
THE IMPACT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF UNDERGRADUATES: A STUDY IN RAJARATA UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

Psychological capital has been receiving increasing attention of global academia as it is deemed as an important controller of human performance. In business management it has extensively been explored, however no significant attention has been received to sightsee how the concept could be effectively used to swell academic performance of students. The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of psychological capital on academic performance of undergraduates of Rajarata University of Sri Lanka. The data were collected from a sample of 300 students in all faculties of Rajarata University of Sri Lanka using the stratified sampling method through a self-administrated questionnaire. Results were drawn using bivariate correlation and linear regression analyses. Results revealed that optimism, resilience, self-efficacy has positive significant impact on academic performance of the undergraduates of Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, albeit the impact of hope on academic performance was negative and insignificant. The research provides important information about the impact of psychological capital on academic performance of undergraduates. Although the impact of psychological capital on performance has been investigated in the other contexts, research in Sri Lankan context is scant. Therefore, this study provides insights particularly to the present context might be also valid in Sri Lankan University Context. The study concluded that, in order to increase the academic performance it is essential to enhance the resilience, optimism, self-efficacy of the students.

Keywords: *Academic Performance, Psychological Capital*

1 INTRODUCTION

Education is considered as a basic human need as it connects with well-being and development of society. The social and economic development of a nation

is directly related with education quality and superiority of academic activities (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012). Academic performance refers to how students deal and cope with the different tasks associated with their studies, the ability to study and remember facts and being able to communicate one's knowledge in verbal or written form (Thamavithya, 2011), is influenced by number of social, psychological, economic, environmental and personal factors (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012). The academic performance and learning of university students, are proposed to the influence individual's career success and employability (Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004). Among aforementioned determinant of academic success, psychological capital has not been reached to its maximum in behavioral research process, so substantial further exploration is imperative for the field (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012). Psychological capital means a positive assessment of circumstances and probability of success due to motivated effort and perseverance (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007). The concept of psychological capital helps to understand the behavior of human being (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), and it can only be developed by self-practice (Seligman, 2002).

Psychological capital is interest and emerging concept in present era. In reviewing the literature, it was noted that psychological capital has been increasingly tested in different context. Ample studies had been done in organizational levels to test the impact of psychological capital on business performance (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007a; Avey, Nimnicht, & Pig, 2010). Further, Kappagoda, Othman, & De Alwis (2014) examined the psychological capital and its impact on Job Performance in the Banking Sector employees in Sri Lanka. Moreover, Abbas & Raja (2014) investigated psychological capital on innovative performance. However, no ample studied were evident in university/ higher educational context to test academic performance and psychological capital, demonstrates the need and essentiality of excavating latent association of psychological capital has on student performance. Accordingly, researchers interested to investigate how does psychological capital impact on academic performance of undergraduates in Sri Lanka?

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic performance refers to how students handle their studies and how they cope with various tasks (Banquil, et al., 2009) and plays a significant role in creating the best quality graduates for the country's social and economic development (Ali, et al., 2009). The Grade Point Average (GPA) is now used by most of tertiary institution as a convenient summary measure of academic performance (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012; Singh, Malik, & Singh, 2016). Further, Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) was also used by higher education institutes to evaluate academic performance of students (Muhammad, Tahir,

Muhammad, & Ali, 2011). Continuous Assessments and End Semester Examination are major contributors for the GPA and is measured proportionally on given weight. Continuous assessments consist of tutorials, reports, presentations, field visits, projects and classroom tests. Assessment criteria for practical-oriented subjects and languages were determined considering expected characteristics of graduates (Undergraduates Prospectus, 2019). The academic performance is determinant by various factors such as technology, family background, psychological capital, physical strength, skills and attitudes (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012). Psychological capital is the positive side of human life and psychological state for development, is defined as hope, optimism, self-efficacy, resilience, creativity, courage and wisdom of a human. It is characterized by efficacy: having confidence to take on and put in necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks, optimism: making a positive attribution about succeeding now and in the future, hope: persevering towards goals when necessary and redirecting paths to goals in order to succeed, resilience: ability to sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond to attain success (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007a). Psychological capital is beyond human and social capital (Sridevi & Srinivasan, 2012). Economic capital focuses on “what you have?” human capital on “what you know?” and social capital on “whom you know?” psychological capital focuses on “Who you are?” and what you can become? (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007). It is unique and open to measurement, development and performance improvement in the work place (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007b). Hope, optimism, self-efficacy and resilience are four major pillars of psychological capital (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007).

