

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN PSYCAP OF WORKING PROFESSIONALS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The present study explores gender differences in PsyCap in working professionals in India. The sample consisted of 108 working professionals, 47 females and 61 males. Psychological Capital Questionnaire-24 was administered on the sample. Data was analysed using inferential statistics (t-test). It is found that no significant differences exist in PsyCap between males and females. Slight differences in all 4 dimensions– hope, optimism, resilience and efficacy were however found.

Keywords: Gender, Psychological Capital, Working Professionals.

INTRODUCTION

SIOP defines Industrial-Organisational (I-O) psychology as the scientific study of the workplace. The knowledge foundation and scientific methods of psychology are applied to important issues in business, including leadership, motivation, coaching, performance, talent management, assessment, selection, training and organisational development.

According to the Bureau of Labour Statistics, industrial-organisational psychology was the fastest-growing occupation in the United States in 2014. Employment in the field is expected to expand 2.5 percent between 2019 and 2029. I-O psychologists work on strategy and measurement, staffing, learning/development, talent management, and performance management throughout the employment lifecycle. The importance of industrial-organisational psychology as a distinct branch of psychology has undoubtedly grown in the past 1-1.5 year because of the pandemic. Organisations are faced with brand new issues due to dynamic changes in the workplace as well as introduction of home-based work mode. Individuals have come face to face

with unprecedented challenges and susceptibility to mental illness too has risen. Dalal, Roy, Choudhary, Kar and Tripathi (2020) concluded in systematic review and meta-analysis on the prevalence of psychological morbidities among the general population, health-care workers, and COVID-19 patients during the COVID-19 pandemic that approximately half of the population faced psychological effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The most commonly reported difficulties across various studies were poor sleep quality (40%), stress (34%), and psychological discomfort (34%). These increased levels of psychological distress are bound to impact almost all aspects of life including the professional sphere. O'Hara in an article dated 5 June 2020 emphasised on the importance of this branch of psychology by stating that industrial and organisational (I/O) psychologists will play a key role in helping open up workplaces following lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

American Psychological Association defines Positive Psychology as the field of psychological theory and research that focuses on the psychological states (e.g., contentment, joy), individual traits or character strengths (e.g., intimacy, integrity, altruism, wisdom), and social institutions that enhance subjective well-being and make life most worth living.

Positive psychology has been defined as the scientific study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions (Gable & Haidt, 2005). An underlying premise of this science is that mental health is more than the absence of mental illness and therefore it is valid and important to enhance well-being and cultivate positive emotions (Keyes, 2007).

Positive psychology in the workplace focuses on increasing job satisfaction, promoting employee well-being, hopeful attitude, resilience and a productive work culture.

Positive organisational behaviour has been defined as "the study and application of positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement" (Luthans, 2002b, p. 59; Nelson & Cooper, 2007; Turner, Barling, & Zaharatos, 2002; Wright, 2003).

Fred Luthans a management scholar was one of the firsts to apply the concept of behavioural science to understand better and effectively manage human behaviour in organisations. He popularised the concept of positive psychological capital (PsyCap). He believed that by abstaining from being preoccupied with personal shortcomings and by focusing more on personal strengths and good qualities, the leaders of present day and their associates can develop confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience, thereby improving both individual and organisational performance.

PsyCap is a core psychological factor of positivity as a whole, and positive organisational behaviour standard that meets states that surpass human and social capital to acquire an upper hand by investing in and developing who you are (Luthans, Luthans, and Luthans, 2004; Luthans and Youssef, 2004). Its four parts are as follows: (a) Hope is a person's motivation to succeed in a given goal in a certain setting, as well as the means by which that work will be completed. (b) Optimism is a person's expectation of positive events. (c) Resilience is the ability to recover from adversity, uncertainty, and failure, as well as respond to changes and demands in life that may be difficult. (d) Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their ability to mobilise motivation, cognitive resources, and behaviours to reach peak performance.

Hope: Hope is dependent on an acquired sense of gainful agency and pathways (Snyder and Colleagues, 1991, p.287). Agency is defined as the will to achieve the planned or desired consequence (Snyder, 2000, 2002; Snyder et al., 1996). The paths consist of recognising goals, subgoals, and substitute methods to accomplish those goals. Individuals that are optimistic employ contingency planning to anticipate potential obstacles and design strategies to overcome these obstacles in order to achieve their goal (Snyder, 2000). Peterson and Luthans (2003) discovered that the levels of hope of managers of fast food restaurants were connected to their unit's financial performance, employee retention, and work satisfaction. Hope has also been linked to “job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and work happiness” in a large cross-sectional sample of employees (Youssef & Luthans, in press).

Optimism: Seligman (1998) describes optimists as individuals who attribute positive outcomes to “internal, stable, and global” causes, and negative outcomes to “external, unstable, and specific” causes. Optimism as a dimension of psychological capital is connected to expectancy of a positive outcome or event attribution, which involves good feelings and motivation, with the proviso of being realistic (Luthans, 2002a). Realistic optimism involves an assessment of what can actually be accomplished and what cannot be in a given situation.

