

Authentic Leadership and Psychological Capital: The Impact on Egyptian Employees' Work Well Being

Aya Maher¹, Heba Samir Mahmoud² and Salma El Hefny³

¹Faculty of Management Technology, the German University in Cairo, New Cairo, Egypt

²Faculty of Management Sciences, October University for Modern Sciences and Arts, Egypt

³Faculty of Management Technology, the German University in Cairo, New Cairo, Egypt

aya.ahmed-maher@guc.edu.eg

hsamir@msa.eun.eg

salma.elhefny@guc.edu.eg

Abstract: The objective of this exploratory paper is to discuss the impact of psychological capital on Egyptian employees' work well-being. Some scholars defined positive psychological capital as the individual's positive psychological state that has four components which are efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience. Positive psychological capacities are states rather than fixed traits and they can be developed through the authentic leadership and trust. On the other hand, work well-being; is concerned with human potential power and happiness-oriented. The significance of this study lies in the fact that positive psychological capital should be an issue of concern to leaders of public organizations in Egypt due to its effect on employees' work well being. The significance of the study is also due to the increasing deterioration in public employees' job performance and productivity, which is reflected in the poor quality of services rendered to citizens and their dissatisfaction with many public services offered by these organizations. The research question will then focus on what is the impact of psychological capital on Egyptian employees' work well being. The analysis of this study was drawn from different academic literature and in-depth interviews with three senior employees and leaders in different public organizations. Recommendations revealed that leaders of public organizations should give more attention to the importance of positive psychological resources as core psychological factors that affect their employees' performance, satisfaction, turnover rate and employees' work well being.

Keywords: Psychological capital, authentic leadership, trust, work well-being, efficacy, optimism, hope, resilience & Egyptian public organizations.

1. What is Psychological Capital?

Positive Psychological capital is defined by Avey et al. (2009) as the ability of a person to withstand or face any challenging situation with persistence and patience to reach his targets and goals in order to finally succeed in the short or long term. Coping with such challenges may necessitate that the person may have to switch paths or routes if necessary and try hard to overcome the encountered difficulty. Dawkins et al. (2013) and Luthans et al. (2007) discussed psychological capital as the positive psychological state of development of an individual.

Venkateshand and Blaskovich (2012) mentioned in their study that psychological capital, when present in individuals, provides them with positivity, which also meets with the criteria of positive organizational behaviour that is responsible for the development of individuals and helps them achieve a competitive advantage. Psychological Capital (abbreviated sometimes as PsyCap), has been discussed by many scholars to consist of four positive psychological resources, which are hope, optimism, efficacy, and resilience (Sun et al., 2012; Walumbwa et al., 2010; Dawkins et al., 2013; Shahnawaz and Jafri, 2009).

1.1 Self-Efficacy

According to Peng et al. (2013), self-efficacy is a term used to describe the tendency of individuals to overcome challenges and the persistence to reach their goals and achieve success. It is more or less an individual's self-confidence to achieve a task. Luthans et al. (2008) and Avey et al. (2009) discussed that self-efficacy is the individual's confidence or belief in his abilities through the mobilization of his mental resources and the generation of his internal motivation to take the right action and decision within a certain situation.

Avey et al. (2009) also mentioned that self-efficacy can be developed through mastering, modelling, social persuading and the stimulation of psychological and physiological factors. Firstly, mastering involves gaining some experiences and self-confidence to successfully achieve a certain difficult task. Both Venkatesh and Blaskovich (2012) emphasized the importance of mastery experience to employees and how they feel about

their own progress and success from these experiences. Secondly, modelling involves observing a peer or role model accomplishing a task and being rewarded for that task, which also depends on how influential this peer or role model is or how much the peer is similar to him/her. Thirdly, social persuasion happens when the individual is praised by others for his achievements, which also helps in increasing his self-confidence. Fourthly, stimulation of psychological and physiological factors happens when the employee receives courage and support from others (Luthans et al, 2008; Luthans et al., 2010).

