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**Heroes, Highly Effective People and
Self-directed Learners at the
Workplace: Developing and Measuring
Positive Organizational Behavior
Resources**

Dissertation highlights

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1. Abstract

Positive organizational behavior (POB) constructs are (a) grounded in theory, (b) sound psychometrically, (c) related to the field of organizational behavior, (d) state-like that is open to development and (e) positively correlated to workplace outcome measures such as performance and satisfaction. In this dissertation the field of POB is expanded along these criteria based on observed gaps in the literature. Quantitative statistical methods are used to for scale abridgement and construct validation, as well a new intervention method is proposed to develop positive resources. As a result of this dissertation the literature about positive organizational behavior is enriched with a PCQ-5 scale, a new intervention method that avails of the benefits of peer teaching specifically worked out and tested to develop PsyCap, the Seven Habits corporate training is for the first time conceptualized scientifically within a well-known motivational theory, namely self-determination theory, a 7Habits construct and measurement tool is developed and tested.

2. Introduction and research questions

We all can do more, we all can do better, we all can make better decisions, we all can have better relationships, we all can be happier. The basic insight of Covey in *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (1989) and Fred Luthans, the father of positive organizational behavior (2002a), is that more independent employees who know what they want, take responsibility and who fashion their own environment are not just happier but also more productive and creative, therefore there is this fundamental win-win situation between leaders and followers, employees and employers which creates this opportunity for management to foster employee positivity and autonomy through trainings and to move the bottom line with better individual attitudes and habits.

Positive organizational behavior (POB) is defined by Luthans as “the study and application of positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement” (Luthans, 2002b, p. 59). The research presented in my

dissertation is covering many of the possible types of research within POB. There is measurement related scale development and scale abridgment, construct theorizing and the development of new constructs, intervention development and the measurements of its effectiveness. There is research flowing from practice to science as in the case of the two conference articles on the Seven Habits, and there is research flowing towards practice or applicability as in the case of the PsyCap scale abridgment to obtain a highly practical shorthand scale for PsyCap and the peer teaching PsyCap intervention advanced in the second paper.

3. Methods

In my research papers I avail of the standard psychometric tools that are standard for the field of POB. I used the statistical software R and mostly the packages Lavaan and Psych. For data collection I used Prolific.co and Facebook as well as paper flyers. In the third paper I used self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2000) to analyse The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People (Covey, 1989) in terms of positive psychology.

4. Findings

The first paper builds on a simple idea and a textbook execution of the psychometric process of scale abridgement. In this paper initial evidence is provided for the soundness of a very short form PsyCap measure valid across multiple samples of working adult populations ($N = 1331$ in total) from four different countries (United States, China, Germany, and Hungary). Consistent with the theoretical considerations of prior scale abridgement efforts related to the two-faceted hope dimension within the PsyCap construct (e.g., Avey, Avolio and Luthans, 2011) we propose and empirically validate a five-item PsyCap measure, the PCQ-5, consisting of one item from the dimensions of self-efficacy, resilience and optimism and one item for each facet of the hope dimension (agency and pathways). The proposed PCQ-5 shows internal consistency reliability and good fit for a single factor global PsyCap model across all samples, moreover, like the PCQ-24 it predicts meaningful workplace outcomes.

The second paper is an intervention and as such it hinges more on the researchers' design decisions and even eventualities outside of the control of any party involved. Our pretest, posttest, retest controlled trial in terms of content, measurement and analysis was strictly modelled based on the original PsyCap intervention studies (Luthans et al., 2010 and 2008). The intervention design – which was deliberately minimalist in order to test peer teaching as an intervention method at its limits – leaves much room for refinement, alternatives and different applications. However, it was reasoned, that in order to substantiate the claim that the peer teaching about how to develop psychological resources impacts positively the same psychological resources which the teaching was about, only the minimum requirements of peer teaching are to be present. Such minimum requirements are a short information input, a one page reading in our case, and some time spent with the teaching activity, the minimum that can be considered meaningful, we suggested 5-10 minutes. Due to this minimalist approach, which nevertheless yielded significant and not trivial PsyCap

increase, it is to be expected that more elaborated and longer peer teaching interventions are more effective. Also, important to mention, that we used PsyCap as our teaching material as well as the measured resource, because PsyCap is perhaps the most prominent resource in POB and due to its multidimensionality it covers a lot of ground. But the peer teaching method should be explored for other positive resources as well.

The two Seven Habits articles were an attempt to bring an established corporate practice within the realm of science. The Seven Habits at face value fit the field of positive organizational behavior, yet there was no systematic review and evaluation of Covey's material in terms of psychological theories. My efforts were focused on conceptualizing the Seven Habits in terms of self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2000) and to develop a psychometrically sound 7Habits construct that is predicting existing positive constructs, yet it is distinct from them. The obvious limitation of the Seven Habits papers is that they build on a rather small sample ($n = 53$), therefore the viability of the 7Habits construct is to be demonstrated on larger samples. Also, the Seven Habits is

a training program primarily that promises increased effectiveness through the continued practice of the habits. What remains to be researched is whether the Seven Habits training intervention results in increased effectiveness as linked to increased levels of the 7Habits construct. Similarly, the SDLR9 scale is also building on a sample size that doesn't allow for conclusive observation about its applicability across the board.

In summary, in my research I was exploring gaps in the literature and I tried to turn them into research opportunities to add to the body of knowledge of POB and hence as a result of this dissertation the literature about positive organizational behavior is enriched with a PCQ-5 scale, a new intervention method that avails of the benefits of peer teaching specifically worked out and tested to develop PsyCap, the Seven Habits corporate training is for the first time conceptualized scientifically within well-known motivational theory, namely self-determination theory, a 7Habits construct and measurement tool is developed and tested, its relationship is explored in relation to SDT, PsyCap, Thriving at work and the Big five

personality traits, and the self-directed readiness construct is adopted for Hungarian adults working in virtual teams.

5. Author's publications on the topic

Szerdahelyi, M., Paterson, T. A., Huang, L., Martos, T., Komlósi, L. (2021): *Positive Psychological Capital: Validation of the PCQ-54*. Paper under double-blind review at Group and Organization Management

Szerdahelyi, M., Paterson, T. A., and Martos (2021): *Developing Psychological Capital through a Peer Teaching Intervention*. Paper under double-blind review at Applied Psychology: an International Review

Szerdahelyi, M. & Komlósi, L. (2020): The Positive Psychological Basis, Measurement and Outcomes of Covey's 7Habits. In: ESD Proceedings, Published: April 2020.

Szerdahelyi, M. & Komlósi, L. (2020): Covey's 7Habits and the Big Five Personality Traits: Cure for High Neuroticism? In: ESD Proceedings, Published: September 2020.

Kupa, K., Szerdahelyi, M.J. and Komlósi, L. I. (2021):
Development of the SDLR9 Measurement Tool and
Evidence for a Second Order Latent Construct of SDLR in
Virtual Teams in Hungary. Working paper published by
the SzEEDSM Doctoral School.