Hope is a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency: goal directed energy, (b) pathways: planning to meet goals (Snyder, 2012; Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007a). It is the ability to formulate plans and strategies to persevere to achieve goals. Hope has willpower to act creatively and an ability to explore different ways to accomplish the goals (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007). Hopeful employees tend to be creative and resourceful, even with tight budgets (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007b). Resilience is positive psychological capacity to ‘bounce back’ from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure, or even positive change, progress and increased responsibility (Luthans, 2002a). It is the ability to handle situations under certain tasks and unfavorable conditions (Masten & Reed, 2002). Resilient believes that having what it takes to be successful provides the necessary staying power in the face of repeated failures, setbacks and skeptical or even critical social responses that are inherently daunting (Bandura & Locke, 2003). Resilience helps people become flexible and adaptable even in highly changing and unsafe situations (Coutu, 2002). Optimism is the mood or attitude associated with an interpretation about the social or material—one which the evaluator regards as socially

desirable to his/her advantage, or for his/her pleasure" (Schneider, 2001). Optimism refers to a positive attribution or expectation of success in the present time as well as in the future, a thought and an expectation that the future will be good (Snyder, 2002). In this context, the optimists are people who have positive attitudes about being successful in the present and in the future, (Peterson, Luthans, Avolio, Walumbwa, & Zhang, 2011). Optimism is an attribution style that explains positive events in the form of personal, permanent and pervasive causes and negative events in relation to external, temporary and situations-specific events (Seligman, 1998). Self-efficacy is conviction or confidence of once having to mobilize cognitive resources, to take necessary actions to perform a particular task successfully overcoming problems (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998b). It is an ability to organize and execute the actions needed to produce certain accomplishments" (Bandura, 1997). Therefore, this self-belief influences how people behave and make decisions, and how much effort they spend on the task (van Dinther, Dochy, & Segers, 2011). Self-efficacy promotes and encourages academic achievement through increasing academic aspiration both directly and indirectly (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996).

Sweetman, Luthans, Avey, & Luthans (2010) found a strong relationship between creative performance and psychological capital (hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism) ((Peterson & Byron, 2007). Lee (2009) examined the relationship between resilience and academic achievement of students in Georgia through 91 senior students. The study showed that resilient had a positive relationship with academic performance of students. Medlin and Faulk (2000) investigated that relationship between student engagement and optimism and the impact of on individual academic performance of United States university students through 145 students. Result indicated that student engagement was positively correlated with optimism and performance, while optimism is positively correlated with performance. (Motlagh, Amrai, Yazdani, Abderahim, & Sourie (2011) investigated the relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement in high schools students. Here, 250 students were selected on cluster sampling method and result delineated that sub factors of self-efficacy: self-evaluation and self-regulation are the best predictors of academic achievement.

3 METHODOLOGY

The study was explanatory type study and it applied quantitative research approach and questionnaire survey strategy. The target population were all undergraduates of Rajarata University of Sri Lanka (approximately 5500) from which 300 students were selected on stratified sampling method to have a proper mix of students from all faculties, as the sample of the study. As unit of analysis was in individual students, study developed a questionnaire to collect

required data. The questionnaire contains thirty eight questions under three sections that section I is opened for demographic information of respondents and section II and III is used to measure independent and the dependent variables through 5 point Likert Scale. Two senior academics at the Management faculty reviewed and debugged the questionnaire appropriately. Data were collected by researchers themselves visiting the faculties that lead for higher response rate and speedy data collection. SPSS software assisted for data analysis and descriptive statistics, correlation and regression tests were employed on the data for robust conclusion.

4 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Study collected data from undergraduates of Rajarata University from January 2019 to March 2019 period and distributed 300 questionnaires among six faculty students. Response rate was 93%. That was accurate enough to derive strong conclusion. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested through Cronbach Alpha value and it exceeded the threshold value (0.7) by each variable evidenced the internal consistency of items being considered for the study.

4.1 Reliability Analysis

A result of the reliability analysis was given in Table 1.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Variable	No of items	Alpha value	Comment
Hope	06	0.734	Acceptable
Resilience	06	0.711	Acceptable
Optimism	06	0.693	Acceptable
Self-efficacy	06	0.708	Acceptable
Academic performance	10	0.757	Acceptable

4.2 Sample Profile

The questionnaire has been distributed among six faculty students fairly equal. Maximum response rate was recorded by Management faculty and minimum was from Technology. Male response rate for the study was 50.66% and it was significantly higher than female response rate (Table 2).

Table 2: Sampling Profile

Demographic Factor	Items	Percentage
Faculty	Management Studies	28.67%
	Social Sciences & Humanities	26%
	Medicine & Allied Science	16.66%
	Applied Science	9.33%
	Agriculture	8.67%
	Technology	8.67%
Academic Year	02 nd year	35.34%
	03 rd year	32%
	04 th year	32.66%
Gender	Male	50.66%
	Female	49.34%

4.3 Descriptive statistics

According to the descriptive statistics, overall mean value of academic performance, was 3.9147. It implies that student record higher level of academic performance through semester examinations. Mean value of self-efficacy and resilience were 3.7956, 3.6733 respectively. It indicated that students have ability to organize and execute the actions needed to produce certain accomplishments of his/her life; have capacity to bounce back from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure. The positive attribution / expectation of success in the present time as well as in the future of students were at moderate level reporting 3.005 mean value for the “Optimism” variable. However, hope shown significantly lower mean value comparatively to other variables in the study. It was 2.279 and indicated that lower level of positive motivational state of student.

