

Is Psychological Capital a Form of Emotional Intelligence? A Research on University Students

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Abstract

Psychological capital (PsyCap) is defined as one's being hopeful, resistant, self-confident and optimistic (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). Whereas emotional intelligence stated by Goleman (1998) as "*the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships*". Emotional intelligence is a combination of individuals' personal competence and social competence (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002). Both emotional intelligence and PsyCap has been evaluated as inner resources of positive outputs like success, satisfaction, well-being, health etc. But it is not clear to what extent emotional intelligence and PsyCap were similar. The purpose of this research is to examine the interaction between emotional intelligence and psychological capital by employing a quantitative approach of scientific inquiry. A demographic data sheet, Psychological Capital Questionnaire (Luthans et al., 2007) and Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI, Boyatzis, Goleman & Rhee, 2000) has been implemented. Correlation, and multiple regression techniques were conducted. Significant results revealed that PsyCap and emotional intelligence were significantly associated. The correlation between PsyCap and EI is ($r=.540, p \leq .01$). Subfactors of EI, social awareness and self-awareness, explained 28.8% of the variance on PsyCap.

Keywords: Psychological capital, emotional intelligence, positive psychology, positive organizational behavior

Introduction

The new positive psychology paradigm pointed out the importance of individual's well-being from a various perspectives. The efforts to increase not only performance, but also well-being and happiness leads to focusing on new phenomena, namely emotional intelligence and PsyCap. Positive psychology paradigm differs from previous approaches by giving importance to the happiness as much as pain, in order to increase individuals' happiness by improving their awareness and strengths (Seligman, 2007; Seligman et al., 2005). Positive psychology is not focused on curing the people who are patient, in contrast increasing the happiness of normal individuals (Seligman, 2007). The positive psychology paradigm applied to psychology, social psychology, sociology, marketing, management and economy in a short period (Sirgy et al., 2006). Emotional competence is "*a learned capability based on emotional intelligence that results in outstanding performance at work*" (Goleman, 1998b). PsyCap could be associated with emotional intelligence. The purpose of this study is to examine the interaction between emotional intelligence and psychological capital.

Psychological Capital (PsyCap)

Positive Organizational Behavior (POB), based on positive psychology, examined positive psychological resource capacities. Luthans et al., (2001) underlined the importance of determination and application of required skills in the psychological and human resources from an individual oriented perspective. Positive psychological capital, including *hope, resilience, self-confidence and optimism*, should be measured to enhance performance and well-being of individuals (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007).

Some individuals perform better than others under stressful conditions. Organizational researchers generally focused on to determine the traits of higher performers. First studies explained these performance differences by general mental ability-intelligence levels (Hunter & Hunter, 1984; Schmidt & Hunter, 2000). PsyCap consists of four dimensions: "(1) *having confidence (self-efficacy)* (2) *making a positive attribution (optimism)* (3) *persevering toward goals and redirecting paths to goals (hope)* (4) *when faced by problems sustaining and bouncing back (resilience) to attain success*" (Luthans & Youssef, 2004; Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007,

p.3). The PsyCap is mostly associated with overcome the psychological problems in order to find new solutions(cited in Simsek & Sali, 2013).

Emotional Intelligence

Some individuals could understand and evaluate themselves, others and manage the emotions, relationships, communication practices and performance scores better than others no matter how intelligent they are (Şimsek & Aktaş, 2013). These differences were explained historically by social intelligence, multiple intelligence or emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence was defined by Salovey and Mayer (1990) as “*the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions*” (p. 189). Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) model of emotional intelligence defines four discrete mental abilities: (1) perception of emotion, (2) use of emotion to facilitate thought, (3) understanding of emotion, and (4) management of emotion.

One of the most impressive books about emotional intelligence was written by Goleman in 1997, although related term social intelligence was used first in 1920’s by Thorndike (1920). Goleman (1998a, p. 317) defined emotional intelligence as “*the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships*”. Social skills require adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others (Goleman, 1998). Emotional intelligence reduced two dimensions: personal competence (self-awareness and self-management) and social competence (social awareness and relationship management). Goleman’s model has been presented in Table 1 (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002).

