

Psychological Capital (PsyCap) and Counterproductive Work Behaviour: Organizational Identification as a Mediator

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Abstract: The present research aims to address two of the major gaps in PsyCap literature: investigating the processes (mediators/moderators) by which PsyCap influences outcomes, and testing PsyCap in a non-western context. The present study thus examined the relationship between PsyCap and employee counterproductive work behaviours (CWBs) through organizational identification (OID) in the Indian context. The current study used a quantitative survey-based research approach and has collected data from 204 employees from the Delhi-NCR region. PCQ-24 (Luthans et al. 2007), counterproductive work behaviour checklist (Spector, Bauer, & Fox, 2010), and organizational identification questionnaire (OIQ; Cheney, 1983) were used to measure PsyCap, CWBS, and organizational identification respectively. Data were analysed using SPSS. Descriptive analysis and mediation analysis were used to analyse the data. PsyCap was found to be positively related to OID, and negatively to CWBs. Mediation analysis showed that organizational identification mediated the relationship between PsyCap and CWBs having a large effect size. Future implications of the current research have been discussed.

Keywords: PsyCap, CWBs, Organizational identification, Mediation analysis

Introduction

Psychological capital (or PsyCap) is one of the core constructs of positive psychology at work comprising of four identified resources such as hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism. PsyCap has also been presented as a second-order construct comprising of these four first-level components (Luthans et al., 2007). PsyCap can be considered as a personal resource that increases the employees' ability to deal with the ever-increasing job/organizational demands and evaluate these in a more positive frame leading to organizational and personal related outcomes (Hobfoll, 1989; Costantini et al., 2017). PsyCap influences a variety of outcomes in terms of attitudes, behaviours, and performance (Norman et al. 2010, Newman et al., 2014). A positive association has been found between PsyCap and extra-role behaviours, such as OCBs (Avey et al., 2008; Gooty et al., 2009) and a negative link has been observed with undesirable behaviours in the workplace, such as counterproductive or deviant behaviour (Avey et al., 2008; Norman et al., 2010). Despite a plethora of research in PsyCap, some outcomes have not been explored much as compared to some other, and counterproductive work behaviours (CWBs) is one such neglected area (Newman et al., 2014). Moreover, Newman et al. (2014), Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, (2017) advocated the need to examine the processes (moderators/mediators) through which PsyCap influences outcomes. According to Newman et al. (2014), the literature on PsyCap has tended to focus on its antecedents and results, rather than on the processes through which PsyCap influences outcomes. Although research has begun to discover potential mediators of the PsyCap/outcomes link (Imran & Shahnawaz,

2020; Sihag, 2020; Bhatnagar & Aggarwal, 2020), this field of study is still relatively young. Additional research is needed to elucidate the underlying mechanisms by which PsyCap affects workplace outcomes. Lastly, most of the above-mentioned reviews have recommended testing PsyCap and outcome relationships in a non-western culture. Thus, the present study aims to address the above gaps in PsyCap literature.

PsyCap and Counterproductive Work Behaviours (CWBs)

Counterproductive Work Behaviours (CWBs) have emerged as one of the important constructs in contemporary organizations. CWBs impose numerous costs on organizations such as lower levels of productivity, lost work time, higher intention to quit, and stress for other workers (Appelbaum & Matousek, 2007, Striler et al., 2020; Schilbach et al., 2020). Bennett & Robinson (2000) defined CWBs as voluntary behavior of organizational members that violates significant organizational norms, and in doing so, threatens the well-being of the organization and/or its members. CWBs can manifest in many ways in organizations. The active manifestations of these behaviours include spreading negative rumours, harassing coworkers, sabotaging the work or key projects of other employees, or purposely failing to follow instructions, while passive behaviours include actions such as failing to help a coworker, neglecting to pass on key information, or otherwise withholding something that can help the organization and its members achieve relevant goals, with the intent of restricting the accomplishment of organizational goals.

