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Research Paper

Demographic Predictors of Psychological Capital among College Youth

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the psychological capital of 325 college students in Delhi, utilising the Psychological Capital Questionnaire, which was administered via a convenience sampling method for data collection. The result reveals key insights into the influence of demographics on psychological Capital. It finds no significant differences in psychological capital based on sex or religion. Still, it does show that youth from unreserved castes and higher socioeconomic statuses exhibit greater psychological capital than their counterparts from reserved castes and lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The research addresses a gap in research on demographics and psychological capital. The study emphasises the need for a nuanced understanding of how these demographic factors impact youth development, suggesting areas for future research while acknowledging limitations, such as a narrow and unequal sample demographic and the need for adaptation of measurement tools.

Keywords: *Youth, Psychological Capital, Demographic Factors*

According to India's Census 2011, youth (15-24 years) in India constitute one-fifth (19.1%) of India's total population, which was expected to become a 34.33% share of the total population by 2020 (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 2017). Youth well-being will hence be intrinsically linked to long-term national well-being. With the emergence of the scientific field of positive psychology, the interest in understanding individuals from a positive psychological resource perspective has become a current development in higher education scholarship (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007a; Jafri, 2013; Luthans, Luthans, & Jensen, 2012; Riolli, Savicki & Richards, 2012). Psychological capital, drawn from positive psychology, challenges the preoccupation with what is wrong and dysfunctional in people to what is right and good about them. Specifically, it focuses on strengths rather than weaknesses, health and vitality rather than illness and pathology.

Psychological Capital is a multidimensional construct, which has been defined as "an individual's positive psychological resources and is characterised by (1) having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3)

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persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to attain success" (Luthans & Youssef, 2004; Luthans, Avolio, Avey & Norman, 2007b). Studies conducted across cultures and countries, using different methodological approaches and statistical analyses, have collectively revealed support for associations between the individual HERO constructs and combined HERO as PsyCap, and a range of desirable (e.g., positive affect, flourishing) and undesirable (e.g., negative affect) outcomes in school samples (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007a; Datu, King & Valdez, 2018; Carmona–Halt, Salanova, Llorens & Schaufeli, 2019). PsyCap constructs have been empirically established in PsyCap workplace studies (Avey, Reichard, Luthans & Mhatre, 2011; Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). However, PsyCap theory remains largely under-studied among youth samples. Therefore, this study aims to explore the determinants of psychological capital among college-going youth.

Aim of the research: To study the demographic predictors of Psychological Capital among college youth.

Research Hypotheses

- *Hypothesis 1*: Females will have higher psychological capital than males.
- *Hypothesis 2:* Hindu religion youth will have higher psychological capital than *other religion* youth.
- *Hypothesis 3:* Unreserved caste youth will have higher psychological capital than reserved caste youth.
- *Hypothesis 4:* Upper SES youth will have higher psychological capital than Upper Lower SES youth.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants were 325 youth enrolled in colleges at the University of Delhi. The original sample included 338 participants, but 13 datasheets were excluded due to being grossly incomplete. The participants ranged in age from 15 to 24 years. The mean age was 19.12 years (SD = 1.23). Of the 325 participants, 49.5% (161) were male, and 50.5% (164) were female. Regarding religion, 76.9% were Hindu, 18.2% Muslim, 2.2% Sikh, 0.9% Christian, 1.2% Buddhist, and 0.6% identified as Atheist. In terms of caste, 61.8% belonged to the Unreserved caste, 24.6% to OBC, 12.6% to SC, and 0.9% to ST. For socioeconomic status, participants reported the education and occupation of the family head and the monthly family income. Based on this, 36% were Upper Class, 38.2% Upper Middle, 17.2% Lower Middle, and 8.6% Upper Lower.

Measurement

The data for the study were collected using traditional paper-based testing. Participants responded to the survey items provided to them in the form of a booklet, which had: (1) an Informed Consent Form (2) a Socio-Demographic Form and (3) a Psychological Capital Questionnaire (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007a).

Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ)

PsyCap was measured using a 24-item psychological capital questionnaire (PCQ). This 24-item PCQ instrument is a 6-point Likert-type scale. PCQ has four dimensions, namely, hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy. Each sub-component consists of six items. Hope

scale is adopted from Snyder et al. (1996). Optimism is taken from Scheier & Carver (1985). Self-efficacy from Parker (1998) and resilience from Wagnild & Young (1993). The PCQ instrument is commonly used in organisational behaviour research. However, recently the PCQ has been used frequently in other settings, including college students (Bahadori Khosroshah, Hashemi Nosratabad, & Babapour Kheirodin, 2012; Siu, Bakker & Jiang, 2014; Barnes & Cassidy, 2018). For this study, items that reference work settings were changed to make them general items, exactly as they appear in their original scale from which the items were initially taken. These modifications change the context but do not change the meaning of the items. Therefore, these modifications were minor modifications that do not require assessing the psychometric adequacy of the modified measure (Stewart, Thrasher, Goldberg & Shea, 2012; Coons et al., 2009).

Sampling procedure

For this study, the convenience sampling method was employed. Students aged between 15-24 years took part in this study. Their participation in this research was voluntary without any personal benefits.

RESULT

Hypothesis 1: Females will have higher psychological capital than males

Table 1: Comparison of Males and Females on the Measure of Psychological Capital

Measure	Gender				*t*	*p*
	Male[a]		Female[b]			
	M	SD	M	SD		
Self-efficacy	26.50	3.358	26.60	3.343	-.287	.774
Hope	29.80	3.999	29.00	3.473	1.915	.056
Resilience	27.55	3.491	27.78	3.583	-.596	.552
Optimism	26.16	3.706	26.09	3.921	.165	.869
Psychological Capital	110.00	10.125	109.48	10.823	.451	.652

n^a=161, n^b= 164, df =323

The result shown in *Table 1* suggests that there is no evidence to suggest that male (*M*=110.00, *SD*= 10.125) and female participants (*M*= 109.48, *SD*= 10.823); *t* (323) = .451, *p* =.652) differ in psychological capital and its subscales - self-efficacy, hope, resilience and optimism. Therefore, the hypothesis that females will have higher psychological capital than males stands rejected.

Hypothesis 2: Hindu religion youth will have higher psychological capital than Other religion youth.

The result shown in *Table 2* suggests that there is no evidence to suggest that Hindu (*M*=110.27, *SD*= 10.662) and *Other Religion* youth (*M*= 107.96, *SD*= 9.658); *t* (323) = 1.679, *p* =.094) differ in psychological capital and its subscales - self-efficacy, hope, resilience and optimism. Therefore, the hypothesis that *Hindu religion* youth will have higher psychological capital than *other religion* youth stands rejected.

Table 2: Comparison of Hindu and Other Religions on the Measure of Psychological Capital

Measure	Religion				*t*	*p*
	Hindu[a]		Other Religion[b]			
	M	SD	M	SD		
Self-efficacy	26.63	3.388	26.29	3.208	.759	.448
Hope	29.48	3.778	29.09	3.699	.789	.431
Resilience	27.88	3.430	26.93	3.793	1.553	.141
Optimism	26.27	3.941	25.64	3.315	1.261	.208
Psychological Capital	110.27	10.662	107.96	9.658	1.679	.094

n^a=250, n^b= 75, df =323

Hypothesis 3: Unreserved caste youth will have higher psychological capital than reserved caste youth.

Table 3: Comparison of Unreserved and Reserved Caste on the Measure of Psychological Capital

Measure	Class				*t*
	Unreserved[a]		*Reserved*[b]		
	M	SD	M	SD	
Self-efficacy	27.12	3.226	25.62	3.339	4.027***
Hope	29.84	3.671	28.68	3.801	2.726**
Resilience	28.09	3.416	26.98	3.583	2.789**
Optimism	26.28	4.037	25.87	3.412	.948
Psychological Capital	111.3	10.493	107.15	9.939	3.566***

*n^a=251, n^b= 124, df =323, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001*

The result shown in *Table 3* suggests that participants of the Unreserved Caste (*M*=111.33, *SD*= 10.493) have more psychological capital than participants of the Reserved Caste (*M*= 107.15, *SD*= 9.939); *t* (323) =3.566, *p* <0.001, particularly on the domain of self-efficacy, hope, and resilience. At the same time, no such difference was found in optimism. Therefore, the hypothesis that Unreserved caste youth will have higher psychological capital than reserved caste youth stands mostly accepted.