Table 1. Goleman’s framework of emotional competencies

	Self Personal Competence	Other Social Competence
Recognition	Self-Awareness - Emotional self-awareness - Accurate self-assessment - Self-confidence	Social Awareness - Empathy - Service orientation - Organizational awareness
Regulation	Self-Management - Self-control - Trustworthiness - Conscientiousness - Adaptability - Achievement drive - Initiative	Relationship Management - Developing others - Influence - Communication - Conflict management - Leadership - Change catalyst - Building bonds - Teamwork & collaboration

Individuals with higher emotional intelligence were found to experience more positive life events than others. Individuals with higher level EI manage their life better than lower ones. (Goleman, 1998a). The positive results of emotional intelligence were higher leadership performance (Palmer, Walls, Burgess, & Stough, 2001), work performance (Khokhar & Kangri, 2009), successful career in the organization (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Emotional intelligence has similarities with PsyCap in terms of evaluating and solving problems, developing different perspectives to a problematic situation. Self-awareness, managing emotions, self-motivation, empathy and managing relationships were basic concepts of emotional intelligence.

There are only a few studies focusing on the PsyCap and emotional intelligence relationship. Tugade and Fredrickson (1990) found that resilient individuals use positive emotions to bounce back from negative emotional experiences. Resilient people find positive meaning in negative circumstances. Ignat (2010) found positive and significant relationships between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy, high life satisfaction, a healthy way of coping with stress. Tomer (2005) evaluated both personal capital and emotional intelligence from economic perspective as an increasingly important intangible source. Mellão and Mónico’s (2013) studied direct relationship between PsyCap and emotional intelligence in Portugal. They pointed out as a significant and high correlation between two variables. Malik and Masood’s (2015) also found significant correlations between PsyCap and emotional intelligence ($r = .599$).

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the association of PsyCap with emotional intelligence and the research questions are given below:

1. What are the levels of PsyCap and emotional intelligence?
2. What is the correlation between PsyCap and emotional intelligence?
3. How much of the PsyCap variance is explained by emotional intelligence?

Research Method

In this study a quantitative approach of scientific inquiry, descriptive, relational, and comparative models were used for exploring the interactions between PsyCap and emotional intelligence. The research model was illustrated in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Research Model

Research Sample

The working sample consisted of 400 undergraduate students in a Public University in İstanbul. Data was collected from 176 individuals. 6 cases were deleted due to missing data and being outliers. After excluding missing values and outliers, data for 170 cases were analyzed. Regression assumption, normality, linearity, multicollinearity were tested.

Research Instruments

Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI)-Version 2: Inventory, 5 point Likert type with 72 items, was developed by Boyatzis, Goleman and Rhee (2000). Tuna (2008) translated into the Turkish in his doctoral study. Items numbers and Cronbach alphas for dimensions are given respectively: self-awareness (8 items, 0.622); self-management (24 items, 0.819), social awareness (12 items, 0.576), relationship management (24 items, 0.804).

PsyCap Questionnaire : Questionnaire, consisted of totally 24 items with a 6 point Likert type each, was developed by Luthans et al. (2007) and Çetin & Basim (2012) translated into Turkish. Items numbers and Cronbach alphas for each dimensions are given respectively: hope (4 items, 0.598); resilience (5 items, 0.776); self-efficacy (6 items, 0.773); optimism (6 items, 0.883).

Procedures: The questionnaires were filled by undergraduate students by online and paper-pencil. Pearson Correlation and Regression analyses were reported and the results discussed in context of the literature.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The means and standard deviations of the emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management) and PsyCap (hope, resilience, self-efficacy and optimism) scores were illustrated at Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

	<i>Resistant</i>	<i>Hopeful</i>	<i>Optimistic</i>	<i>Self Confident</i>	<i>Self Awareness</i>	<i>Self Management</i>	<i>Social Awareness</i>	<i>Relationship Management</i>	<i>PsyCap</i>	<i>ECI</i>
M	4,03	3,92	3,73	3,85	4,41	4,43	4,55	4,35	3,88	4,44
SD	,66	,63	,72	,61	,63	,49	,53	,51	,56	,47
Min.	1,00	1,50	1,33	1,17	2,75	3,13	3,17	3,13	1,25	3,09
Max.	6,00	5,00	5,67	5,67	6,00	5,58	5,92	5,83	5,52	5,74