There is evidence to support that organizational stress (Kelloway & Barling, 2010; Nair & Bhatnagar, 2011), breach

of psychological contract (Rousseau, 1989; Hoobler & Brass, 2006), unfair organizational practices (Ambrose, Seabright, & Schminke, 2002), and authoritarian leadership styles (Aryee et al. 2007) are positively related to CWBs. There is also evidence to support that PsyCap would mitigate the effect of these negative work conditions, as a negative relationship has been found between PsyCap and stress/anxiety (Avey, Luthans, & Jensen, 2009). Some other studies reported a negative relationship between PsyCap and undesirable work behaviours such as CWBs (Avey et al., 2008; Norman et al., 2010; Avey et al. 2011). Yan (2010) found that when faced with rude customers, employees who have high psychological capital will be more positive and optimistic to take the initiative to explore new initiatives and ways to change negative situations, rather than resort to CWBs.

PsyCap and CWBs: Organizational Identification as a possible mediator

As mentioned above, previous researchers have found a negative relationship between PsyCap and CWBs, however, given the complexities of modern organizations, it would be naïve to take these relationships seriously and further research is needed to explore the mechanism through which this PsyCap-CWBs association takes place. Therefore, it is important to explore the mechanism through which PsyCap would have influenced CWBs (Newman et al, 2014; Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). In the context of the present study, organizational identification has been presented as a possible mediator between PsyCap and CWBs.

The construct of organizational identification (OID) has been attracting a lot of interest amongst organizational scholars. One of the reasons for this interest is the centrality of OID in understanding and analyzing the link between individuals and their employing organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; van Dick, 2001). Secondly, the OID of individuals is beneficial to the individuals as well as to the organization. For instance, employees who have high OIDs are motivated to work hard to achieve organizational goals and activities (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail, 1994). Satisfaction of the need to belong and positive self-esteem are some of the benefits the employees reap (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) because of their identification with the organization.

Yardan, Demirkiran, and Taşkaya (2016) found positive and significant relationships between the dimensions of psychological capital and organizational identification of the personnel working at a state hospital in Turkey. According to their analysis, 27.2% of the change in organizational identification was explained by optimism, resiliency, hope, and self-efficacy. Therefore, it can be concluded that PsyCap would lead to organizational identification.

Demir, Demir & Nield, (2014) found that organizational identification influenced job performance, intention to remain, and CWBs. OID was found to be the main predictor of organizational citizenship behaviours and CWBs. According to Fagbohunge, Akinbode & Ayodeji (2012), organizational identification was found to be associated with workplace deviant behaviours negatively. When employees' values are similar to that of the organization and when they identify themselves as members of the organization, they develop higher and stronger organizational identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). However, when employees have vague and inconsistent organizational identification, they do not feel like part of the organization and are more likely to violate the rules and norms of the organization. Through the extant literature, it can be concluded that organizational identification influences CWBs negatively.

Wang and Zheng (2018) found that PsyCap fully mediated the association between transformational leadership and employee voice behaviour (VB). Moreover, PsyCap's influence on VB was larger when organizational identification was high compared to when it was low. Norman et al. (2010) examined OID as the moderator between PsyCap and CWBs. The result of the study showed that OID moderated the relationship between employees' PsyCap and their OCBs. The result further shows that employees who had the highest PsyCap and who identified most with the organization were less likely to indulge in CWBs. However, Norman et al. (2010) did not enumerate the how and why of this relationship. However, we believe that OID would more likely mediate the relationship between PsyCap and CWBs because of the following processes or reasons.

Firstly, one of the ways PsyCap manifests in the organization is through leadership. For example, Shamir et al. (1993) demonstrated that transformational leaders engage followers in three ways: through enhancing follower self-efficacy, enabling followers' social identification with their group or organization, and aligning the organization's work ideals to follower values.

