



A STUDY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL AMONG THE STUDENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION OF CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH BIHAR, GAYA

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Abstract

Students in higher education often face greater psychological stress and academic demands compared to those in lower levels of education, potentially impacting their mental well-being and academic achievement. Psychological Capital (PsyCap), consisting of self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience, is essential in assisting students in overcoming these obstacles. This study aimed to (1) assess the overall level of Psychological Capital among students at Central University of South Bihar (CUSB), Gaya, and (2) examine whether significant differences in PsyCap exist based on students' gender, residential locality (rural/urban), and level of course (UG/PG).

A descriptive survey approach was used to gather data from a sample of 149 students (92 males, 57 females) through a 24-item Psychological Capital Questionnaire (Luthans et al., 2012), administered online. The study employed statistical analysis to test the hypothesis that there would be no significant differences in Psychological Capital based on demographic factors. The findings suggested that students demonstrated a moderate to high level of PsyCap overall, there were no statistically significant differences across gender, locality, or level of study, thereby supporting the null hypothesis.

The findings correspond with the objectives of India's National Education Policy (NEP-2020), which emphasizes the significance of psychological well-being and holistic student development. The study highlights the necessity for institutions of higher education to integrate psychological support systems to enhance PsyCap and promote student success.

Keywords: Psychological Capital, Higher Education, Self-efficacy, Resilience, Gender, Rural-Urban, Undergraduate, Postgraduate, NEP-2020, Mental Health

Introduction

Higher education students often face greater psychological pressure and demanding workloads compared to their counterparts in elementary and secondary education. This can lead to ineffective performance and emotional distress, impairing their abilities. Psychological capital (PsyCap), a key factor in managing stress and psychological pressure, helps individuals navigate these challenges by fostering resilience, hope, optimism, and self-efficacy. These psychological traits not only help individuals maintain confidence but also encourage perseverance and goal attainment despite adversity (Luthans et al., 2006; Avey et al., 2006). PsyCap is associated with numerous beneficial effects, such as increased job satisfaction, motivation, and organizational commitment, in addition to reduced stress, anxiety, and burnout (Bradley, 2014; Liu et al., 2013).

Psychological capital, as defined by Luthans (2002), includes the dimensions of self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience. **Hope** involves goal-directed motivation and the ability to find alternate routes to achieve goals (Snyder et al., 2002). **Optimism** refers to the belief in positive outcomes and is linked to greater work performance and perseverance (Seligman, 1998; Luthans & Youssef, 2004). **Resilience** is the capacity to adapt and thrive after challenges (Coutu, 2002), while **self-efficacy** refers to one's confidence in their ability to succeed in specific tasks (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Together, these traits form the basis of PsyCap, which enhances individual performance in various settings, including educational environments.

The concept of PsyCap is integral to the New Education Policy (NEP-2020), which emphasizes the holistic development of students, encompassing their psychological and emotional well-being. The NEP-2020 advocates for mental health aid through initiatives like "Manodarpan," which provides psychological counseling and resources for students, teachers, and families, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the NEP-2020 promotes the creation of a holistic report card that evaluates cognitive, emotional, and socio-psychological development, aligning with the requirement to deal with students' overall well-being for optimal educational outcomes (Luthans et al., 2007).

In conclusion, PsyCap plays a crucial role in supporting students' psychological and academic success. As the NEP-2020 acknowledges, fostering mental well-being through initiatives such as the holistic report card and mental health support systems is essential for the long-term success and personal growth of students.

Need and Rationale of the Study

Research consistently demonstrates that psychological capital (PsyCap) positively influences desired outcomes and negatively affects undesirable results (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007; Avey, Reichard, Luthans, & Mhatre, 2011). Specifically, PsyCap is negatively related to negative behaviors and attitudes, such as stress, anxiety, and intent to leave, while positively influencing performance and attitudes, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and psychological well-being (Avey et al., 2011; Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Studies indicate that all components of PsyCap—self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience—are linked to enhanced students' academic performance (Luthans, Luthans, & Jensen,

2012; Gilman, Dooley, & Florell, 2006). Moreover, a student's engagement in their studies, which directly impacts academic achievement, is also positively influenced by PsyCap (Meyers et al., 2015).