1.2 Optimism

Optimistic people are positive and always expect good things to happen. They have a positive attitude that gives them the energy to challenge any difficulties encountered and look upon them as part of their maturity and growth. According to Ventatesh and Blaskovich (2012), optimistic attitude can be acquired through training oneself to be positive or expect good things to happen and repel bad thoughts, forget about the past with its failures and mistakes, and cherish the present and the future. Avey et al. (2009) mentioned in his study that for optimism to happen, one should make the past lenient and embrace opportunities in the future. Optimism can be developed by the growing of self-awareness for it and trusting oneself to be courageous to accept and take the risks (Wisner et al., 2011). On the other hand, pessimistic people are the ones who always expect events to go bad or dark for them regardless of their past successes. They find it hard on themselves to expect any externalities beyond their expectations or feel threatened to face any risks or challenges (Luthans et al., 2010).

1.3 Hope

Hope has been defined as the state of motivation a person reaches that comprises three components; which are goal, will power, and the way power (Venkatsh and Blaskovich, 2012). Avey et al. (2006) found that individuals with higher hope tend to sustain their level of internal motivation which helps them achieve their goals and remain successful. Hope was also defined by Peng et al. (2013) as the positive state required to accomplish a certain goal. Individuals who have higher hopes tend to be more positive, which helps them reach their goals, while those of lower hopes tend to be more negative and always search for what is missing which results in them failing to achieve their goals (Wisner, 2011). Luthans et al. (2010) believed that individuals need the will power to stay persistent against challenges and obstacles to achieve their goals. The will power is the perception of action, physical and mental energy required to achieve a certain goal. Goals are the results people would like to achieve, while way power is the routes and way to achieve that goal. If one route is blocked, an alternative must be found to feel the hope and achieve success (Wisner, 2011). People with higher hopes usually have higher aspirations and stronger desires to accomplish that goal; they have the ability to draw multiple alternatives to reach their goals (Shahnawaz & Jafri, 2009).

1.4 Resilience

Resilience can be defined as the person's skills and capabilities that enable him/her to rebound back and stand in the face of difficult situations. A resilient person, when subjected to a difficult situation, such as loss of a job, a close family member, or a serious injury, usually has the ability to adapt to any arising or unexpected situation by returning back to his normal positive state, unlike a non-resilient person who cannot recover and shows a lot of distress and frustration (Lee et al., 2013). Peng et al. (2013) and Luthans (2008) also discussed resilience as the person's ability to rebound back from a difficult situation, failure, excessive workload, or responsibility.

Avey et al. (2006) believed that resilient people share some common characteristics like adaptation to change, acceptance of reality, the belief that life has meaning by values and capability of improvisation. The strength of resilience can change the individual depending on the situation itself. It was mentioned that positive psychological capital, when present in any organization, affects employees' well-being and job performance positively.

2. Work Well-Being

Work well-being is a very common term that is well known across organizations. According to Zheng, Zhu, Zhao, and Zhang (2015), the well-being of employees as a term does not have a specific definition; it is a term that is widely known and widely used, everyone is familiar with it, however, nobody has a specific definition for it. However, there are two main perspectives for well-being; one being concerned with human potential power and the other is happiness-oriented. The former regards well-being as a result of either self-positioning,

or personal achievements, or self-actualization. While the latter regards well-being as the personal and subjective experience of happiness.

According to the above, it can be seen that work well-being can be demonstrated through these two distinct and different paradigms; happiness-oriented and human potential power. And through these paradigms, we can have a better understanding of how to achieve work well-being as well as the factors that affect it. First, we will start with understanding how to achieve work well-being, followed by the listing of factors that will surely have an impact on work well-being and its achievement.

2.1 How to achieve work well-being?

Again, when considering the subjective well-being; also noted as SWB, it can be seen that it includes a very wide range of different components; such as, life satisfaction, happiness, stress, the feeling of fulfillment. It also includes another more global components; such as, people's judgments about the lives they live or, simply, their momentary experiences. Research has proven that when measuring subjective well-being (SWB), it can be seen that all the above mentioned components relate one way or another. By combining all the feelings and emotions that people undergo during different occasions; whether it is a nice and fun occasion such as a Christmas dinner, or a sad occasion as the illness of a family member, the memories, the experiences, the global judgments of life situations and, consequently, life satisfaction will all either lead to achieving either positive or negative subjective well-being (Kim-Prieto, Diener, Tamir, Scollon, and Diener, 2005).