Leaders with a higher degree of responsibility may help their followers develop a stronger sense of organizational identity by providing more support and maintaining a higher level of work passion within teams. Leaders who have a high degree of hope have a greater grasp of their work environment and are more creative in their problem-solving. As a result, they may more effectively accomplish their objectives and earn the trust of their followers (Lane and Chapman, 2011). Leaders with a greater capacity for resilience are likewise more resistant to unfavourable stressful occurrences. They not only achieve positive emotional control but also inspire the development of favourable feelings in their followers. Thus, these actions of leaders will assist the employees in dealing positively with

hardship and failures, thereby increasing followers' organizational identification, which would ultimately lead to fewer CWBs.

Secondly, Luthans et al. (2007) presented PsyCap as the cognitive processes of positive appraisal of events at work that will lead to increased attention and positive memories related to work (Youssef-Morgan & Luthans, 2015). Therefore, PsyCap would mitigate the effect of negative work conditions such as stress/anxiety (Avey, Luthans, & Jensen, 2009) leading to a more balanced/positive processing of work events. Moreover, leaders can provide critical aspects that guide followers' interpretations of work occurrences. Without a doubt, leaders contribute significantly to the development of team climate, and a positive and harmonious team environment leads to the enhancement of organizational identity (Walumbwa et al., 2010). Moreover, leaders with a high level of PsyCap may allow good and efficient interpersonal relationships, effective resolution of misunderstandings and disputes, and a favourable work environment, all of which contribute significantly to followers' organizational identification. On the contrary, leaders lacking sufficient psychological capital are more likely to stifle their followers' organizational affiliation. Hence, employees lacking in this necessary positive psychological state of PsyCap will be bereft of a strong sense of identity and therefore are more likely to generate negative psychological states, resulting in a lack of work ethic and thereby engaging in destructive counterproductive work behaviours (Wang et al., 2018; Yang & Chao, 2016).

Based on the above review, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

H1: PsyCap will be positively related to OID.

H2: OID will be negatively related to CWBs.

H3: OID would mediate the relationship between PsyCap and CWBs.

Method

Sample

The data was collected through random sampling on employees working in the organizations such as Rajya Sabha Secretariat, Lok Sabha Secretariat, LIC of India, Delhi Metro Rail Corporation, Videocon, AIIMS, Bank of Baroda, etc from the Delhi-NCR region. A total of 204 participants of varying ages and designations were a part of this study. The age of the

sample ranged from 20-65 years and the mean age was 41.23 years. There were 66 females and 138 males in the sample.

Measures

Psychological Capital Questionnaire (Luthans et al. 2007): To assess Psychological Capital, PCQ-24 was used on the current sample. PCQ-24 comprised of four subscales with an equal number of six items each: (1) hope, (2) optimism, (3) self-efficacy, and (4) resilience. The items have to be scored on a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ('strongly disagree') to 6 ('strongly agree'). Cronbach alpha of PCQ 24 on the current sample was found to be 0.84.

Counterproductive Work Behaviour-Checklist (Spector, Bauer, & Fox, 2010): The short version having 10 items of Counterproductive Work Behaviour Checklist (CWB-C) was used in the current research. There are 5 items for organization-focused CWB and the remaining 5 items for person-focused CWB. According to Spector, Bauer, and Fox (2010), the scale can also be used as a whole (total score) as well as dimensions-wise, however, in the current study, we have used the total score only. Responses can be made on a 5-point frequency scale; Never, Once or twice, Once or twice per month, Once or twice per week, Every day. Cronbach's alpha of the CWB checklist on the current sample was found to be 0.90.

Organizational Identification Questionnaire (OIQ; Cheney, 1983): The shortened version of OIQ having 12 items was used in the current study. Participants had to indicate their agreement with each item on a six-point Likert scale in which 1 signifies totally disagree, while 6 implies totally agree. Miller et al. (2000) found that the short version of the scale is uni-dimensional and valid. Cronbach's alpha of OIQ on the current sample was found to be 0.96.