Higher education institutions play a important role in shaping society's future by Getting students ready for the workforce and societal contributions. Nonetheless, students commencing higher education face varying challenges based on their cultural, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds (McKenzie & Schweitzer, 2001). Some students may struggle to adapt to the academic environment, leading to stress and anxiety (Qazi et al., 2020; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Morrison & Cosden, 1997). In contrast, others possess psychological resources that are helpful to them cope effectively with academic challenges. Modern students also face new pressures, including academic competition and technological advancements, which increase the need for enhanced psychological capital to manage these stressors.

Psychological capital is crucial for improving overall well-being and helping individuals overcome challenges to achieve life goals. While some aspects of psychological capital are inherent, they can also be cultivated and regulated, providing students with tools to develop a positive mindset and improve academic performance. Enhancing students' psychological capital is key to improving their capacity to face academic challenges and perform better. Recent research indicates that improving psychological capital positively impacts student achievement and learning capabilities (Fugate et al., 2004). Additionally, academic success is a substantial predictor of future job success, which emphasizes the significance of comprehending and fostering PsyCap among higher education students (Peterson et al., 2011; Parent-Rochelleau et al., 2020).

Given the obstacles encountered by students in higher education, including academic pressures and concerns about job prospects and unemployment, studying PsyCap profiles can provide valuable insights into how students can overcome obstacles and find meaning in their education. By examining the levels of self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience, this study aims to explore the current status of psychological capital among higher education students and its potential for enhancing academic success and well-being.

Research Questions

An intensive review of the related literature led the investigator to investigate the following questions:

1. What are the levels of Psychological Capital among higher education's students?
2. Do the levels of Psychological Capital among students differ with respect to?
 - a) their gender-(Male/Female)
 - b) their permanent residential locality -(Rural/Urban)
 - c) their level of course -(UG/PG)

Statement of the Problem

The problem is stated as:-

"A Study of Psychological Capital among the students of Higher Education of Central University of South Bihar, Gaya."

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives have been defined for the present study:-

1. To find out the level of Psychological Capital among higher education students of CUSB.
2. To find out the level of difference of Psychological Capital among higher education students of CUSB on the basis of their (i) gender, (ii) locality, (iii) level of course (UG & PG).

Research Hypotheses of the Study

1. Students of Higher Education will not be significantly differing on psychological capital with respect to (i) gender, (ii) locality, (iii) level of course (UG & PG).

Research Methodology

Method: This present study uses the 'Descriptive Survey Method' to obtain the objectives of the study.

Participants: One forty nine (149) students were taken as sample through simple random technique to measure the level of psychological capital of higher education students of CUSB, Gaya.

Tool to be used: The tool of study is employed for the purpose of collecting data from sample. The researcher in the current study used version of the 24-items questionnaire adapted for research in the educational context by Luthans et al. (2012). The scale evaluating the four positive psychological capabilities: Self-efficacy, Hope, Resilience, and Optimism each contain 6 items. The responses to items are given on a six-point Likert scale scored as '6', '5', '4', '3', '2', '1' for strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, disagree and strongly disagree. Scoring for psychological capital is just total points but it should be carefully noted that items 15, 19, and 21 are reverse scored (i.e., for these items a "1" is scored as a "6" and a "6" is scored as a "1"; a 2 is a 5 and a 5 is a 2; and a 3 is a 4 and a 4 is a 3). Total score ranges from 24 to 144.

Data Collection Procedure

At very first the investigator took permission from the owner of the tool with the support of the supervisor. Then the investigator administered the tool in Google form and shared it among the targeted sample and gave them proper time for answering the tool through online mode sent to the respondents via electronic communication i.e., e-mail, instant messaging and social media platform. After its data were collected.

Statistical Analysis

Total 149 responses were received. There were 92 male and 57 female who filled the online questionnaire and then data is classified and presented by using descriptive statistics and interpretation. Following is the detailed description of items-

Table 1: Detailed description of participants on the basis of gender, residential location, level of course.

