadership skills. However, it is important to mention here that the majority of studies in this regard have been conducted on employees in the organisational set up. There is hardly any study conducted on the student sample as done in the present study.

Need of the Study

Psychological capital has emerged as an important concept in leadership study. PsyCap, which consists of four variables (self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resiliency) is seen as an

important factor in both leadership growth and influence. Previous research work has explored widely the relationship between psychological capital and leadership. Research has reported the importance of psychological capital in leadership effectiveness. In the Indian context, researchers have explored the relationship of Psychological capital with variables like Organizational commitment (Sahoo & Sia, 2015), Emotional intelligence (D'Souza et al, 2021), transformational leadership (Agrawal,2020), Teachers' commitment (Clarence et al, 2021), creative performance (Gupta & Singh, 2014) etc. These research works have been done on samples drawn from various public, private and multinational organizations. The focus of the present research work was on students pursuing graduation in different colleges of Patiala. This difference in the nature of the sample makes the present research work different from the ones that have been carried out in India. It was thought important to explore the relationship between the two variables, namely, Psychological Capital and leadership skills so that intervention programs in this regard can be designed according to the unique and specific needs of the sample.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were to assess the relationship between:

- 1. Hope component of PsyCap and the three dimensions of leadership skills, namely Administrative skills, interpersonal skills and conceptual skills.
- 2. Self-efficacy component of PsyCap and the three dimensions of leadership skills, namely Administrative skills, interpersonal skills and conceptual skills.
- 3. Resilience component of PsyCap and the three dimensions of leadership skills, namely Administrative skills, interpersonal skills and conceptual skills.
- 4. Optimism component of PsyCap and the three dimensions of leadership skills, namely Administrative skills, interpersonal skills and conceptual skills.

Hypothesis

On the basis of review of literature, following hypotheses were formulated:

- 1. There would be a positive correlation between the hope component of PsyCap and the three dimensions of leadership skills, namely Administrative skills, interpersonal skills and conceptual skills.
- 2. There would be a positive correlation between the self-efficacy component of PsyCap and the three dimensions of leadership skills, namely Administrative skills, interpersonal skills and conceptual skills.
- 3. There would be a positive correlation between the resilience component of PsyCap and the three dimensions of leadership skills, namely Administrative skills, interpersonal skills and conceptual skills.
- 4. There would be a positive correlation between the optimism component of PsyCap and the three dimensions of leadership skills, namely Administrative skills, interpersonal skills and conceptual skills.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample for the present study comprised 100 (males=50, females=50) participants in the age range of 19-22 years from different colleges of Patiala (Punjab). For the purpose a list of all government and private colleges located in Patiala city was prepared. Out of the total colleges, 4 colleges were randomly selected. The investigator visited these colleges and sought permission from the respective principals to collect data. Then the investigator tried to procure a list of students enrolled in under graduate courses like BA, B.Com., BCA, BSC, etc. Thereafter, the investigator was directed to meet the teachers, who were willing to

provide a list of students enrolled in their subjects. From these lists, 200 students were randomly selected. Only 147 students gave their consent to be a part of the study. The scales were administered to these students. In this way data was collected from 147 participants. However, data of 47 participants could not be used for statistical analysis, as it was found to be incomplete leaving a data of 100 participants for further analysis.

Tools Used: The following tools were used in the present study: 1. Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ, Luthans et al., 2007):

The PCQ is a 24 item questionnaire developed by Luthans (Luthans et al., 2007). It consists of four subscales, which are Hope, Self-efficacy, optimism and Resilience. Each subscale is comprised of six items giving a total of 24 items. Examples of the items include:

- I feel confident in discussing with my classmates and teachers about the module/course work. (Self-Efficacy)
- If I find myself in a jam at study, I could think of many ways to get out of it. (Hope)
- When I have a setback at my study/ course work, I have trouble recovering from it, moving on. (Resilience)

Response for each item is rated on a 6-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Participants are needed to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement by circling their rating on the Likert scale. Reliability Measures for the PCQ-24 item questionnaire ranges from 0.796 (Jafri, 2013) to 0.94 (Luthans et al., 2007).

2. Leadership Skills Questionnaire (Northouse, 2001):

Leadership scale developed by Northouse (2001) was used in the present research study. It provides a profile of leadership skills showing the strengths and weaknesses of the respondents. The scale is designed to measure the leadership skills in three broad types: Administrative skills, Interpersonal Skills and Conceptual skills. It consists of 18 items. All the items are answered using 5 point scale (1= not true, 2 = seldom true, 3 = occasionally true, 4 = somewhat true, 5 = very true). Scoring for the three types of skills is done as per the items assessing each skill as mentioned in the manual. Score for each skill is obtained by calculating the total of scores of items under each dimension. Thus, there are three sets of scores for each participant. The questionnaire has Cronbach's alpha of .82 and test-retest reliability of .78.