Correlation Analysis between PsyCap and Emotional Intelligence

The interactions between PsyCap and emotional intelligence were evaluated by Pearson correlation coefficients. Pearson Correlation Coefficients are given in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Coefficients between PsyCap & Emotional Intelligence

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
(1) Resistant	1	,608**	,509**	,665**	,339**	,361**	,459**	,375**	,819**	,434**

(2) Hopeful		1	,569**	,711**	,405**	,365**	,439**	,456**	,844**	,473**
(3) Optimistic			1	,699**	,376**	,402**	,425**	,389**	,830**	,451**
(4) Self Confident				1	,395**	,412**	,434**	,422**	,901**	,472**
(5) Self Awareness					1	,652**	,606**	,747**	,446**	,871**
(6) Self-Management						1	,681**	,783**	,454**	,875**
(7) Social Awareness							1	,729**	,518**	,852**
(8) Relationship Management								1	,483**	,922**
(9) Psychological Capital									1	,540**
(10) Emotional Intelligence										1

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

As shown on the Table 3, all of the dimensions of PsyCap are positively correlated with all the dimensions of emotional intelligence. The range between two variables were .339-.459. The highest correlation were between resistant (PsyCap) and social awareness (EI), ($r=.459$, $p\leq.01$). The correlation between PsyCap and EI is ($r=.540$, $p\leq.01$).

Regression Analysis

In order to predict PsyCap, four dimensions of emotional intelligence were regressed onto PsyCap, using stepwise regression. R was significantly different from zero, $R=.544$; $F(2, 167) = 35,156$; $p=.000$. Social awareness made the highest contribution to the prediction of PsyCap, explaining 26.4% of the variance. Both social awareness and self-awareness, explained 28.8% of the variance on PsyCap. Detailed regression results were presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable: Psychological Capital			
Independent Variable:	β	t	p
<i>Social Awareness</i>	0.392	4.801	0.000
<i>Self Awareness</i>	0.209	2.556	0.011
$R=0.544$; Adjusted $R^2=0.288$; $F=35,156$; $p=0.000$			

The results demonstrated that emotional intelligence explained significantly high variance on PsyCap. As given above Table, β coefficients of Social Awareness (0,392) and Self Awareness (0,209) are statistically meaningful. So the regression equation for $PsyCap = 1,206 + 0.392 \times Self\ Awareness + 0.209 \times Social\ Awareness$.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore the association between emotional intelligence and PsyCap, considering both explains individual's capacity from different perspectives. Emotional Intelligence and PsyCap were relatively new phenomena with many positive outcomes in work and non-work life. PsyCap is hypothesized as being not independent from emotions. Luthans, Avolio, Avey and Norman (2007) claimed that PsyCap is more stable than the positive emotions and moods but less stable than core self-evaluation and the two personality traits. Luthans, Youssef and Avolio (2007) underlined that PsyCap could be potentially related to positive constructs like creativity, wisdom, well-being, flow, humor, gratitude, forgiveness, Emotional Intelligence, spirituality, authenticity, and courage.

The role of emotional intelligence on PsyCap was investigated, in a sample of university students. The sub-factors of PsyCap were resilience, hope, optimism, and self-efficacy. Emotional Intelligence's dimensions were personal competence (self-awareness and self-management) and social competence (social awareness and relationship management). A positive and significant correlation was found between all dimensions of variables. The correlation between PsyCap and EI is ($r=.540$, $p\leq.01$). The results were consistent with Malik and Masood's (2015) study in Pakistan and Mellão & Mónico's (2013) study in Portugal. Regression analyses of this study were different from Malik and Masood's (2015) research in terms of the shifting independent and dependent variables in regression analysis. In this study, Emotional Intelligence explained 28.8% of the variance on PsyCap. Whereas Malik and Masood (2015) regressed control variables (age, gender and organization) and PsyCap on Emotional Intelligence, explaining 25.8% percent variance. All results confirms that PsyCap and Emotional Intelligence were relevant concepts.

This study has some limitations, focusing only the relationship between emotional intelligence and PsyCap. The effects of core self-evaluations and personality traits on emotional intelligence and PsyCap association could be tested. Moreover, research on outcomes of emotional intelligence and PsyCap association, like well-being, performance, positive work attitudes, behaviours, workplace spirituality, and psychological empowerment has been suggested.

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