Sample distribution		
Groups	N	%
Male	92	61.74
Female	57	38.25
Rural	71	47.65
Urban	78	52.34
UG	66	44.29
PG	83	51.71

1. Analysis of the Level of Psychological Capital among Students

Descriptive statistics were calculated in order to assess the psychological capital scores of 149 students. The results revealed that the scores ranged from **60 to 132**, with a **mean score of 106.03 (SD = 14.52)**. The **median score was 109**, and the **mode was 111**, indicating that the distribution was slightly skewed toward higher values.

The **distribution was negatively skewed** with a **skewness value of -0.834**, suggesting that a larger proportion of students scored above the mean. This is validated by the results that **58% of the students scored above the mean**, while **42% scored below it**. The **kurtosis value of 0.932** suggests a distribution that is slightly more peaked than normal.

The **range of scores** was **72**, and the **variance was 210.79**, indicating moderate variability in the data. The **interquartile range**, defined by the 25th and 75th percentiles, was **96.50 to 115.50**, showing that the middle 50% of students had scores within this range.

A standard range was also considered using the formula **Mean $\pm$ 1 SD**, which results in a range from **91.51 to 120.55**. This suggests that the most of the students had psychological capital scores within this range, indicating an overall moderate to high level of psychological capital.

Table1.1. Level of psychological capital of the students

Range	Below 91.511 Less positive level	91.511-120.549 Moderate level	Above 120.549 Positive Level
No. of students	24	103	22

Table 1.1 shows that the no. of students having slightly less positive attitude is 244, and no. of students having positive attitude is 22, where maximum of the students are having moderate level of psychological capital is 103. These findings imply that the majority of students demonstrate a moderate level of psychological capital. Therefore this data helps in finding the level of psychological capital among students of higher education.

2. To find out the level of difference of psychological capital on the basis of Gender.

Ho1.i: Students of Higher Education would not be significantly differing on psychological capital with respect to gender.

Table2.1: t-test for the Comparison of female and male students

Group	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	Sig. value
Female	57	104.33	16.906	95.474	1.056	0.294
Male	92	107.09	12.807			

Table 2.1 reveals comparison of male and female student's level of psychological capital in higher education. The mean and SD of female students are 104.33 and 16.906 respectively whereas the mean and SD of male students are 107.09 and 12.807 respectively. The "t" value found 1.056 which is not significant at 0.05 level of significance indicates that level of psychological capital between female and male students do not differ significantly. The related null hypothesis i.e. Students of Higher Education would not be significantly differing on psychological capital with respect to gender stands accepted. It can be concluded that there will be no significant difference of psychological capital level among the students of higher education on the basis of gender.

3. To find out the level of difference of psychological capital among students of higher education belonging to urban and rural locality.

Ho1.ii: Students of Higher Education would not be significantly differing on psychological capital with respect to their residential location i.e., rural & urban.

Table3.1: t-test for the Comparison of students on the basis of locality.

Group	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	Sig. value
Urban	78	103.67	15.955	143.39	2.110	.037
Rural	71	108.63	12.351			

Table 3.1 reveals comparison of psychological capital level belonging to urban and rural locality. The mean and SD of students belonging to urban locality are 103.67 and 15.955 respectively whereas the mean and SD of students belonging to rural locality are 108.63 and 12.351 respectively. The “t” value found 2.110 which are not significant at 0.05 level of significance indicates that level of psychological capital belonging to urban locality do not differ significantly from students belonging to rural locality. The related null hypothesis i.e. Students of Higher Education would not be significantly differing on psychological capital with respect to their residential location i.e., rural & urban” stands accepted. Thus, present study shows no significant difference on the level of psychological capital of students belonging to urban as well as rural backgrounds.

4. To find out the level of difference of Psychological Capital among higher education’s students of CUSB on the basis of their level of course.

Ho1.iii: Students of Higher Education would not be significantly differing on psychological capital with respect to their level of course i.e., UG&PG.

Table4.1: t-test for the Comparison of students on the basis of level of course.