The exploration of descriptive statistics further indicated that students of Agriculture faculty shown significantly higher level of academic performance than the other faculties. However, no evidence found to delineate the significant differences of academic performance among other faculties. Moreover, ANOVA test indicated that academic performance of students does not depends on year of the study in the university.

4.4 Correlation Analysis

To test the association between independent variables and the dependent variable, study applied correlation analysis, as per the correlation test, correlation coefficient of resilience, optimism and self-efficacy were positive and statistically significant at 0.05 level. Accordingly it could be concluded that resilience, optimism and self-efficacy had statically significant association with academic performance of students. However, interestingly, Hope has recorded a negative association with academic performance of students and it too was statistically significant (Table 3).

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

Variable	Academic Performance	Hope	Resilience	Optimism
Academic Performance	1			
Hope	-0.319**	1		
Resilience	0.421**	-0.389	1	
Optimism	0.316**	-0.078	0.150	1
Self-efficacy	0.434**	-0.484	0.437*	0.146

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

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

4.5 Regression Analysis

The impact of hope, resilience, optimism and self-efficacy on the student academic performance was measured through multiple regression analysis. Coefficient of determination (R square value) of the fitted regression line was 0.313 (Table 4).

Table 4: Regression Analysis

R Square: 0.313		ANOVA:0.000	
Variables	Un-standardized Coefficients (B)	Standardized Coefficients(Beta)	Sig.
(Constant)	2.007		0.000
Hope	-0.068	-.084	0.301
Resilience	0.206	.243	0.002
Optimism	0.176	.236	0.003
Self-efficacy	0.205	.252	0.002

Accordingly, 31% variation of dependent variable is able to be explained through independent variables. Significance value of ANOVA table was less than 0.05, indicated that model is strong enough to explain the impact of

independent variables having on the dependent variable. Hence, the model will be strongly enough to predict the future changes of academic performance of students.

According to regression result, it was found that hope had statistically insignificant negative impact on academic performance of undergraduates. The finding of the study was somewhat contradictory with many previous studies where Amules, Yoon and Amudson (2015) found a moderate positive relationship between hope and academic performance.

Resilience of students had statistically positive significant impact on student performance confirming the findings of Mwangi, Okatcha, Kinai, & Ileri (2015) found that significant positive relationship between resilience and academic achievement. Resilience of undergraduate was highly positive in the current study as they could usually succeed to form positive impression about the others and student could handle many academic activities effectively with other extra-curricular activities. Furthermore, students could usually overcome stressful work situations restoring normal mood quickly after the unpleasant events.

Medling & Fault (2006) found that significant and positive relationship between optimism and student performance. It was further reconfirmed by the present study showing statistically significant impact of optimism on academic performance. Optimism of undergraduate demonstrate that they always look on the bright side of their academic activities and students expect pleasant events rather than the unpleasant events of the university life. And also students were always optimistic about their future.

The impact of self-efficacy on academic performance of students was statistically significant. Further, exploration of self-efficacy demonstrates that students have confidence to analyze problem they face and find sustainable solutions. The decision aligned with the finding of Motlagh, Amrai, Yazdani, Abderahim, & Sourie (2011) that positive impact of self-efficacy on academic achievement in High School Students. Standardize beta coefficient of the regression line evidenced that self-efficacy of undergraduates is highly impact to the academic performance than the optimism, hope and resiliency.

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study focused to measure impact of psychological capital on academic performance of students at Rajarata University. Psychological capital was measured through hope, resilience, optimism and self-efficacy. As per the regression test, except hope, all other variables shown statistically significant positive impact on academic performance among them self-efficacy was stronger determinant of academic performance. Accordingly, it could be recommended to swell students' resilience, optimism and self-efficacy to uplift

academic performance of students. Resilience of students could be augmented through training students to make a proper plan to manage routings and contingences effectively. Further, students should be directed to acquire life-long experience, knowledge and skills through extra-curricular activities during the university life. Moreover, student could be taught to look good sides of everything. Furthermore, a broader awareness should be given to students, how to cope more stressful work situations effectively. Optimism of students could be enriched giving chance students to engage in extra-curricular activities during the study period. Furthermore, students should be taught how you could manage well your stress level and how to meet unexpected situations. Thus, proper mind set should be develop through series of workshops or organized student activities.

Further found that undergraduates self-efficacy positively influence to the academic performance. Self-efficacy could be enhanced through the creation of self-confidence to express ideas without any fear. Students should be given a chance to present more ideas, and opportunity should be given to students express their views, ideas and the debate. Further, they could be educated more about how to analyze their problems in different point of view and get better decisions for those problems.

Following suggestions are important for future research. This study has taken psychological capital as independent variable and there can be considered more factors in future researches to further investigation of undergraduates' academic performance. This study was focused on only Rajarata University of Sri Lanka. Therefore it has made difficulties on generalizing the findings to the entire population. There were difficulties in covering all the areas in Sri Lanka. Because lack of resources such as time and financial it was difficult to conduct this study in correct manner. Therefore, suggest that future studies carried out considering other universities of Sri Lanka.

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