Results

Before proceeding with the main analysis, Herman's single-factor analysis was run to check for common method variance as all the scales used in the present research were self-reports. The analysis revealed that when all the items of all the scales were loaded on a single item, it explained 26.9 % of the variance, thus it can be said that the results of the present study were free from common method bias. SPSS version 22 was used for finding out the mean, standard deviation, and correlation. Process Hayes 3.0 Micros (2018) was run for the mediation analysis.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations, and Pearson correlation coefficients for PsyCap, OID & CWBs

	Mean	Std. Deviation	PsyCap	OID	CWBs
PsyCap	116.0196	12.15016	1	0.437**	-0.402**
OID	71.0196	12.95044		1	-0.404**
CWBs	15.2647	6.67976			1

A significant positive correlation has been found between PsyCap and OID ($r=0.437, p<0.01$). Significant negative correlations have also been found between PsyCap and CWBs ($-0.402, p<0.01$), and between OID and CWBs ($-0.404, p<0.01$) (see Table 1)

Figure 1

Organizational Identification as the mediator between PsyCap and CWBs

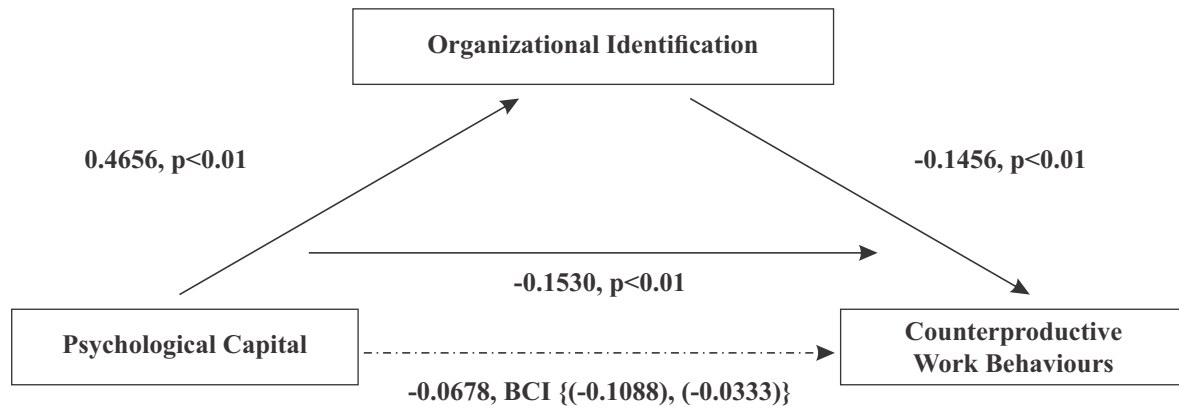


Figure 1 reveals that there is a direct as well as an indirect relationship between PsyCap and CWBs. A completely standardized indirect effect of X (Psychological Capital) on Y (CWBs) was obtained to be -0.1233 , Bootstrapping CI $\{(-0.2007), (-0.0596)\}$. This indicates that 12% of the effect on CWBs is influenced by organizational identification as a mediator in a negative direction which corresponds to a high effect size.

Discussion

The present research aimed to study the relationship between PsyCap, and CWBs, while simultaneously examining the possible pathways of OID between the two. The first two hypotheses of the study were to ascertain the relationships between PsyCap-OID and OID-CWBs. As predicted, PsyCap showed a positive relationship with OID, and a negative relationship was found between OID and CWBs. As PsyCap is the positive appraisal of work and the context of work, therefore people high on PsyCap would like to identify with the organizations resulting in OID. A more positive appraisal of work and organization would result in developing more positive feelings for the organization and it might also lead to feeling the oneness and belonging to the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Furthermore, an individual who attaches an emotional significance to his/her membership of the organization (Tajfel, 1978) is less likely to indulge in activities that could sabotage the normal functioning of his/her organization or deteriorate his/her relationship with the organization he/she is a member of. According to Ashforth, Harrison and Corley (2008) and Riketta (2005), OID has a potential capacity to generate a range of positive employee and organizational outcomes, such as organizational citizenship behavior. Hence, an individual who has high organizational identification will tend to indulge in altruistic behaviors and this would thereby decrease his/her tendency to indulge in sabotaging behaviors such as CWBs.