Resilience: Resilience in the workplace is defined as the “positive psychological capacity to rebound, to ‘bounce back’ from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure, or even positive change, progress and increased responsibility” (Luthans, 2002a, p. 702). Resilience in the workplace is an under researched topic. Luthans et al. (2005) found there existed significant link between the resilience of the Chinese workers who were going through significant change and their rated performance; Maddi (1987) found that resilient employees in a firm undertaking a massive downsizing were able to stay healthy and happiness, and maintain performance; Larson and Luthans (2006) found the factory workers’ resiliency related to their satisfaction with their job; and Youssef and Luthans (in press) found that employees’ satisfaction, commitment, and

happiness could all be associated to their resilience.

Self efficacy: Self-efficacy for the workplace was defined by Stajkovic and Luthans (1998b, p. 66) as “the employee’s conviction or confidence about his or her abilities to mobilise the motivation, cognitive resources or courses of action needed to successfully execute a specific task within a given context.” Self efficacy has been found to have a strong positive link with work-related performance. (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998a).

Singh and Khan (2011) conducted a study to look into the differences in psychological capital and happiness between employees of private and government banks. For this purpose, 100 bank employees (50 from the government and 50 from private banks) were chosen at random from the tri-city area (Chandigarh, Mohali & Panchkula) and Psychological Capital Scale and Oxford Happiness Questionnaire were administered. The study found a significant difference in psychological capital and happiness between government and private bank employees, with private sector bank employees scoring higher than their government sector counterparts on both dimensions of psychological capital and happiness.

Zubair and Kamal (2015) conducted a study to investigate the direct and indirect effects of work-related flow and psychological capital on employee creativity among software house employees. 532 participants were recruited from software houses in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, and they ranged in age from 25 to 52 years ($M = 32.53$). They finished the assessments of psychological capital, job flow, and employee inventiveness. The findings revealed that psychological capital, work-related flow, and employee creativity were all significantly positively connected. Work-related flow was found to be a strong predictor of employee creativity using stepwise regression analysis. Findings also found that men had more psychological capital, work-related flow, and creativity than women.

Parthi and Gupta (2016) found a significant gender difference in the psychological capital subdimensions of optimism and resilience. Their study sought to investigate gender differences in psychological capital, job satisfaction, and organisational climate. For this purpose, a total of 100 employees (50 males and 50 females) from BSNL Telecom were randomly selected. The information was gathered using the Psychological Capital Scale (Luthans et al., 2007), the Job Satisfaction Scale (Singh & Sharma, 1999), and the Organisational Climate Scale (Pethe, Chaudhari & Dhar, 2001). Female employees had higher levels of optimism, while male employees had higher levels of resilience.

Lamba and Sokhi (2017) conducted a study to find out gender differences in PsyCap in R & D organisations and found out that male professions had higher self efficacy while there was no

statistical evidence to support differences in hope, optimism and resilience.

Rani and Chaturvedula (2018) in their study concluded that statistical evidence did not support gender differences in PsyCap.

Chaudhry and Narad (2022) investigated the relationship between adolescents' academic achievement and psychological capital. The sample of the study constituted 122 boys and 79 girls from both government and private secondary schools of Ghaziabad. PCQ-24 was administered to measure PsyCap and 10th standard percentage was used as a measure of academic achievement. T-test was used to compare means across genders and types of schools. Link between the variables was determined using correlation. It was concluded that : (1) Girls exhibited higher levels of self-efficacy, hope, and overall psychological capital. (2) Performance of girls in terms of academic achievement was better than boys. (3) Private school pupils exhibited higher levels of self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and overall psychological capital when compared with government school students. (4) Private school students outdid government school students in terms of academic achievement. (5) A considerable positive association was found between teenage general PsyCap, efficacy, optimism and resilience, and academic accomplishment.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

The present study aims at understanding the gender differences between males and females in PsyCap.

Objectives

1. To assess gender differences in Hope.
2. To assess gender differences in Optimism.
3. To assess gender differences in Resilience.
4. To assess gender differences in Self Efficacy.

Hypothesis

A. H_A : There is a significant difference between males and females in Hope.

H_0 : There is no significant difference between males and females in Hope.

B. H_A: There is a significant difference between males and females in Optimism.

H_O: There is no significant difference between males and females in Optimism.

C. H_A : There is a significant difference between males and females in Resilience.

H_O: There is no significant difference between males and females in Resilience.

D. H_A: There is a significant difference between males and females in Self Efficacy.

H_O: There is no significant difference between males and females in Self Efficacy.

Design

The present study aims at understanding gender differences between males and females in PsyCap. For this purpose, Psychological Capital Questionnaire- 24 by Fred Luthans, Bruce J. Avolio and James B. Avey was used to measure PsyCap. Data was collected through the above mentioned questionnaire and a quantitative method was used for analysis.

