

# Investigation of the Psychological Capital of Security Employees by Nationality and Status

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## Abstract

The concept of psychological capital (PsyCap) recently has attracted a great deal of interest who has been studying on organizational behavior. Psychological capital can be defined as individual's positive psychological state which contributes both personal and organizational aims and improves human performance. It is accepted that psychological capital has four components: self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resiliency. The purpose of the present study is to examine the associations of psychological capital (PsyCap) of security employees by nationality and status. In this study a cross-sectional survey was conducted using a convenience sample of 336 security employees in a military organization to establish possible relationship between psychological capital and two of demographic variables (nationality and status). The data obtained by the survey was analyzed using the SPSS 21.0 package program. In statistical analyzes, T-test and variance (ANOVA) analyzes were used. The results of the data has showed that resiliency of civil employees differs significantly from officers and noncommissioned officers. The analysis has also showed that self-efficacy and hope of Turkey participants differ significantly from European countries participants. However, no statistically significant difference has been found in resiliency of participant countries.

**Keywords:** Psychological capital, nationality, status, security employees

## Introduction

Positive psychology issue has attracted attention since Martin E. P. Seligman stressed this concept in his speech after being elected as president of the American Psychological Association in 1998 (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Martin Seligman challenged the field to change from a preoccupation with what is wrong and dysfunctional with people to what is right and good about them. Specifically, it focuses on strengths rather than weaknesses, health and vitality rather than illness and pathology. In his recent book on Authentic Happiness, Seligman (2004) first asked the question of whether there is psychological capital, and if so, what it is and how we get it. He answered the question by suggesting that “when we are engaged (absorbed in flow), perhaps we are investing, building psychological capital for our future.” Luthans, Luthans and Luthans (2004:46). Peterson (2000:44) emphasized that psychology should be as focused on strength, as interested in resilience as in vulnerability and as concerned with the cultivation of wellness as with remediation of pathology.

The aim of positive psychology is to begin to catalyze a change in the focus of psychology from preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities. (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000: 5) Although positive psychological has begun to draw attention throughout the years, it has only recently been proposed as a new approach focused on organizational behavior studies (Luthans, 2002a, 2002b; Luthans and Youssef, 2007; Wright, 2003).

The concept of psychological capital has emerged from the theories and researches within the field of positive psychology. (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000: 5) categorized positive psychology as individual and group level. While individual level is about positive individual traits: the capacity for love and vocation, courage, interpersonal skill, aesthetic sensibility, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, future mindedness, spirituality, high talent, and wisdom, group level is about the civic virtues and the institutions that move individuals toward better citizenship: responsibility, nurturance, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance, and work ethic. The field of positive psychology at the subjective level is about valued subjective experiences: well-being, contentment, and satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present).

(Luthans et al., 2006: 388) define Psychological Capital as “An individual’s positive psychological state of development that is characterized by: (1) having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks;(2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the

future; (3) persevering toward goals, and when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resiliency) to attain success.”

Drawing from positive psychology constructs, four psychological resources which were termed by (F. Luthans et al.,2007) best meet the POB scientific criteria: self-efficacy, hope, optimism and resilience.

Self-efficacy, which is one of the basic elements of psychological capital, is most often defined as a person’s perception or belief of “how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations” (Bandura, 1982, p. 122). And self-efficacy was defined as “an individual’s conviction (or confidence) about his or her abilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to successfully execute a specific task within a given context” (Stajkovic and Luthans, 1998:66).

Hope has been identified as the most unique construct included in POB and although it has not been as thoroughly researched as self-efficacy. Snyder, Irving and Anderson (1991: 287) defined hope as “goal-directed thinking in which people perceive that they can produce routes to desired goals (pathways thinking) and the requisite motivation to use those routes (agency thinking)”. The pathways component of this definition refers to an impression of being able to generate alternative plans to meet goals when impeded, as well as positive self-talk about being able to find these routes.

A useful definition of optimism was offered by anthropologist Lionel Tiger (1979): “a mood or attitude associated with an expectation about the social or material future—one which the evaluator regards as socially desirable, to his [or her] advantage, or for his [or her] pleasure”. An important implication of this definition, one drawn out by Tiger, is that there can be no single or objective optimism, at least as characterized by its content, because what is considered optimism depends on what the individual regards as desirable. Optimism is predicated on evaluation—on given affects and emotions, as it were (Peterson, 2000:44). Optimism can be viewed as an attributional style that explains positive events through personal, permanent, and pervasive causes and negative events through external, temporary, and situation-specific ones (Luthans and Youssef, 2007: 331).

Luthans (2002b) defined resilience as “the positive psychological capacity to rebound, to ‘bounce back’ from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure, or even positive change, progress, and increased responsibility” (Luthans, 2002a: 702). Resilience is a topic that has received increasing attention in recent years and as

characterized by positive psychology, involves positive coping and adaptation in the face of significant risk or adversity (Masten and Reed, 2002: 74).

In this study, it is aimed to examine the psychological capital of the security personnel in terms of different dimensions (self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience) according to nationality and status.