Hypothesis 4: Upper SES youth will have higher psychological capital than Upper Lower SES youth.

Table 4: Comparison of Participant's Socioeconomic Status on the Measure of Psychological Capital

Measures	Upper SES[a]		Upper Middle SES[b]		Lower Middle SES[c]		Upper Lower SES[d]			
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F	*Post hoc*
Self-efficacy	27.13	3.236	26.74	3.273	25.35	3.460	25.69	3.285	4.455**	U SES > LM SES

Hope	29.57	3.590	29.30	3.936	28.80	3.997	30.21	3.098	1.026	
Resilience	28.38	3.321	27.48	3.375	26.45	3.795	27.86	3.980	3.975**	U SES > LM SES
Optimism	26.35	3.829	25.95	4.210	25.87	3.295	26.45	2.811	.370	
Psychological Capital	111.43	10.681	109.48	10.233	106.47	10.689	110.21	9.057	2.894*	U SES > LM SES

The result shown in *Table 4* suggests a significant difference in psychological capital for the four SES conditions [F (3, 321) = 2.894, p<.05]. Post hoc comparisons using Hochberg's GT2 test indicated that youth of Upper SES (M = 111.43, SD = 10.681) have significantly higher psychological capital than the Lower Middle SES condition (M = 106.47, SD = 10.689), particularly in the domain of self-efficacy and resilience. No significant difference in hope [F (3, 321) = 1.026, p>.05] and optimism [F (3, 321) = .370, p>.05] for the four SES conditions was found. Therefore, the hypothesis that Upper SES youth will have higher psychological capital than Upper Lower SES youth stands partly accepted.

DISCUSSION

Demographic Predictors of Psychological Capital

There is a lack of research linking demographic variables (sex, religion, caste and socioeconomic status) with psychological capital, particularly with the youth population. Sex and religion were found to have no connection to any aspect of psychological capital. Sabot & Hicks (2020) in their research on the relationship of psychological capital with psychological well-being found no difference between male and female participants on psychological capital. This study provides evidence that youth psychological capital differs with caste and socioeconomic status. Participants of Unreserved caste and higher socioeconomic status have more psychological capital than participants of reserved class and low socioeconomic status. This finding collaborates with previous research findings that socioeconomic status has a positive correlation with self-efficacy (Han, Chu & Song, 2014). The youth of higher socioeconomic status have higher self-efficacy, while the youth of lower socioeconomic status have lower self-efficacy. The youth of lower SES have lower social support, which weakens their sense of self-efficacy and optimism during the socialisation process (Piko, Luszczynska & Fitzpatrick, 2013). Similarly, the youth of the reserved caste are mostly of low socioeconomic status, so the youth of the reserved caste have lower psychological capital. Agarwal & Priyanka (2017) have examined the relation of caste with self-efficacy and found that youth belonging to the scheduled caste have lower self-efficacy.

Strengths of the Study

Research on demographics concerning psychological capital is limited. This study provided literature that not only supports previous findings but also opens new areas for future research. This study includes caste identity as a demographic variable. Euro-American research includes race and ethnicity as demographic variables, but caste, which is somewhat parallel to race and ethnicity, hardly gets mentioned as a demographic variable. Lastly, most

of the research on socioeconomic status uses family earnings as an indicator of the participant's socioeconomic status, which is a minimal view. This research takes the head of the family's education level, occupation level and family income as the determinants of the participant's socioeconomic status. This provides a more holistic understanding of the participants' socioeconomic status.

Limitations of the Research

This study had several limitations. First, this study is performed with youth who can speak English, reside in Delhi and study in some of the best colleges of this country. Therefore, the findings of this study can't be generalised in a diverse country like India. Second, the measurement of psychological capital used in this study is adapted from a workplace setting to a youth setting. Though the details on the modification of the scale and the details regarding psychometric properties have been given, numerous studies have shown that age-related downward extensions of adult scales are fraught with problems, not least because they do not accurately reflect the developmental nuances of the sample (e.g., Campbell, Rapee & Spence, 2001; Viar-Paxton et al, 2015). Finally, participants were unequal on a few demographic variables, so they were regrouped into broader categories. Therefore, a bigger and more balanced sample size would have been better.

Overall, this research provides a much-needed literature examining the relationship of socio-demographic characteristics with youth psychological capital.

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Conflict of Interest
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