Based on what has been said regarding the subjective well-being, the same is applied to the work well-being. If we take police officers as an example, it can be seen that their stressful work can eventually lead to a high turnover rate. The stress, the negative emotions, the negative memories, their momentary experiences; some of the above mentioned components that the SWB encompasses, associated with the various cases they work on can lead to their fallout in case the organization cannot address the concerns they tend to cope with. All this negativity can only lead to lower subjective well-being, which in turn will lead to lower work well-being since their personal feelings will be reflected on their work which, consequently, in turn, will lead to higher turnover rates (Siu, Cheung, and Lui, 2015).

Based on what has been mentioned so far, it can be clearly seen that the human being needs to be happy and well internally in order to ensure a positive work well-being. A person's work is a reflection of that person feels; if he/she is upset, he/she will not perform well. If he/she is happy, he/she will perform well. In order for a person to achieve work well-being, he/she will need to make sure that all their experiences, emotions, feelings and judgments are somehow positive. Research has all also showed that the factors that affect work well-being are almost the same as the components that are encompassed by the SWB.

2.2 Factors affecting work well-being

Kim-Prieto, et al. (2005), stated that alongside the main components that have been mentioned above, there are other factors that should be taken into account that do have an effect on work well-being. Some of these factors are demographic factors that include things like; marriage and income. Others are considered personality factors; for example, goal pursuit and coping. These factors are used to measure the well-being of a person that, again as mentioned above, will reflect the person's work well-being. How can these factors affect work well-being? That is what will be discussed next.

If income is taken as an example, it can be clearly said that any government when measuring a society's well-being, automatically uses the gross domestic product (GDP) as the main measurement. This is due to two specific reasons; first, it is a straightforward measurement that is easy to calculate and is calculated in monetary units, and secondly, it is a great measure of well-being according to economists, because they argue that members of any society; in other words, any human being, would prefer more than less when it comes to income. This means that when the income is high, people will be very happy. And if people are happy, they will be satisfied, and when they are satisfied, they will perform their jobs well and this will reflect their work well-being. Also, happiness is one of the components that is required to achieve work well-being according to what has been mentioned above. Therefore, it can be concluded, that income as a factor will help form a positive impact on work well-being (Valdmanis, 2015).

The same idea of the factor of income, will be applied for the other factors as well. When one is happily married, this will be reflected on them as a person which in turn will be reflected at their work place. When

one can easily achieve their goals, this will allow them to be psychologically happy which in turn will be reflected at their work place. When one can cope with any negativity in their lives or at work, such as the example of the police officers mentioned above, this will allow a subjective well-being which in turn will be reflected on their work place.

3. The effect of positive psychological capital on employee's attitudes and work well-being

Now that all the separate parts have been discussed thoroughly; what positive psychological capital is, what employee attitudes and behaviors are like, what work well-being is, and finally what job performance is, we have reached the part where we combine all the above information together. In this section of the paper, we are going to depict the effect of positive psychological capital on employee's attitudes, work well-being, and job performance. This section will discuss how positive psychological capital can lead to job satisfaction, it will also discuss how positive emotions can lead to lower turnover, how intrinsic motivation can lead to higher levels of job performance, and finally a real life case that took place in Egypt explaining the above.

3.1 How positive psychological capital can lead to job satisfaction?

Based on what has been mentioned previously, the study reveals that employees need to be psychologically happy, and this will in turn be reflected on their jobs. Any organization nowadays, to gain competitive advantage in the market, should have a deep need for innovation. Employees' innovative behaviour serves as the key source that helps make an organization fruitful in the surrounding dynamic business environment which will also help the organization protect its competitive spot in the market. The constant pressure, however, that is applied over the employees pushing them to innovate and be creative, results in very high rates of job stress. When encountered, job stress can lead to a wide range of psychological and physiological problems. Stress is also associated with health issues which in turn may cause an organization to lose billions of dollars in the form of low and/or lost productivity (Abbas and Raja, 2015).

