

THE RELATION BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL OF EMPLOYEES

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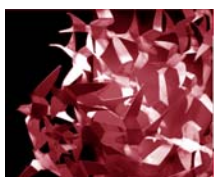
ABSTRACT

This paper examines the relationship between the Emotional Intelligence (EI), understood as an individual's competence in intelligent adaptive behavior, and the Psychological Capital (PC), seen as a set of positive personality features used in the professional scope, of employees. A quantitative survey was made with a sample of 301 individuals of both genders and different age groups that are currently employed in Portugal. We used the measures Emotional Intelligence Scale (Rego, Sousa Cunha, Correia, & Saur-Amaral, 2007) and the PsyCap Questionnaire (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007). The results suggest that the EI has a significant relationship and a high correlation ($r = .599$) with the PC of the workers, being the capacity of self motivate using the own feelings (self-encouragement) and to control their feelings in emotional situations (emotional self-control) factors that contribute very much to promote the Psychological Capital of the employees.

Key-words: Psychological Capital; Emotional Intelligence; Emotional Intelligence Scale; PsyCap Questionnaire.

1. INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of this century, Luthans, Luthans, Hodgetts, and Luthans (2002) suggested that the focus of attention in the field of organizational behavior should center on the Positive Organizational Behavior (POB), through study and application of skills in the psychological and human resources, positively oriented, which could be measured, developed and managed so as to enhance the performance of employees in organizations (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007). Characteristics such



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as hope, resilience, confidence and optimism were presented as POB states, considering that represent a higher order setting in employees, named as Positive Psychological Capital.

Others studies have also examined that some organizational employees deal more effectively with their emotions than others, benefiting their cognitive processes. This idea resulted in the concept of Emotional Intelligence, defined as a set of skills that individuals have to recourse to sophisticated systems, for processing information about their and other's emotions, as well as the ability to employ this information as guiding their cognitions and behaviors (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008).

In view of the increasing complexity and multiplicity of demands in the current economic environment, the competitive advantage of organizations will be situated, in our opinion, on these differentiating factors, that allow creating excellent work and consequent organizational effectiveness. Therefore, this line of research aims to find and perceive results that may contribute to the enumeration of these advantages, specifically related to the relation that Emotional Intelligence can have with employee's Psychological Capital, never studied before.

Emotional Intelligence

The Emotional Intelligence (EI) comes from the idea that some people have the ability to treat emotions better than others, in benefit of the cognitive processes. The valid concept of EI includes the individual's ability to resort to sophisticated information processing systems about their and others emotions, as well as the ability to use this information to guide the thinking and behavior. Those skills have adaptive functions that benefit themselves and others (Mayer et al., 2008).

The concept of EI has spread quickly in the organizational context, becoming popular as a desirable characteristic and a widespread success predictor, especially after the Goleman's (1995) publication ideas, who disseminated that emotional intelligence would be the most important capability to explain the success at work, leading companies to invest in training and changing their selective practices. This was based on the idea that people with high emotional intelligence would present an effectively performance in their work, assuming the existence of the construct and its utility, without, however, rely for this one empirical data (Cobero, Primi, & Muniz, 2006).

Others significant results were discovered through studies that assessed a positive relationship between EI, performance and individuals successfully career in the organization (e.g., Cherniss, 2000; Dulewicz & Higgs, 2000; Farnham, 1996; Goleman, 1995, 1999; Goleman et al., 2001, 2002; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Steiner, 1997; Wong & Law, 2002, cit. in Rego & Fernandes, 2005, p. 7).

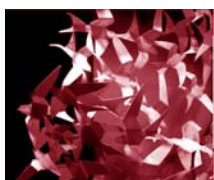
Until the moment, there are no studies that relate the Emotional Intelligence with the Psychology Capital of the employees. Therefore, discover if there is a relation between them will be important to understand how the organization's performance can be increasingly developed in a more and more competitive world in which human labor power is essential to the success of business.

Psychological Capital

The study of the Psychological Capital begins with the Positive Psychology movement and, specifically, with the study of Positive Organizational Behavior, which made this approach be included in the organizational context (Machado, 2008).

So, based on positive psychology and its application in the organizational context, Luthans and his group of researchers proposes a new approach, the Positive Organizational Behavior (POB), defined as "the study and application of strengths and positive psychological capacities of the human resources, that can be measured, developed and managed effectively, in order to improve organizational performance" (Luthans, 2002a, p. 59).

Initially, it was identified some psychological skills, such as confidence (or self-efficacy), hope, subjective well-being (or happiness), resilience and emotional intelligence as states that fulfill the POB criteria (Luthans, Avolio, Walumbwa, & Li, 2005). Later, after some research and applications



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of the POB theory, it was defined only four psychological skills that better fulfilled the POB criteria (Luthans et al. 2007): confidence (or self-efficacy), hope, optimism and resilience.

Studies have found that the PC found a positive relation between employee's hope, optimism and resilience with their performance and their attitudes in the workplace (Green, Medlin, & Whitten, 2004; Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Norman, & Combs, 2006; Luthans & Youssef, 2007).

