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**THE IMPACT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL ON WORK ENGAGEMENT OF  
ADVANCED LEVEL TEACHERS OF NATIONAL SCHOOLS IN AMBALANGODA  
EDUCATIONAL ZONE**

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**ABSTRACT**

Organizations consider positive work behavior of Work Engagement within their employees as one of the key elements to be successful. The researcher had not been found any study regarding advanced level teachers' Work Engagement in Sri Lankan context. Therefore the objective of the study was to address the gaps by investigating the multi-dimensional impact of Psychological Capital namely Self-Efficacy, Hope, Resilience and Optimism on Work Engagement of advanced level teachers of national schools in Ambalangoda educational zone. Research methodology of the study was quantitative and the researcher used census method by using questionnaires to collect data. Data were analyzed via multiple linear regression. Findings indicated that tested all independent variables, Self-Efficacy, Hope, Resilience and Optimism positively impact on Work Engagement. The current study is a novel contribution for the research site and the study will be supported to enhance Work Engagement of advanced level teachers as well as future labor force who will learn from relevant teachers in the research site. Hope recorded as the most significant variable within the study. Thus these schools and relevant authorities can be suggested to launch a goal setting intervention in which work related goals were determined and explaining multiple pathways to achieve these goals to enhance Hope of advanced level teachers in the research site.

**Keywords:** *Hope, Optimism, Resilience, Self-Efficacy, Work Engagement*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Work Engagement is a positive work behavior of the most significant resource within any organization and Work Engagement has developed as an important theme to be discussed within top management as a key element for an organization to be successful (Ruslan, Islam, & Noor, 2014). The most

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frequently used definition of Work Engagement in the scientific research defined it as a positive, fulfilling work related state of mind which is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

It is important to be considered regarding whether the engaged employees can convey radical transformations in organizations. Engaged employees are loyal, committed, productive, high performed, less intention to leave, more customers centric and bring profits to the firm (Gallup, 2008 as cited in Raina & Khatri, 2015) As well as highly engaged employees act as an asset for the organization and disengaged employees are a huge liability for the organization (Wilson, 2009).

### *Research Problem*

Practically manufacturing firms have chances to identify problems within the product prior to customer experience, but it is not possible within service firms. When considering about the Sri Lankan context, Central Bank of Sri Lanka (2017) said that service sector organizations are very important because service sector is the main sector which contributed 58.8% for the Gross Domestic Production in 2017. According to the World Bank Annual Report (2017), Sri Lanka is a lower middle income country of 21.4 million people with per capita GDP of \$4.065. Therefore majority of people in Sri Lanka consumes public sector services. By comparing with other public sector services, education system of every country plays a crucial role to support economic growth and shared prosperity. Comparatively Sri Lanka has long outperformed primary and secondary school system among developing countries. There are two major reasons why engagement in education is important. First one is, when teachers are enthusiastic in front of the classroom, this enthusiasm can pass on to the students. Second one is, among engaged teachers' absenteeism is lower and they do not resign quickly (Bal, Bakker & Kallenberg, 2006 as cited in Schoor, 2015).

School system is the highest resource allocation category of education industry in Sri Lanka. Because according to the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (2017), there are 10,194 government schools within the country. Further as per the Ministry of Education School Census Report, Sri Lanka (2017), student teacher ratio is greater within national schools (21) than provincial schools (16). Therefore it is important to have good Work Engagement from national school teachers. The most competitive examination in the Sri Lankan school education system is Advanced Level (A/L). Relatively very small proportion of students have opportunities to enter into public universities out of all the students who face the A/L examination per year. According to the University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka, it is nearly only 10% in 2018. Therefore A/L teachers' Work Engagement is very important within schooling system in Sri Lanka. This study will support for these schools and institute of Ambalangoda educational zone

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to take proper actions to enhance their Work Engagement. Not only teachers', it causes to enhance Work Engagement of future labor force who will also learn from those teachers. Thus this study gives a good contribution for the country.

According to the planning division of institute of Ambalangoda educational zone there are five national schools and the researcher collected questionnaires from 30 teachers of each national school as the preliminary survey. The level of Work Engagement shows 2.48 for Dharmasoka College, Ambalangoda; 2.46 for Devananda College, Ambalangoda; 2.44 for Revatha College, Balapitiya; 2.42 for Devapathiraja College, Hikkaduwa and 2.41 for Sumangala College, Hikkaduwa. The overall mean value was recorded as 2.44 of the average value of 3 representing seven point likert scale (Ranging from 0 to 6) which showing low level of Work Engagement among A/L teachers of national schools in Ambalangoda Educational Zone. Therefore this guides for a research problem in this research context. Thus the researcher formulated the research problem statement as, "Why there is a low level of Work Engagement of Advanced Level teachers of national schools' in Ambalangoda Educational Zone?"