Psychological capital (also known as PsyCap) is one variable that relates to both job stress and innovation. Psychological capital as mentioned previously refers to an "individual's positive psychological resources." This variable has the ability to provide employees with the proper and necessary psychological resources that are positive enough to help reduce job stress and ease the process of innovating. It is quite obvious that positive PsyCap which is characterized with the presence of resilience, hope, efficacy, and optimism, can help with employees' innovation and creativity in the presence of a controlled job stress level. This pool of positive resources will easily give way for employees to be innovative and to challenge themselves and others. Also, employees who have the same pool of positive resources are less likely to encounter any sort of stress in their workplaces (Abbas and Raja, 2015).

3.2 How positive emotions can lead to lower employees' turnover rate?

Siu et al. (2015) discussed emotions as a "multiple component response tendencies that unfold over relatively short time spans." Emotions usually generate when people evaluate the personal meanings of situations and events. Positive emotions in particular are the ones that are caused by pleasant situations and events. What positive emotions do is that they "momentarily broaden people's attention and thinking, enabling individuals to draw flexibly on higher level connections and wider-than-usual ranges of precepts and ideas. In turn, these broadened and flexible outlooks help people to discover and build survival-promoting personal resources." One of the mentioned resources is psychological capital such as being resilient (Siu et al., 2015).

Positive emotions are also likely to expand awareness. This awareness can consequently prompt growth in social and personal resources. Those who are, on a broad level, equipped with social and personal resources are more capable of successfully coping with problems, adapting themselves to their work's environment's adversities, enjoying higher levels of job satisfaction, encountering fewer symptoms of stress, that can be both physiological and psychological, meeting life's challenges and opportunities, and finally experiencing an overall satisfaction with their lives. Therefore, it is safe to say that when individuals have positive emotions, they can easily experience a large sense of satisfaction, which in turn will lessen their desires and intentions to quit their jobs; hence, lower the turnover rates (Siu et al., 2015).

4. Authentic leadership and developing psychological capital (through trust as a mediator):

The four positive psychological capacities of self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience are open for development and can be managed for more work performance. Positive psychological capacities are states rather than fixed traits, that is why they are open for development and enhancement (Luthans et al., 2004). Management scholars have conducted researches in both authentic leadership and positive psychological capital as a response to the economic, geo-political and technological pressures on organizations to select and develop leaders that are capable of creating competitive advantage not only through short-term bottom line but also through showing long-term vision, values, and ethics regarding stakeholders (Calpp-Smith et al., 2009). Authentic leadership is defined as the leadership approach that emphasizes building the leader's legitimacy through honest relationships with subordinates, promoting openness and exhibiting values based on an ethical foundation. Authentic leadership consists of four components. First, is self-awareness which is in depth understanding of the person's strengths, weaknesses and idiosyncratic qualities (Kernis, 2003). Second, relational transparency which entails sincere representation of oneself to the others (Gergen, 1991). Third, balanced processing which involves collecting and using all the relevant and objective information especially that ones challenging the person's prior beliefs (Gardner et al., 2005a). Fourth, internalized moral perspective which refers to self-regulation and self-determination rather than responding solely in accordance with the situational demands (Worline and Quinn, 2003). Authenticity is partially represented by positive psychological capital (Luthans and Avolio, 2003), and authentic leaders are capable of building trustful relationships with their followers (Gardner et al., 2005). Trust in management has been found to intercede the relationship between psychological capital and performance and to partially intercede the relationship between authentic leadership and performance.