Considering that this relation between EI and PC was never proposed in any other study, our propose was to try to answer the investigative questions "What is the relationship between the Emotional Intelligence and the Psychological Capital of employees?" and "Is there any correlation between their dimensions?"

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Objectives

The main objective of this study was to discover if the Emotional Intelligence has any relation with the Psychological Capital of employees.

Considering that this relation between EI and PC was never studied in any other research, our propose was to try to answer the investigative questions "What is the relationship between the Emotional Intelligence and the Psychological Capital of employees?" and "Is there any correlation between their dimensions?"

2.2. Sample

It was conducted a quantitative survey with a non-random sample of 301 individuals non-volunteers for credit point and that were living and working in Portugal.

The age of the participants is between 18 and 67 years, with a mean (M) of 40.11 and standard deviation (SD) of 10.78 years, being the total of male's respondents 43.7% ($n = 132$) of the search and, female, 56% ($n = 169$). Regarding to males, the ages are located similarly, between the 18 and 67 years, with $M = 40.28$ and $SD = 12.11$. The age of the female varies between 19 and 58 years, with $M = 39.97$ and $SD = 9.66$.

2.3. Measures

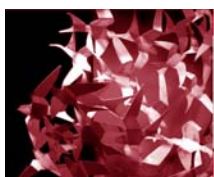
The variables were assessed using two instruments (in the portuguese version): the PsyCap Questionnaire (Luthans et al., 2007) and the Emotional Intelligence Scale (Rego, Sousa Cunha, Correia and Saur-Amaral, 2007). The questionnaires and its dimensions were validated by a confirmatory factor analysis.

PsyCap Questionnaire

It was used the PsyCap specific to the organizational context, recently developed and validated by Luthans et al. (2007). This instrument, called by its authors for PsyCap Questionnaire (PCQ) was drawn from measures widely recognized and published in the literature, like self-efficacy, hope, optimism and resilience (Machado, 2008).

The instrument has 24 items, six for each of the four dimensions (hope, optimism, self-efficacy and resilience), to which the respondents should point your level of agreement using a six-point Likert scale, from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 6 ("strongly agree") (Luthans, Avolio, Avey & Norman, 2007).

Concerning to the internal consistency of the PsyCap Questionnaire, it was achieved a Cronbach's α of .919. In relation to the quality of adjustment, the value of CMIN / DF is 2.700, (248) of 669.547, $p < .001$. For the NFI index it was found a good fit, with a value of .819, and a CFI of .876. The RMSEA is .075, which indicates that the model is adjusted. While the amount of CFI is slightly lower than the recommended in literature, it can be consider that the model is adjusted,



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since the values obtained on other indicators, especially the value of RMSEA, are considerable. The Cronbach's *Alpha* of the PsyCap dimensions are: self-efficacy, $\alpha = .891$; hope, $\alpha = .824$; resilience, $\alpha = .773$, and optimism, $\alpha = .690$. Although the value of the last dimension is lower than .70, as recommended in the literature, it was kept the scale proposed by the authors to the extent that it was achieved a good index for internal consistency of the 24 items.

Emotional Intelligence Scale

Initially composed by 96 items, this number was reduced in 2007, when Rego, Sousa, Cunha, Correia and Saur-Amaral, in a study of Emotional Intelligence and Creativity, have reviewed the instrument, resulting from this analysis comprises 17 items grouped into six factors, so as designated by Rego & Fernandes (2005a): understanding of own emotions, self-control against criticism, self-encouragement (use of emotions), emotional self-control (emotional regulation), empathy and emotional contagion and understanding the others emotions.

The instrument consists in a seven-point Likert-type scale from 1 ("the statement does not apply absolutely nothing to me") to 7 ("the statement applies completely to me").

It was also used the Cronbach's *Alpha* to measure the internal consistency of the dimensions and it was obtained an *Alpha* value of .867 for the overall scale. Evaluating the fit quality of the model, the data gives us the following values: CMIN / DF is 2.392, (113) of 270.305, $p < .001$; the NFI is .881; 19 the CFI is .925; and the RMSEA is .068. So all the values are considered in the previously literature cited, which shows that the model is adjusted.

Analyzing the internal consistency of the Emotional Intelligence Scale dimensions, it was found: understanding of own emotions ($\alpha = .753$), self-control against criticism ($\alpha = .815$), self-encouragement ($\alpha = .782$), emotional self-control ($\alpha = .771$), empathy and emotional contagion ($\alpha = .817$) and understanding the others emotions ($\alpha = .791$). It means that all the values are considered high and that the dimensions are reliable.

2.4. Procedures

During the research, were taken every precaution to ensure participant's anonymity and confidentiality of the data, so that the answers were not biased. So, all the formal and ethical issues were held in this study.

Some students of the Psychology course were contacted, in the University of Coimbra, and it was explained to them the academic purpose of this study and each of them distributed two questionnaires to parents interested in participating on the study. This was made in order to achieve a greater number of respondents in the shortest time.

It was also distributed some questionnaires to some employees of different stores located in the district of Coimbra (e.g.: bakeries, perfumeries, copiers, pharmacies, restaurants, hotels and others).