There are several factors which directly effect on Work Engagement. Among these factors the researcher identified Psychological Capital (PsyCap) which consists of four dimensions namely Self-Efficacy, Hope, Resilience and Optimism as important internal resources which have significant positive impact on Work Engagement based on a strong rationale. According to the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory PsyCap is considered as a psychological resource that raises Work Engagement. At the essence of this theory there is an assumption as individuals have a definite level of personal resources which they decide to keep and expand on the basis of motivational factors and enhancement of PsyCap leads to enhance positive work behaviors such as Work Engagement (Hobfoll, 1989). Thus, the theory explains that there is a positive impact of PsyCap on Work Engagement (Alessandri, Consiglio, Luthans, & Borgogni, 2018). Based on those theoretical evidences, researcher developed research hypotheses as; H<sub>1A</sub>: There is a positive impact of Self-Efficacy on Work Engagement of A/L teachers of national schools in Ambalangoda Educational Zone, H<sub>1B</sub>: There is a positive impact of Hope on Work Engagement of A/L teachers of national schools in Ambalangoda Educational Zone, H<sub>1C</sub>: There is a positive impact of Resilience on Work Engagement of A/L teachers of national schools in Ambalangoda Educational Zone and H<sub>1D</sub>: There is a positive impact of Optimism on Work Engagement of A/L teachers of national schools in Ambalangoda Educational Zone.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

At present world organizations try to be productive than their competitors. To achieve that objective Work Engagement of employees is a crucial factor. The

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concept of personal engagement at work was developed by William Kahn in 1990. He described how individuals experience a sense of connection and disconnection (disengagement) regarding their roles at work. When they are engaged, they employ and express themselves psychically, cognitively as well as emotionally during role performances.

Positive psychology movement is origin of the concept of PsyCap research. Under that in 1990 s, positive psychology movement has been launched and original negative psychology study has been changed. In 2000, positive psychology has been formally put forwarded (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). According to literature positive organizational behavior can be identified as the theoretical basis of the concept of psychological capital. In 2002, the concept of Positive Organization Behavior (POB) has been put forwarded which focuses on the advantages of human resources and the measurement development and application of energy measurement (Luthans, 2002). In 2005, PsyCap defined as the core psychological factors of individual general enthusiasm (Avolio, Walumbwa, Li, & Luthans, 2005). The operational definition of PsyCap is a kind of positive psychological situation presented in the process of individual's growth and development including Self-efficacy, Hope, Resilience and Optimism (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007).

Stajkovic & Luthans (1998) defined Self-Efficacy as an individual's belief regarding their motivation, cognitive resources and courses of action necessary to accomplish a specific task at a given context. Self-Efficacy has motivational qualities which energizes employees, directs their efforts and promotes persistence. Furthermore Consiglio, Borgogni, Tecco, & Schaufeli (2016) have conducted a study which explains that the motivational process reasoning for high initial levels of Self-efficacy. That showed a positive impact of Self-Efficacy on Work Engagement. Thus Self-Efficacious employees are more enthusiastic about their work and pursue their goals with more energy compared to less efficacious people.

Hope can be identified as a multidimensional construct that comprises of an individual's 'willpower' and 'way power'. Willpower is an individual's agency or determination to achieve goals and 'way power' is one's capability to formulate alternative pathways and contingency plans in order to achieve a goal in facing obstacles (Snyder, Irving, & Anderson, 1991). Hopeful individuals have a sense of goal-directed determination and have the capability to step back or disengage from automatic response patterns.

Ruter (1987) defined Resilience as individual's ability to manipulate their environment effectively in order to protect from the negative consequences of adverse events. When employees experience negative events in the workplace, individuals with high PsyCap are more likely to adapt positively and bounce back from those events. That helps to prevent intentions to quit employment of

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existing employees (Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Norman, & Combs, 2006). Furthermore prior studies indicated possible links between Resilience, commitment and Work Engagement (Luthans et al., 2007; Luthans & Youssef, 2007).

Optimism is the tendency of belief that one will usually experience good outcomes in life (Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 2001). Optimists attribute positive results to the self, while attributing negative results to outside factors better than pessimists. These characteristics lead them to engage enthusiastically, feeling of engross in their work and work with greater levels of energy. Furthermore, empirical literature has revealed that there was positive association between Optimism and Work Engagement within their contexts (Choi & Kang, 2012; Kim & Sup Hyun, 2017; Kulophas et al., 2018; Mauno, Kinnunen, & Ruokolainen, 2007; Xanthopoulou, Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009).