4.1 Authentic leadership and psychological capital at the individual and at the group levels:

The empirical research found that authentic leadership "at the individual level" is affecting the follower organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), the follower commitment, follower satisfaction, and follower performance (Walumbwa et al., 2008). The relationship between the psychological capital and performance "at the individual level" however, has been empirically tested and adopted in many contexts ranging from immigrant workers (Youssef & Luthans, 2003), to Chinese factory workers, to business students and engineers (Luthans et al., 2007). Because social phenomena take place in groups and the group interactions affect the nature of psychological constructs (Bandura, 1977), theoretical and empirical analyses have taken place "at the group level" to determine whether there are relationships between authentic leadership, psychological capital, and performance with trust as a mediator. The result of these analyses showed that in order to truly achieve the social process of leadership, the role that peers play (as interfollower social contagion factor) in building the leader's image perceived by the followers must be highly observed; bearing in mind that the analytical approach in use moves away from the traditional leadership assumption which looks primarily at the leaders' behaviors (Meindl, 1995). (Rachel et al., 2009) suggested that when the followers perceive that their leader performs within the context and concepts of authentic leadership, they have greater amounts of trust in this leader which automatically increases their productivity as then they are willing to invest more time and resources looking forward to a positive future outcome. This finding proves that the follower positive psychological capital stemmed from the hope for a positive future outcome based on the increasing amount of trust in the leader results in higher productivity. Based on the previously illustrated findings, it is crucial for the leader to be concerned not only with his personal authenticity; rather he must be able to convey that authenticity to his followers in order to influence them to work toward common goals and objectives (Avolio et al., 2004).

4.2 Trust as a mediator in management between authentic leadership and performance and between psychological capital and performance:

Trust has been defined in the majority of organizational behavior literature as "a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another" (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002, P. 612). Trust has two components: cognitive trust, which is based on evidence of trustworthiness upon which the person decides whether to give or to withhold trust. Affective trust, which is based on strong emotional attachment during a relationship (Moustafa-Leonard, 2007; Smith & Lohrke, 2008).

The authentic leader's characteristics and behaviors of self-awareness, relational transparency, ethical perspective, and a balanced and consistent way of conveying information and decision outcomes to followers can build trust relationship especially when the authentic leader is consistent in making ethical decisions and engage in balanced processing instead of making snap decisions. Then, the followers are willing to give their trust to the leader's future actions and decisions based upon their past experiences (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009).

When trust is built between the followers and the leader who has proved authenticity through his actions, decisions and behaviors accompanied with an effort that develops their own capacities for authenticity and work engagement, the followers are sincerely willing to exhibit more loyalty and dedication to top management team which eventually leads to positive change in performance (Luthans & Avolio, 2003).

Followers can't develop trust towards the management team except with the existence of psychological capital (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, et al., 2007). So, for the top management team to be able to reap the gains of positive changes in performance, they have to envelop the psychological capital of their followers into dominant trust that makes the followers vulnerable to the management team fostering their positive performance (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009).

5. Psychological Capital in Egypt

5.1 Positive Case A

Badran et al. (2015) in their study discussed the impact of psychological capital with all its resources of resilience, hope, optimism, and efficacy on job satisfaction. The study was conducted over 451 Egyptian employees working in the 11 most important companies to the economy. The idea behind this study is to show that PsyCap can still lead to high job satisfaction even if the Egyptian population is culturally diverse and has been known to be plagued with negativity due to the stream of recent events. The research has showed that Egypt, North Africa, and the Middle East, regardless of the amount of negativity that exists within their borders, due to recent political and other turmoil, have hope. This hope stems from the presence of positive psychological capital. The presence of this hope has allowed employees to be satisfied with their jobs, because there is hope that living conditions, work opportunities, and life circumstances would get better. This region remains, despite all the political turmoil and all the challenges in the area, to be an attractive sight for foreign direct investment. PsyCap was found to remain the positive resource that can boost universal competitiveness through the boosting of employees' job satisfaction and consequently job performance. Therefore, no matter how negative people can be, and no matter how bad life situations are, there is still hope, optimism, and resilience left in the Egyptian employees. The existence of signs of positive psychological capital resources in Egypt revealed a tendency for a better life and higher job satisfaction among employees, which in turn will reflect better job performance. And that is how the developing countries turn into developed countries and the smallest of businesses boom into the largest of businesses (Badran et al., 2015).