Group	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	Sig. value
UG	66	106.09	14.182	147	0.063	.966
PG	83	105.99	14.866			

Table 4.1 reveals comparison of level of psychological capital on the basis of level of course among the students of higher education. The mean and SD of students of UG backgrounds are 106.09 and 14.182 respectively where as the mean and SD of PG backgrounds are 105.99 and 14.866 respectively. The “t” value found .063 which is not significant at 0.05 level of significance indicates that level of psychological capital of students of UG backgrounds do not differ significantly from students belonging to PG. The related null hypothesis i.e. students of Higher Education would not be significantly differing on psychological capital with respect to their level of course i.e., UG&PG.” Stands accepted. Thus, present study shows no significant difference on the level of psychological capital of students on the basis of level of course i.e. UG & PG.

Major Findings of the Study

- 1) There is no significant level of difference on psychological capital between male and female students.
- 2) There is no significant level of difference on psychological capital with respect to their residential location i.e., rural & urban.
- 3) There is no significant level of difference on psychological capital with respect to their level of course i.e., UG & PG.

Conclusions

The objective of this study was to assess the level of psychological capital among the higher education students on the basis of gender, residential location, and level of course. In conclusion, it is essential to understand psychological capital varies from person to person; however, a single person's psychological capital is relatively constant; however, cultivation would also change the persons' psychological capital. The results of this research revealed that maximum of the students are having moderate level of psychological capital. Institutions of higher education may take into account students' psychological capital to boost students' study engagement and fulfils the goal of fostering talents in order to strengthen students' learning effect. Increased psychological capital led to more positive emotional experiences. Psychological capital can benefit students improve their psychological health, and academic performance by providing assistance and convenience in their work and life. Overall, it can be inferred that because students' psychological capital is a potential predictor of their academic adjustment and helps students adjust to university life, there exists a necessity for a deeper understanding of Psychological Capital. Besides, teachers and concerned stakeholders are required to cultivate and foster psychological capital among students for their better adaptation to university.

Educational Implications

A study of Psychological Capital among the student of Higher Education has numerous significant educational implications:

1. **Link between Psychological Capital and Performance:** Students with higher levels of psychological capital (self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience) perform better academically.
2. **Role in Academic Achievement:** Psychological capital influences students' learning motivation, study skills, and ability to earn satisfactory grades.
3. **Students with Low Psychological Capital:** Students with low psychological capital (self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience) show lower levels of internal learning.
4. **Need for Training Programs:** Both students and teachers should focus on training programs to help students develop psychological capital during the process of learning.
5. **Growth of Psychological Capital:** Psychological capital growth is impacted by a person's readiness, motivation, interest, learning orientation, and goal achievement.
6. **Attention to Psychological Skills:** More attention should be given to each psychological element (self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience) through psychological capital-building programs.
7. **Practical Treatments:** Each psychological skill can be developed through practical treatments.
8. **Classroom Environment:** Educational institutions should create an environment that encourages the advancement of psychological capital to enhance learning.
9. **Curriculum Design:** Curriculum developers should design more flexible curricula that encourage student engagement in seeking specialized information.
10. **Teacher Awareness:** Teachers ought to understand the benefits of monitoring and supporting students, and allow them more autonomy in tasks to enhance psychological capacities.

11. **Support in Adjusting to University Life:** Teachers and stakeholders must help students build psychological capital to better adjust to university life.

12. **Contribution to Knowledge:** The study contributes to the understanding of the intermediary function of psychological capital in enhancing students' learning performance.

Suggestions for Further Research

Afterwards completing the research on the above topic there has been discovered some areas where research work can be further carried out to get more useful results. The subsequent areas are as follows where research on the topic can be carried further-

- The present study is confined to the students of higher education only. The same study can be conducted on the school students also.
- The present study is confined to the higher education students of non-technical courses only. This study could be conducted on higher education students of technical courses also.
- The present study is conducted on students only. This study can be further conducted on individuals other than students also.
- The research on the topic is limited to the level of psychological capital among higher education students. The research can be further conducted to ascertain the reason behind low and high level of psychological capital among the students.
- The research can be further conducted to ascertain whether a positive emotion is related with psychological capital and their interrelation.

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