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

In the current study the researcher used quantitative methodology because the researcher considered about the impact of PsyCap dimensions namely Self-Efficacy, Hope, Resiliency and Optimism on Work Engagement and the researcher has developed hypotheses to test the impact of PsyCap dimensions on Work Engagement. Because of that the research was based on deductive approach. The purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of PsyCap dimensions which are independent variables on Work Engagement which refers to dependent variable. Therefore the study was an explanatory one which explains the cause and effect. As well as it contains more than one independent variable. Therefore the data analytical tool is multiple regression. The researcher used census strategy for the current study which consists of 102 A/L teachers within the research site and the response rate was 96%. Therefore the researcher used mono method since there is single data collection technique and corresponding analysis procedures. This study was a cross sectional because the researcher used specific time to collect data for study purpose.

The researcher used only one party in collecting data. Therefore the unit of analysis or the major entity that was being analyzed of the study was individual level. The researcher has used only primary data as the source of data for the research. Primary data were gathered through questionnaire. The researcher measured Work Engagement via seven point likert scale which was modified by Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova (2006) with Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.86 and validity more than 0.6. The PsyCap measured by using six point likert scale developed by Luthans et al (2007) with face and predictive validity and the overall PsyCap reliability ranging from 0.88 to 0.89 includes Self-Efficacy, Hope, Resilience and Optimism 0.88, 0.89, 0.89, 0.89 respectively.

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#### 4 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The researchers carried out percentage analysis of demographic data of the selected sample to get an idea of the sample profile. The total percentage of male teachers was 35% and female was 65% were included in the analysis of gender. Therefore it can be identified that there is higher female representation and majority of teachers were married (94%) and minority of teachers were not married (6%) within A/L teachers of national schools in Ambalangoda educational zone. The highest percent (39%) of teachers teach under the scheme of Science/Math. 29% and 20% of teachers teach under the schemes of Art and Commerce respectively. Further it is clear that comparatively there is less percentage of teachers (12%) for the scheme of Technology at national schools in Ambalangoda educational zone.

According to the Kolmogorov Smirnov Test, the output P value is 0.089 and it is greater than the critical P value (0.05). Therefore there aren't enough evidence to reject  $H_0$  (Data are normally distributed). Thus it can be concluded that Work Engagement data are normally distributed at 95% level of Confident. All items of Work Engagement scale and all items of PsyCap scale are acceptable with good internal consistency as Cronbach's Alpha value for all variables are greater than 0.7. Values of KMO and Bartlett are higher than 0.5, Work Engagement and PsyCap scales are validated and outputs can be generalized to the population as well.

The researcher could find enough evidences to reject  $H_0$  (There are no relationships between Work Engagement and Self-Efficacy; Work Engagement and Hope; Work Engagement and Resilience; Work Engagement and Optimism) with all output p values of 0.000 which are less than the critical p value of 0.05. Furthermore all "r" values are positive and it leads to conclude that Work Engagement is positively correlated with above mentioned four variables. Thus it can be concluded that there are positive relationships between Work Engagement and all four dimensions of PsyCap with 95% level of confidence.

The researcher applied multiple regression for the analysis of the impact of Self-Efficacy, Hope, Resilience and Optimism on Work Engagement as there are more than one independent variable on a dependent variable. According to the regression analysis, output P values of all four dimensions are less than the critical P value of 0.05. Hence it can be concluded that there are significant positive relationships between Work Engagement and Self-Efficacy, Work Engagement and Hope, Work Engagement and Resilience, Work Engagement and Optimism. 80% of variation of Work Engagement can able to explain through the fitted regression model. Therefore it can be concluded that the fitted model is significant at 95% level of confidence. Equation 1 represents the final fitted regression model of the study.

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$$\text{Work Engagement} = 0.343 + 0.155 \text{ Self-Efficacy} + 0.354 \text{ Hope} + 0.104 \text{ Resilience} + 0.176 \text{ Optimism} \quad (1)$$

## 5 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

As findings of current study, there are studies which proved all dimensions of PsyCap positively impact on Work Engagement. Such as a study regarding nurses employed in two public hospitals in Northern Cyprus (Karatepe & Avci, 2017), a study in Korean context (Joo et al., 2016), a study regarding IT professionals in Indian context (Sihag & Sarikval, 2014), As well as there were positive correlation between all dimensions of PsyCap and Work Engagement in a study of call center employees in South African context (Simons & Buitendach, 2013). As well as a study of 36 western countries revealed that self-Efficacy has not been influenced on Work Engagement (Malinowski & Lim, 2015). This study revealed that this is not applicable in A/L teachers in Ambalangoda Educational Zone.