5.2 Negative Case B

The researchers for this study conducted in depth interviews with three senior employees and leaders in different public organizations whom she managed to have access to, to gather some information regarding the impact of psychological capital on their employees' satisfaction in their organizations. The selection criteria for these senior employees from the Ministry of Agriculture, Nile Transport, and Ministry of Culture, was based on the fact that these organizations are among the public organizations that render important services to the country and were known to have negative work environments (El Nagdy et al., 2016). Leaders or managers in their organizations are not supportive to any new or innovative ideas or creative thinking from the employees' side. Their excuse for that is always the lack of necessary resources required for innovative and creative thinking, although, the main reason would be their fear of trying something new or different from the traditional means of doing things. The work environment in most of these public organizations is characterized by ambiguous roles, high bureaucracy, and routine. Stress and frustration are always common feelings among public employees due to the lack of proper internal management or human resource practices that would adjust the work environment. Therefore, most employees have negative feelings towards their jobs and they lack hope and optimism for any improvements in their jobs or changing the status quo. The negativity of said work environment in these public organizations reflects in return the psychological capital resources among these employees. Employees suffer low self-efficacy due to their lack of self-confidence about their progress or achievements since it is not being praised or recognized by their leaders. Hope and optimism in changing the status quo or improving the work environment become very low, which in turn is reflected on the employees'

ability to withstand stress and obstacles, which affects their resilience level negatively. The result of this negative psychological capital affected badly their moral, work performance, job satisfaction, and service rendered to citizens but not their turnover rate due to the difficulty in finding a new job opportunity with the high unemployment rate in Egypt.

6. Discussion and Analysis

This study discusses the impact of psychological capital on Egyptian employees' work well being. Psychological capital resources comprise self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and self-resilience. All of which when present in employees are called positive psychological capital, that has an impact on their personal well-being and emotions thus, affecting their job satisfaction levels positively and resulting in low turnover rates.

Having analysed the different available literature, and having conducted in-depth interviews with governmental employees portrayed in the above cases, the following points can be deduced:

- **In Positive Case A:** It is quite obvious that when psychological capital resources were present in the employees of the 11 selected companies, they raised their hope, optimism, and resilience levels despite the drastic political and economic conditions in Egypt and the North African Region. This in turn, affected their satisfaction and performance levels positively. In Case A, the positive work environment and proper management practices for the selected organizations, that had a strong impact on the economy, have helped to a big extent with the sustainability of the psychological capital resources of their employees, which was reflected on their well-being and satisfaction positively.
- **In Negative Case B:** On the other hand, results revealed that the weak management and poor working environment present in these different public organizations affected employees' psychological capital negatively, which was reflected in their low hope and optimism, high stress, and low self-efficacy. All of which affected their well-being and satisfaction levels negatively. The turnover rate was not affected only due to the shortage of alternate job opportunities in the country.

To sum up, the study reveals that both positive and negative psychological capital affects public employees either positively or negatively in terms of work well-being, level of satisfaction, motivation, services rendered to customers and turnover rate. The organizational climate and management practices also affect employees' psychological capital which in turn has an effect on their performance and productivity. The researchers also believe that the strength of these positive psychological resources in public employees and its sustainability for long periods of time play a strong role in the ability of these employees to withstand the difficult work environment. A good example for that can be given by public employees working in the Alexandria Library and Markaz Kadah who are well-known for their good performance and service rendered to the public.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

To conclude, based on the above analysis and conducted interviews represented in cases A and B, the only way for employees to reach the final destination of their job satisfaction, is if they encounter all the positive resources that PsyCap encompasses. In other words, if the employees feel psychologically positive, then they will automatically feel satisfied with their jobs which will be reflected positively on their work well being.

When followers perceive that their leaders are authentic, they will respond in a trustful way. Trust has been suggested as a mediator between authentic leadership and performance and a mediator between psychological capital and performance.

In both Case A and Case B, it was revealed that if public employees have the ability to be more innovative and efficient at work, and recognized and appreciated for their efforts, this will automatically lessen the amount of stress they could feel during the stage of innovation, which is characterized by some degree of risk. This will also help in enhancing their job involvement and job performance. If these public employees feel the positive outcome of their doings and realize that they are indeed contributing to the rise of their organizations, they will then perform better, be more satisfied with their jobs and have positive work well being which will be reflected positively on the services rendered.

Recommendations for this study will be summarized as follows.

- Train leaders in public organizations on how to raise the level of psychological capital and work well being in their employees through good management practices and proper systems.
- Leaders should monitor their employees' psychological capital, satisfaction level and work well being through periodic surveys and open communication systems to be able to take corrective actions accordingly.
- Train the leaders to convey their authenticity to their follower in order to build trust relationships that was proved to positively affect performance.

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