## Methods

In this study a cross-sectional survey was conducted using a convenience sample of 336 security employees in a military organization consisting of seventeen countries: Turkey, U.S.A., Germany, Portugese, Slovenia, Austria, Poland, Greece, Swiss, Ireland, Hungary, Romania, Croatia, Czech Republic, Sweden, Italy, Finland, Denmark, Norway, Britain, Netherlands, Ukraine, Canada, Lithuanian, Bulgaria, Albania and Kosovo. Country-based assessment was not made because of the number of countries is in large and the number of personnel in the participating countries varies considerably from each other. Instead, a four-zone grouping was used to categorize European countries. (United Nations E-Government Survey, New York, 2016, pp.219). The countries in Europe were categorized in the study as North-Western Europe and South-Eastern Europe. Descriptive statistics of participants according to nationality and status are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Participants According to Nationality and Status**

Demographic	Category	N	%
Nationality	Turkey	54	16,1
	North American C.	44	13,2
	North and Western	96	28,5
	Southern and Eastern	142	42,2
Status	Officer	185	55,1
	Non-commisioned	115	34,2
	Civilian employee	36	10,7

To assess psychological capital, the recently developed (Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007) and psychometrically analyzed (Luthans, Avolio et al., 2007) 24 items PsyCap Questionnaire (PCQ) was used and free permission was gotten from Prof. Dr. Fred Luthans via e mail for research purpose. Ratings for the PCQ were based on a 6-point

Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” This instrument has adapted 6 items each from published hope (Snyder et al., 1996), efficacy (Parker, 1998), resilience (Wagnild & Young, 1993) and optimism (Scheier & Carver, 1985) scales. Confirmatory factor analysis, conducted using Lisrel 8.80 version 17 was used to compare four competing models of the underlying structure of the PsyCap scales. Four items with a factor load of less than 0.32 were excluded from the analysis and the models tested with a four factor (self-efficacy with the six relevant items, hope with the five relevant items, resilience with the five relevant items and optimism with the four relevant items).

## Results

The effect of participants' nationality and on psychological capital was tested by t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results of the analyses are shown in Tables 2 and 3.

As shown in Table 2, the difference in self-efficacy ( $f_{335}=1,03, p>,05$ ), hope ( $f_{335}=1,53, p>,05$ ) ve optimism ( $F_{335}=2,34, p>,05$ ) does not have significant effect on status. This result showed that status does not have any effect on self-efficacy, hope and optimism. In the resilience ( $F_{335}=3, 53 p<, 05$ ) dimension, the difference was found to be significant. In order to find means that is significantly different from each other Tukey's test was applied. It has been found that the resilience of civilian employees differs significantly from officers and non-commissioned officers.

**Table 2. Anova Results by Status**

Factors	Status	N	Mea	S.	sd	F	P
Self-Efficacy	Officer	18	4.82	.87	2/33	1,03	,355
	Non-Commissioned	11	4.77	.83	3	8	
	Civilian Employee	36	5.01	.86			
	Total	33	4.82	.86			
Hope	Officer	18	4.71	.76	2/33	1,53	,218
	Non-Commissioned	11	4.76	.70	3	2	
	Civilian Employee	36	4.95	.74			
	Total	33	4.75	.74			
Resilienc e	Officer	18	4.57	.71	2/33	3,53	<b>,03 0</b>
	Non-Commissioned	11	4.55	.76	3	4	
	Civilian Employee	36	4.90	.61			
	Total	33	4.60	.73			
Optimism	Officer	18	4.33	.88	2/33	2,34	,098
	Non-Commissioned	11	4.30	.75	3	0	
	Civilian Employee	36	4.63	.81			
	Total	33	4.35	.84			

As shown in Table 3, the difference in self-efficacy ( $F_{335}=5,642, p>, 05$ ), hope ( $F_{335}=7,363 p>, 05$ ) and optimism ( $F_{335}=3,777 p>, 05$ ) has significant effect on nationality. It has been found that self-efficacy and hope of Turkey participants differs significantly from European countries participants and optimism of Turkey participants differs significantly from North and Western European countries. In the resilience ( $F_{335}=2,890 p<,05$ ) dimension the difference was not found to be significant. This result showed that nationality does not have any effect on resilience.

**Table 3. Anova Results by Nationality**

Factors	Nationality	N	Mea	S.	sd	F	P
Self-Efficacy	Turkev	54	5.23	.65	3/33	5,64	<b>,00</b>
	North American C.	44	4.83	.79			
	North and Western Euronean	96	4.65	.93	2	2	<b>1</b>
	Southern and Eastern	14	4.78	.85			
Hope	Turkev	54	5.14	.57	3/33	7,36	<b>,00</b>
	North American C.	44	4.86	.53			
	North and Western Euronean	96	4.59	.78	2	3	<b>0</b>
	Southern and Eastern	14	4.68	.78			
Resilien ce	Turkev	54	4.86	.61	3/33	2,89	<b>,03</b>
	North American C.	44	4.57	.75			
	North and Western Euronean	96	4.53	.67	2	0	<b>6</b>
	Southern and Eastern	14	4.55	.78			
Optimis m	Turkev	54	4.63	.86	3/33	3,77	<b>,01</b>
	North American C.	44	4.52	.61			
	North and Western Euronean	96	4.22	.68	2	7	<b>1</b>
	Southern and Eastern	14	4.28	.95			

**Conclusion**

The results of the current study indicated that nationality and status significantly differ psychological capital. In conclusion: (1) Status does not have any effect on self-efficacy, hope and optimism. (2) Resilience of civilian employees differs significantly from officers and non-commisioned officers. (3) The difference in self-efficacy, hope and optimism has significant effect on nationality. According to this, self-efficacy and hope of Turkey participants differ significantly from European countries participants and optimism of Turkey participants differs significantly from North and Western European countries. (4) The difference in resilience is not significant.

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