The data collection had an individual and collective character and it was made between December of 2011 and February of 2012, without time limit to answer the questionnaire.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Descriptive Analyses

About the PsyCap Questionnaire, that measures the psychological capital of the employee, it is possible to see (Table 1) that the global scale of the answers is $M = 4.53$ in a scale with six points. The higher response mean was the *self-efficacy* (dimension 1; $M = 4.67$) and the lesser one was the *optimism* (dimension 4; $M = 4.32$). The standard deviation of the global scale is 0.61, being the dimension 1 (*self-efficacy*, $SD = 0.82$) the biggest and the dimension 4 (*optimism*; $SD = 0.68$), the smallest dispersion found.



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Analyzing the values of the Emotional Intelligence Scale, it can be verify that $M = 5.05$ for the global scale (in a total of 7 points). It is possible to see on the table that, among the six dimensions, the higher is the dimension 5 (*empathy and emotional contagion*; $M = 5.66$) and the lower is the dimension 4 (*emotional self-control*, $M = 4.27$). The standard deviation of the global scale shows a value $SD = 0.69$, while the biggest dispersion is $SD = 1.17$ (dimension 4 - *emotional self-control*) and the lowest one is $SD = 0.93$ (dimension 6 - *understanding the others emotions*).

Table 1

Minimum and maximum values, mean scores and standard deviations of the PsyCap Questionnaire and Emotional Intelligence Scale and its constituent dimensions

	Min.	Max.	M	SD
<i>PsyCap Questionnaire (Global Scale)</i>	1,96	6,00	4,53	0,61
<i>Dimension 1: Self-efficacy</i>	1,33	6,00	4,67	0,82
<i>Dimension 2: Hope</i>	1,33	6,00	4,62	0,74
<i>Dimension 3: Resilience</i>	2,17	6,00	4,48	0,69
<i>Dimension 4: Optimism</i>	1,67	6,00	4,32	0,68
<i>Emotional Intelligence Scale (Global Scale)</i>	3,29	7,00	5,05	0,69
<i>Dimension 1: Understanding of own emotions</i>	1,00	7,00	5,22	0,98
<i>Dimension 2: Self-control against criticism</i>	1,33	7,00	4,64	1,14
<i>Dimension 3: Self-encouragement</i>	2,33	7,00	5,56	0,95
<i>Dimension 4: Emotional self-control</i>	1,00	7,00	4,27	1,17
<i>Dimension 5: Empathy and emotional Contagion</i>	2,00	7,00	5,66	1,03
<i>Dimension 6: Understanding the others emotions</i>	2,00	7,00	5,17	0,93

3.2. Test of the objectives and investigative question

To answer the investigative question of the study, it was used the calculation of Pearson's correlation coefficients and the results can be verified in Table 2. In this table, it is possible to verify that Emotional Intelligence has a significant relationship and a high correlation ($r = .599$) with the Psychological Capital of the workers. In this relation, all the Emotional Intelligence dimensions have a moderately correlation with the Psychological Capital (only the dimension self-control against criticism has a low association), and the factor self-encouragement appears as the most correlated ($r = .567$).

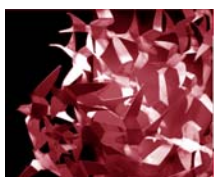
Table 2

Pearson Correlation coefficients between Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Capital

Dimensions	PsyCap	D1 Self-efficacy	D2 Hope	D3 Resilience	D4 Optimism
Emotional Intelligence	.599**	.535**	.501**	.442**	.542**
D1 Understanding of own emotions	.505**	.456**	.439**	.406**	.414**
D2 Self-control against criticism	.151*	.051	.120*	.099	.215**
D3 Self-encouragement	.567**	.618**	.541**	.414**	.381**
D4 Emotional self-control	.474**	.419**	.362**	.353**	.485**
D5 Empathy and emotional Contagion	.344**	.264**	.275**	.246**	.320**
D6 Understanding the others emotions	.402**	.373**	.310**	.283**	.341**

** significative correlation at level $p < .01$

Also in Table 2, it is possible to see that the factor self-encouragement is the one most associated with the self-efficacy ($r = .618$), hope ($r = .541$) and resilience ($r = .414$), while the dimension emotional self-control is the most correlated with the optimism ($r = .485$).



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4. DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

This study met its goal to examine the presence of a relationship between the Emotional Intelligence and the Psychological Capital. Through the correlation made, it can be deduced that the capacity of self motivate using the own feelings (self-encouragement) and to control your feelings in emotional situations (emotional self-control) are factors that contribute very much to promote the Psychological Capital of employees.

It is important to say that the method of this investigation can be considered a limitation, because his cross-cutting study. Nevertheless, this study may have practical implications, because can lead companies to know this relationship and the importance of implementing measures which promotes the formation of Psychological Capital and Emotional Intelligence in their employees.

A suggestion for future investigation is to focus the sample in a particular profession or sector of activity. Another idea for study is to relate the research data with the financial indicators of company's productivity.

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