Procedure

The present study was designed to study the relationship between psychological capital and leadership skills among youth. For this purpose, students studying in different colleges of Punjab were approached. They were administered two questionnaires- PCQ (Psychological Capital Questionnaire) and Leadership Skills Questionnaire. The scores were calculated and correlation analysis was applied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to analyze the association of psychological capital with leadership skills Pearson Product movement correlation was applied.

Table no.1: shows the correlation coefficient between different dimensions of Psychological Capital and leadership skills.

Hope	Self- Efficacy	Resilience	Optimism	Administrative Skills	Interpersonal Skills	Conceptual Skills
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Hope	1.00						
Self-Efficacy	0.22*	1.00					
Resilience	0.53**	0.53**	1.00				
Optimism	0.41**	0.49**	0.64**	1.00			
Administrative Skills	0.10	0.13	0.24*	0.17	1.00		
Interpersonal Skills	0. 72**	0.53**	0.47**	0.35**	0.88**	1.00	
Conceptual Skills	0.19*	0.31**	0.15	0.18	0.79**	0.80**	1.00

 $p < 0.05 \ **p < 0.01$

The first critical finding of present study was significant correlation of construct Hope (psychological capital) with interpersonal skills (r=0.72, p<=.01), conceptual skills (r=0.19, p<=.05) constructs of leadership skills. The explanation for the findings could be based on the fact that leaders possessing greater hope have greater willpower. Hope functions as a path to achieving the objectives (Snyder, 2000; Snyder et al., 1996). Individuals with high levels of hope are more determined and driven to set and pursue tough goals, as well as generate a variety of different paths to achieve goals (Snyder, 2002; Luthans & Church, 2002). This enables these individuals to work effectively with their team, showing more understanding and compassion. Similarly, such individuals have more clarity of thought and focus and hence better conceptual skills.

As shown in the correlation matrix, self efficacy component of Psychological Capital was found to be significantly correlated with Interpersonal Skills (r=0.53, p<=0.01) and conceptual skills (r=0.31, p<=0.01). Major reviews of leadership literature cite self-confidence as an essential element of effective interpersonal skills of leadership (Bass, 1990; Yukl and Van Fleet,1992; House and Aditya, 1997; Northhouse, 2001) and Locke, (1991) suggests that the idea that self-confidence is a necessary trait for successful leadership is undisputed. Maurer, (2001) found that effective leaders share many of the characteristics of efficacious people in that they are motivated, persistent, goal-directed, and resilient.

Individuals with high self-efficacy are also high in conviction (or confidence) to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, or courses of action required to successfully complete a certain activity within a given setting (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). This confidence enables them to be high in emotional intelligence and show respect and concern for their subordinates and team members. Not only this, high efficacious individuals are also efficient in handling interpersonal distress. Furthermore, they also exhibit sharp cognitive ability which is very important for creating vision.

Resilience was found to be significantly correlated with two of the leadership skills assessed, namely administrative (r=0.24, p<0.01) and interpersonal (r=0.47, p<0.01). Resiliency helps an individual to have the ability to have a administrative system to provide appropriate measures to uncertainties and bounce back to previous conditions after facing risks, shocks, disasters, and other threats to organizational stability. It also enhances the ability of social systems to remain stable during and after adversity (Howard and Irving, 2013). Interpersonal skills are the key factors to build a leader's capacity for resilience. A resilient person ensures a social network of support in times of need. He has an access to trusted peers and colleagues, time to reflect and collaborate with them and seek more opportunities that demand less social isolation and more chances for partnerships (Nishikawa, 2006).

The last finding of the present research work shows significant correlation between Optimism and Interpersonal Skills (r=0.35, p<=0.01). Scheier and Carver (1985) express Optimism as the propensity of an individual to look after the outcome even if the problems are associated. An optimistic individual believes that the end result will be good and a pessimistic person believes that the end result will not be good for him. Because optimistic leaders balance the positive and the negative, their communication is more engaging. Optimistic leaders are better at telling positive stories about what the future could look like and they help those who are feeling anxious to see there's a way through the current situation. This helps them to make better interpersonal relations with others. Optimists report having more social support than pessimists (Brissette et al., 2002), they are more accepted by others (Scheier, Carver & Kus, e1994a), and their friendships are longer in duration (Geers, Reilley, & Dember, 1998). Because optimists function better socially, they function better psychologically.

The findings also reveal non-significant correlation between hope, self-efficacy and optimism constructs of Psychological Capital and administrative skills of leadership and optimism construct of Psychological Capital and Administrative and conceptual skills of leadership. This could be because participants may be lacking in goal setting behaviour, unable to generate creative ideas and facing a lot of academic challenges that they found difficult to manage.

Overall, the findings are consistent with previous research in showing positive and significant correlation between Psychological Capital and leadership skills.

IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUSION

Even though conclusions should be reached with caution, the study contributes to the literature by highlighting the links between psychological capital and leadership skills. The findings have significant implications in the area of training and development of leadership skills in the youth through developing their Psychological Capital. Both Psychological Capital and leadership skills are important for Entrepreneurial development. By developing these we can ensure that the capabilities of youth are invested in the right direction.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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