

Investigating the Relationship between Organizational Psychological Capital and Meaning in the Employees' work (Shahid Beheshti University as a Case Study)

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Accepted: April 03, 2013 Published: May 03, 2013

Doi:10.5296/ijhrs.v3i2.3732 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/ijhrs.v3i2.3732>

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between psychological capital and meaning in work among the employees of Shahid Beheshti University. The statistical population of this study includes all of the employees that were working in Shahid Beheshti University in 2011 and then a sample of 103 employees was selected from them randomly. In order to collect the data, two standard questionnaires were used. These include the questionnaire of psychological capital that was developed by Lotanz et al. in 2077 and the questionnaire of meaning that is developed by Stager et al. in 2010. The results of this study

indicate that there are significant positive relationships among the components of psychological capital (including self-efficiency, optimism, hopefulness, and flexibility) and the components of meaning in work (positive meaning, meaning-making through work, and creating good motivations). On the other hand, the results of regression analysis indicate that two components of psychological capital (including self-efficiency and hopefulness) have more predictability of meaning in work.

Keywords: psychological capital, meaning in work, employees

1. Introduction

The work is always one of the mankind's concerns. Also the work has been considered as one of the most important and main sections of life with the mechanization of life, increase in the life costs, and third millennium revolution. This is so much that peoples spend most of their time at work. In the studies that were done in 1980 and 1990 years in the eight countries across the world, work has been ranked as one of the most important aspects of life (Harpaz and Fu, 2002; Chakofsky, 2011). Therefore, it can be said that the work is not only method of subsistence, but it is considered as one of the most important instruments of identity acquisition. This fact motivates the organizational researchers to adopt a vision beyond the hedonism in the work behavior.

The psychological capital has its roots in the optimistic psychology. The purpose of optimistic psychology is to use the scientific methods to discover and reinforce the factors that lead to growth and progress of individuals, groups, organizations, and communities (Lotans, 2010). The capacities of the optimistic organizational behavior should include the contracts that are measurable and developable and also is depends on the work for its improvement (Lotans, 2010; Nelson and Cooper, 2007). According to these criteria, the capacities of optimistic organizational behavior include hopefulness, optimism, flexibility, and self-efficiency. All these factors represent the psychological capital (Lotans and Youssef, 2004; Lotans et al., 2007; Lotans, 2010). The psychological capital has considerable positive effects on the organizational desirable outcomes. For example, the results of many studies indicate that the psychological capital leads to increase in creativity and entrepreneurship; decrease in work absence; increase in performance, commitment, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior. Other benefits of the psychological capital in work include actualization and development of the employees' talent and potentials (Lotans et al., 2007; Toorafayv, 2010). This also is educable and has favorite return on investment (Lotans et al., 2007; Hagez, 2010; Lotans et al., 2008; Lotans et al., 2010).

Some of the authors consider these findings and indicate that meaning sense can solve the life problems and lead that people do positive actions (Frankel, 1996). Having such meaning in the work is very important and also can leads to several positive outcomes for employees and organization. Havener (1999) pointed out that the organizations should consider and perceive the employees' needs for maintaining them and reinforcing their motivations. The qualified employees need to have meaningful work. If this need is not attended by managers, the employees leave the organization. If the work has much meaning and goal for employees, their attitude toward work as a service will be reinforced (Dik and Duffy, 2009). The

individuals that consider the work as a service and the work has much meaning for them have more job satisfaction and spend more time at their work without receiving any overtime salary (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, and Schwartz, 1997). As Dik and Duffy (2009) indicate there are significant relationships between less meaning in work with low job enthusiasm, low organizational commitment and motivation, increase in desire to leave organization, weak perception of the organizational supportiveness from management and leadership, decrease in the wellbeing, and increase in depression. Arnold et al. (2007) indicate that there are significant relationships between meaning feeling in the work and positive emotions and psychological wellbeing. On the other hand, there are significant positive relationships between desire to meaningful work and its positive outcomes. When the employees feel that are working in a job with fundamental goal or the work is important for them, the work will has positive and considerable outcomes for them such as decrease in stress, depression, pessimism and satisfaction and also increase in the commitment, effort, participation, empowerment, happiness, and satisfaction (Cameron, 2008).

All in all, some theories and studies confirm the relationship between psychological capital and meaning in work. For example, Steyn et al. (2011) indicate that there are significant relationships between self-efficiency, optimism, and meaning. Lotans et al. (2007) also pointed out that the employees that have moral psychological capital consider their work as a service rather than a traditional contract and so show more organizational citizenship behavior in their organization. King et al. (2006) indicate that there are significant relationships between positive emotions and sense of meaning in life. Unfortunately, few studies have been done in Iran in terms of both psychological capital and especially meaning in work. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between psychological capital and meaning in work in Shahid Beheshti University.

2. Research questions

Is there any relationship between the components of psychological capital (including self-efficiency, optimism, hopefulness, and flexibility) and the components of meaning in work (positive meaningfulness, meaning creation through work, and good motivations creation)?

Are the components of psychological capital (including self-efficiency, optimism, hopefulness, and flexibility) predictive of meaning of work of the employees of Shahid Beheshti University?