Sample

Data was collected from a sample of 47 females and 61 males, resulting in a total sample size of 108 participants. The population of interest for the sample was working professionals. Snowball sampling technique was used to collect the data.

Tools

Psychological Capital Questionnaire- 24

The PCQ- 24 was developed by Fred Luthans, Bruce J. Avolio and James B. Avey. The self-rater version of the scale was used for the study. It consists of 24 items. Each of the four components of PsyCap- Hope, Optimism, Resilience and Self Efficacy is measured by 6 items. There is a six point rating scale that ranges from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). The resulting score represents an individual's level of positive PsyCap.

Procedure

Questionnaire for measuring PsyCap was carefully selected, keeping in mind its reliability and validity. The questionnaire was then shared as a google form. Instructions to filling the questionnaire were mentioned before the respondent began attempting.

Analysis

The present study is a quantitative study. Independent t-test was used to analyse the data.

T-test is used to compare means of two populations to check if a treatment has effect on the population and whether the two populations differ. The literature review too was taken into account to see if the results of the present study are in line with previous research.

RESULTS

Table T-test results comparing males and females on PsyCap

	Gender	n	Mean	SD	df	t-score	p	Decision
Hope	Male	61	30.0	4.12	106	1.658	0.100	Retain H ₀
	Female	47	31.2	3.16				
Optimism	Male	61	27.1	3.18	106	0.483	0.630	Retain H ₀
	Female	47	27.4	3.60				
Resilience	Male	61	28.5	3.46	106	-0.788	0.432	Retain H ₀
	Female	47	27.9	4.28				
Efficacy	Male	61	31.5	3.69	106	-0.857	0.394	Retain H ₀
	Female	47	30.8	4.19				

DISCUSSION

The present study aims at understanding the gender differences between males and females in PsyCap. Based on the aim, the objective of the present study was to assess gender differences in all four dimensions of PsyCap: Hope, Optimism, Resilience and Efficacy.

Based on the objectives decided, the following hypotheses were proposed:

- A. H_A :** There is a significant difference between males and females in Hope.

H₀: There is no significant difference between males and females in Hope.

B. H_A: There is a significant difference between males and females in Optimism.

H₀: There is no significant difference between males and females in Optimism.

C. H_A : There is a significant difference between males and females in Resilience.

H₀: There is no significant difference between males and females in Resilience.

D. H_A: There is a significant difference between males and females in Self Efficacy.

H₀: There is no significant difference between males and females in Self Efficacy.

The p- value of the dimension *hope* from the table is .100 which is more than the level of significance i.e. 0.05, which leads to the retention of the null hypothesis. Therefore there is no significant difference between males and females in Hope.

The p- value of the dimension *optimism* from the table is .630 which is more than the level of significance i.e. 0.05, which leads to the retention of the null hypothesis. Therefore there is no significant difference between males and females in Optimism.

The p- value of the dimension *resilience* from the table is .432 which is more than the level of significance i.e. 0.05, which leads to the retention of the null hypothesis. Therefore there is no significant difference between males and females in Resilience.

The p- value of the dimension *efficacy* from the table is .394 which is more than the level of significance i.e. 0.05, which leads to the retention of the null hypothesis. Therefore there is no significant difference between males and females in Efficacy.

The mean score of females for hope is 31.2 as compared to 30 for males. Chaudhry and Narad conducted a study in 2022 to investigate the relationship between adolescents' academic achievement and psychological capital; they too found out that girls exhibited higher levels of hope as compared to boys.

Females had a mean of 27.4 which is only minutely more than 27.1 of males for optimism. Males had a mean of 28.5 for resilience while for females it was 27.9. These results are in line with what was found out by Parthi and Gupta in 2016. They concluded that female employees had higher levels of optimism, while male employees had higher levels of resilience.

The mean score obtained by males for the dimension efficacy was 31.5 which is slightly higher

than 30.8 obtained by females. This is congruent with results obtained by Lamba and Sokhi (2017).

CONCLUSION

The present study hereby indicates that there are no significant differences between males and females in the four dimensions of PsyCap – Hope, Optimism, Resilience and Efficacy. These results of the present study are congruent to the results obtained by Rani and Chaturvedula (2018). Slight differences in the mean scores obtained by males and females on the four dimensions have been observed and are in line with previous studies.

The sample size of the study was limited as a lot of people did not respond through the online mode. The number of males and females was not equal. There were 61 males and 47 females. This could have affected the result. Social desirability could've had an impact on how the participants responded.

Further studies can be done with a larger sample size. Differences in PsyCap between people working in rural and urban settings can be studied. Similar studies can also be conducted for understanding differences in PsyCap of people working in government & private sectors and organised & unorganised sectors. PsyCap can also be measured for people who have emotionally taxing occupations for example nurses, doctors, police, special educators etc. to guide policies that can make these occupations less emotionally difficult. Corporates can understand what dimensions their employees have scored low on and how they can improve the well-being of their employees.

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