A study regarding staff nurses working in public hospitals in Malaysia also revealed that Hope and Resilience positively impacts on Work Engagement (Othman & Nasurdin, 2011). A study regarding employees working in private sector organizations in South Korea revealed that Self-Efficacy and Optimism positively impact on Work Engagement (Kim & Sup Hyun, 2017). Especially a study among teachers of national schools in Thailand proved that there was strong and significant association between Optimism and Work Engagement (Kulophas et al., 2018). Within a study regarding Italian public administration, only Self-Efficacy and Hope positively impact on Work Engagement but Resilience and Optimism has not been impacted on Work Engagement (Costantni et al., 2017).

As findings of current study, there are studies which confirmed the highest positive impact on Work Engagement was represented by Hope within their contexts as well (Examples: Costantni et al., 2017; Karatepe and Avci, 2017). In addition to that a study among secondary school teachers within western context confirmed that Psychological Capital, mediate the relationship between job resources and Work Engagement and Hope has been recorded the highest impact within that study (Schoor, 2015).

There are few limitations in the current study. The main limitation of this study is an application of cross-sectional data. Secondly, the researcher has considered multi-dimensional impact of PsyCap on Work Engagement only. Furthermore the current study was conducted only for A/L teachers of national schools in Ambalangoda Educational Zone. Therefore the generalizability is less as it can be generalized only to the relevant population.

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## 6 CONCLUSION AND CONTRIBUTIONS

The current study found positive impact of PsyCap on Work Engagement by proving validity of COR theory within selected teachers in Sri Lankan context which explaining the positive side of PsyCap on Work Engagement. The researcher had not been found a study regarding A/L teachers' Work Engagement in Sri Lankan context. Thus the current study will be contributed for exiting literature regarding Work Engagement in Sri Lankan context.

The highest impact on Work Engagement recorded from Hope within the study. Hope can be identified as a positive motivational state which persevering toward goals and when necessary, redirecting paths to goal in order to attain success. As per Luthans & Youssef (2007) PsyCap is developable. Thus Hope can be increased through a mindfulness meditation intervention which creates positive motivational state or by expressing gratitude and visualizing positive self-images. In addition, hope has been found by a goal setting intervention in which work related goals were determined and explaining multiple pathways to achieve those goals. Not only hope, other variables (Self-Efficacy, Resilience and Optimism) also support to increase Work Engagement of relevant teachers in the study.

Well-developed strategies exist to promote Self-Efficacy such as mastery experience, social persuasion and vicarious experience. In this case, special consideration has to be given to the work domain, in order to increase teachers' confidence to be able to produce changes in their social work environment. That could be done by establishing goals that test their abilities to interact with the work context, for example managing critical situations, such as negative feedback from their supervisor or principals, a conflict with other teachers or in management meetings (mastery experience). At the same time, supervisors, principals and other relevant authorities could also be trained to support teachers and encourage them, for instance by utilizing constructive feedback (social persuasion). Furthermore, sharing information, experiences and behavioral strategies among other teachers should also be promoted (vicarious learning).

For enhancement of Resilience relevant trainings and intervention programmes can be launched by considering possible obstacles for them. Optimism is likely to be enhanced by the socialization process of each individual during their work processes. They can informally develop their work ethics and attitudes through collaboration with other teachers. Structured on-the-job trainings, coaching, mentoring, observing and imitating role models can be significant platforms to build up their optimism.

Authorities can focus the level of PsyCap when recruiting new teachers by asking questions at interviews about their level of Self-Efficacy, Hope, Resilience and Optimism as effective way. On the other hand, principals and



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relevant authorities should also know how to enhance the level of Self-Efficacy, Hope, Resilience and Optimism of these teachers and another ways to enhance teachers' Work Engagement.

Especially A/L teachers in the context have to teach large content within the given limited time period. Therefore by maintaining flexible working environment and flexible working culture for teachers to teach extra hours, authorities will be able to enhance Work Engagement of them as well it is better to have a good appraisal mechanism for appraising teachers who are highly vigorous, dedicated and absorbed.

Future researchers can investigate other drivers of Work Engagement other than Self-Efficacy, Hope, Resilience and Optimism and it is possible to expand further by measuring teachers' PsyCap through the perspective of sectional heads and students. It is recommended to examine dimensions of PsyCap in other similar occupational contexts to measure the significance of the model.

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### **ABBREVIATIONS**

A/L	Advanced Level
PsyCap	Psychological Capital
COR	Conservation of Resources