3. Research methodology

This research is a descriptive-survey study. The statistical population of this study includes all of the employees that were working in Shahid Beheshti University in 2011 and then a sample of 103 employees was selected from them randomly. In order to collect the data, two standard questionnaires were used. These include the questionnaire of psychological capital (including self-efficiency, optimism, hopefulness, and flexibility) that was developed by Lotanz et al. in 2007 and the questionnaire of meaning with 10 questions (including three components as positive meaningfulness, meaning-making through work, and creating good motivations) that

is developed by Stager et al. in 2010. In order to examine and confirm reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbachs' Alpha has been used that its value is 0.88 for our questionnaire. So, reliability of the questionnaire has been confirmed. Also in order to examine the validity of the questionnaire, face validity has been used. The research data was analyzed through Pearson correlation coefficient and multi-variable regression in the SPSS16 software.

4. Findings

As indicated in the previous sections, the first question of this study indicates that is there any relationship between the components of psychological capital (including self-efficiency, optimism, hopefulness, and flexibility) and the components of meaning in work (positive meaningfulness, meaning creation through work, and good motivations creation)?

In order to analyze this hypothesis, Pearson correlation analysis has been used that its results has been indicated in the table 1.

Table 1. the results of Pearson correlation between the components of psychological capital and the components of meaning in work

		Self-efficacy	hope	optimism	resiliency	Positive meaning	Meaning-making through work	Greater good motivation
Self-efficacy	Pearson Correlation	1						
	Sig. (2-tailed)							
	N	103						
Hope	Pearson Correlation	.571**	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000						
	N	103	103					
optimism	Pearson Correlation	.443**	.553*	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000					
	N	103	103	103				

resiliency	Pearson Correlation	.540**	.577* *	.466**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000				
	N	103	103	103	103			
Positive meaning	Pearson Correlation	.500**	.535* *	.217*	.440**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.027	.000			
	N	103	103	103	103	103		
Meaning-making through work	Pearson Correlation	.483**	.425* *	.303**	.345**	.700**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.002	.000	.000		
	N	103	103	103	103	103	103	
Greater good motivation	Pearson Correlation	.576**	.552* *	.342**	.460**	.646**	.649**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	103	103	103	103	103	103	103

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

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As the results of table 1 show, there are significant positive relationships among the components of psychological capital and the components of meaning in work ($p \leq 0.05$). Therefore, the first question of this study is confirmed and it is concluded that there are significant positive relationships among the components of psychological capital and the components of meaning in work.

The second question of this study indicates that are the components of psychological capital (including self-efficiency, optimism, hopefulness, and flexibility) predictive of meaning of the work of the employees of Shahid Beheshti University?

In order to analyze this hypothesis, multi-variable regression analysis has been used that its

results has been indicated in the tables 2,3, and 4.

Table 2. regression coefficients for the components of psychological capital

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.666a	.444	.421	4.11699

a. Predictors: (Constant), resiliency, optimism, Self-efficacy, hope

The results of regression analysis for components of psychological capital in table 2 indicate that regression coefficient is 0.666 and coefficient of determination (r^2) is 0.444 for this test. This meant that the components of psychological capital can explain about 0.444 of variances of meaning in work.

Table 3. the results of regression analysis for confirming regression coefficient of psychological capital

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1325.367	4	331.342	19.549	.000a
	Residual	1661.063	98	16.950		
	Total	2986.430	102			

a. Predictors: (Constant), resiliency, optimism, Self-efficacy, hope

b. Dependent Variable: meaningful at work

In order to confirm regression coefficient, one-way analysis of variance has been used. The results of this test indicate that the $F=19.549$ is significant in $p \leq 0.05$. In other words, the results of this test confirm the relationship between components of psychological capital and meaning in work.

Table 4. multi-variable regression analysis for predicting meaning in work through research predictive variables

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	6.253	2.311		2.706	.008
Self-efficacy	2.992	.806	.362	3.711	.000
hope	2.806	.837	.354	3.354	.001
optimism	-.978	.938	-.097	-1.043	.300
resiliency	1.143	.928	.121	1.232	.221

a. Dependent Variable: meaningful at work

Based on the results of table 4, t-value of regression analysis indicate that only self-efficiency ($t=3.711$) and hopefulness ($t=3.354$) are significant ($p \leq 0.05$). Therefore, it is concluded that self-efficiency ($\beta=0.362$) and hopefulness ($\beta=0.354$) have significant predictability for meaning in work.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The psychological capital is one of the important and effective organizational factors. The effects of the psychological capital on the organizations and several studies and researches that have been done in the beginning of third millennium have made it obligatory to the organizational managers and leaders to explore and discover the effective factors on increasing its level. On the other hand, exploring the meaning in life and especially in workplace is an obvious need for mankind. Therefore, this study was aimed to examine the relationships between psychological capital and meaning in work of the employees in Shahid Beheshti University. The results of this study indicate that there are significant relationships between components of psychological capital and components of meaning in work. These results are in consistence with the results of studies that have been done by Stein (2011), King et al. (2006), Hikes and King (2007). These findings indicate that the psychological capital is progressing from actual self (social, human, and psychological capital) toward possible self. It seems that the employees have high levels of progress motivation and self-actualization. These influence the employees' perceptions, emotions, and cognition and lead to reinforce positive behavior, attitudes, and emotions also lead to neutralize and eliminate negative behavior, attitudes, and emotions. This also increases their motivation to do challenging and meaningful work.

The negative psychological emotions and conditions pave the ground for stress, depression, despair and cynicism. In this condition, the individuals will have limited horizons and also his/her motivation and effort will be decreased for achieving goal and exploring meaning in

work. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the employees' individual and organizational performance and provide a positive and meaningful workplace for them. In order to this, the organizational managers and leaders must attend development of the psychological capital as competitive advantage that can actualize very important goals such as reinforcement of meaning in work, organizational citizenship behavior, commitment, and performance.

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