The third objective of the study was to examine the

mediating role of OID in the PsyCap-CWBs relationship. It was posited that PsyCap as a positive psychological state would lead to organizational identification, which thereby would result in fewer CWBs. Youssef-Morgan and Luthans (2015) proposed some mechanisms that will be used to explain the results of the present study. PsyCap would help to cognitively and positively process one's past, present, and future experiences at work that will lead to enhanced wellbeing at work/less distress. PsyCap would also help us to cognitively process attention, interpretation, and memory to experience satisfaction and wellbeing at work (Imran & Shahnawaz, 2020). Spector and Fox (2005) proposed that negative emotions at work might lead up to CWBs as presented in the Stressor-Emotion Model of Counterproductive Work Behaviour (Spector, & Fox, 2005). Moreover, negative emotions usually emerge from the perception of environmental stressors. The model further suggests that the causal flow from a perception of stressors to negative emotions and eventually CWBs is moderated/mediated by perceived control, personality, anger, anxiety, locus of control, etc. It would be pertinent to highlight that CWBs do not occur automatically and in a vacuum; rather, it is embedded within a complex social system of shared values, norms, and models of behaviors (Schein, 1999). Thus, to understand the process leading to CWBs, it is important to consider the role of socio-cognitive processes (Fida et al., 2015). Taking all these arguments together it can be said that high PsyCap would provide the positive cognitive frame to processes attention, interpretation, and memory in a positive way, which would result in

experiencing less distress. Positive appraisal of organizational events and the resultant PsyCap would thus result in a strong identification with the organization (Yardan, Demirkiran, and Taskaya, 2016) which in turn would result in fewer CWBs as organizational distress are related to moral disengagement which in turn predicted CWBs (Fida et al., 2015). Moreover, the mediating role of organizational identification will also be rooted in the leader's PsyCap. Leaders may assist followers in understanding the social and interpersonal context of their job, and effectively integrate the common psychological features into the team. As a result, the psychological capital of leaders has a beneficial effect on their followers' organizational identity. Leaders also provide the subordinates crucial clues as to how they should perceive their work experiences (Chen et al., 2017, Walumbwa et al., 2010). Indeed, leaders have a big impact on the development of team atmosphere, which in turn has a good and harmonious effect on the employee's organization's identity (Walumbwa et al., 2010.), thereby influencing CWBs negatively.

Limitations and Implications

The sample size of the present study was relatively small ($n=204$). Large sample size would help generalize the results with greater confidence to a larger population and wider domains of work life. We could not conduct a demographic-wise analysis of the data (such as gender, age, and sectors) which further limits the generalizability of our results. In the present research, only a quantitative analysis was done. Qualitative methods can be considered for future investigations.

The results of the present study add to the growing body of literature in several ways, firstly by providing a base to explore how OID could be an inherent outcome of PsyCap among employees, which further strengthens the argument for building and safeguarding the Psychological Capital of employees in an organizational setting. The study also provides replication and extension of previous work linking PsyCap with CWBs (e.g., Avey, Luthans, & Youssef, 2009) by showing in a separate sample that the relationship between these constructs can be replicated even in a non-Western country. Another important practical implication of the study could be the investment in PsyCap for lower CWBs. During challenging economic times, employees may engage in more deviance to gain an advantage over internal competitors for organizational resources, such as jobs, promotions, assignments. Since those higher in PsyCap reported lower levels of CWBs, this study suggests that the enhancement of PsyCap may have a suppressing effect on CWBs. A major contribution of the study could be drawn from the findings of a successful mediation model, and adding a new mediational factor in the form of organizational identification in the Stressor-Emotion Model of Counterproductive Work Behaviour (Spector, & Fox, 2005).

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