


The Effectiveness of Positive Psychological Training with an Islamic Approach on the Psychological Capital of Managers

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The aim of this study was to determine the effectiveness of positive psychological training with an Islamic approach on the psychological capital of school managers.

Methods and Materials: This quasi-experimental study employed a pre-test and post-test design with a control group. The research population included all school principals in Kerman city during the 2023-2024 academic year. Thirty participants were selected using convenience sampling and randomly assigned to experimental and control groups (15 participants each). The experimental group underwent eight 90-minute weekly sessions of positive psychological training with an Islamic approach. Data were collected using the Psychological Capital Questionnaire and analyzed using SPSS 26, with multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) to assess the impact of the intervention.

Findings: The results showed significant improvements in the psychological capital components of the experimental group compared to the control group. Post-test mean scores for the experimental group were higher in self-efficacy ($M = 11.93$, $SD = 0.70$), hope ($M = 13.73$, $SD = 0.57$), resilience ($M = 18.13$, $SD = 0.92$), and optimism ($M = 14.33$, $SD = 0.76$) compared to the control group's scores. The MANCOVA results indicated significant differences between the experimental and control groups in all psychological capital components, with F ratios of 31.47 for self-efficacy, 56.22 for hope, 61.23 for resilience, and 17.20 for optimism ($p < .001$ for all).

Conclusion: Positive psychological training with an Islamic approach significantly enhances the psychological capital of school managers. This method proved effective in improving self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism, aligning with previous research on the benefits of positive thinking and psychological well-being.

Keywords: Positive Psychology, Islamic Approach, Psychological Capital, School Managers, Self-Efficacy, Hope, Resilience, Optimism.

1. Introduction

In today's environment, which demands flexibility, innovation, and speed in the market, the effective development and management of the knowledge, experiences, skills, and expertise of employees—collectively defined as "human capital"—has become a key success factor for sustainable organizational performance. Contemporary enlightened managers recognize the importance of not only tangible assets, data, and physical resources but also this intangible human capital (sometimes referred to as intellectual capital)—"human" referring to individuals working at all organizational levels and the economic term "capital" (Luthans et al., 2006; F. Luthans et al., 2007; Luthans & Broad, 2022; Luthans et al., 2004; F. L. Luthans et al., 2007).

Psychological capital is a set of four healthy psychological states that enhance well-being and performance: hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism. These four states together contribute more than the sum of their parts. At the workplace, individual employees can build psychological capital to enhance their personal performance, and employers can develop psychological capital to improve organizational performance in teams and the entire workforce (Luthans et al., 2006; F. Luthans et al., 2007; Luthans & Broad, 2022; Luthans et al., 2004; F. L. Luthans et al., 2007; Mohammadi et al., 2021; Saadati & Parsakia, 2023). According to a recently published meta-analysis of 244 studies conducted between 2007 and 2020 (Loghman et al., 2022), and a previous meta-analysis of 51 studies conducted before 2011 (Avey et al., 2011), psychological capital leads to higher job performance (reported both by self and supervisor), higher employee engagement, higher job satisfaction, lower turnover intentions, reduced burnout, health and positive relational outcomes, higher mental well-being, and lower incidences of deficiencies such as poor mental health and substance abuse. Research has also shown that the psychological capital of team leaders positively impacts the psychological capital of their team members (Wang et al., 2021).

An interesting aspect of psychological capital is that, like other forms of capital, individuals or organizations can increase the amount they possess through strategic effort. For nearly two decades, applied psychologists have been working on developing, evaluating, and refining programs that include training sessions to increase employees' psychological capital (Lupşa et al., 2020; Luthans & Broad, 2022). Recent research has extended these programs to

include online options to make psychological capital training more accessible and efficient (Carter & Youssef-Morgan, 2022). Previous studies have shown that psychological capital can help individuals cope with stress and reduce stress levels caused by poor performance (Abbas & Raja, 2015; Avey et al., 2011; Baron et al., 2013; Hosseinik et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2023). The concept of psychological capital was first developed in the 2000s during the positive psychology movement led by Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio. They defined psychological capital as "an individual's positive psychological state of development," meaning that psychological capital refers to our mental resources and their ability to help us navigate challenging situations. Psychological capital has been reported to have benefits for both individuals and organizations. According to Luthans and Larson (2006), individuals with higher psychological capital typically experience higher levels of job satisfaction, commitment, and overall well-being (Lupşa et al., 2020; Luthans et al., 2006; F. Luthans et al., 2007; Luthans & Broad, 2022). Abbas and Raja, in a study on the effects of psychological capital on job performance and stress, found that individuals with higher levels of psychological capital are associated with less stress and better performance (Abbas & Raja, 2015). Chang and Chi (2016) noted that the theory of psychological capital suggests that athletes can improve their performance and mental health by increasing their psychological capital (Chang & Chi, 2016).

Among the approaches to strengthening and enhancing psychological capital in individuals is positive thinking training. Positive psychology is an approach based on individual strengths (Avey et al., 2011). Positive psychologists create respectful changes through educational, therapeutic, and practical processes that increase individuals' empowerment and motivation (F. Luthans et al., 2007). Numerous studies have examined the effectiveness of positive psychology in improving the psychological and functional status of various groups. One study showed that positive psychology training affects strengthening positive values such as openness, kindness, honesty, and cooperation. In another study, positive psychology training was found to reduce depressive mood and improve well-being (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013). Researchers in another study reported the impact of positive interventions on enhancing the ability to form and be satisfied with social relationships (Thomas & McPherson, 2011). Additionally, a study examining the effectiveness of positive thinking training on positive psychological states found that this training improved and strengthened trust in God, optimism,

self-efficacy, conscientiousness, a sense of control, purposefulness, hope, life satisfaction, meaningful life, positive mood and happiness, sociability, self-esteem, and self-worth, a sense of calm, gratitude, and forgiveness (Bolier et al., 2013). In this regard, the teachings and commandments of Islam can effectively act to promote positive thinking, patience, endurance in the face of hardships, giving meaning to difficulties and failures, and fostering personal potentials. The primary goal of the methods recommended in religious teachings is to help individuals achieve mental and emotional health, enabling them to face problems with the best possible approaches and find peace through hope in God's infinite grace. Given the necessity of increasing studies in the field of positive thinking based on Islamic sources and the lack of such studies in the managerial community, this research aims to determine the effectiveness of positive psychological training with an Islamic approach on the psychological capital of managers.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present quasi-experimental study uses a pre-test and post-test design with a control group. The research population includes all school principals in Kerman city during the academic year 2024-2023. Thirty eligible participants were selected using convenience sampling and randomly assigned to experimental and control groups (15 participants each) through coin toss. Inclusion criteria included willingness to participate, being a school principal, and having mental health based on a self-report form. Exclusion criteria included incomplete questionnaires, lack of cooperation, missing more than two sessions in the intervention process, and using other psychological treatments during the study. Initially, after explaining the session structure and number to participants, a pre-test was conducted. The researcher then implemented positive psychology interventions for the experimental group. After completing the intervention, the questionnaires were filled out again by both groups. It is noteworthy that at the end of the research process, the control group also received positive thinking training interventions.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Psychological Capital

This questionnaire, designed in 2007, includes 24 questions and four subscales (hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy), each with six items. Self-efficacy (1-6), hope (7-12), resilience (13-18), and optimism (19-24). Participants respond to each item on a six-point Likert scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree). Psychological capital is a positive and flexible psychological state towards life, consisting of four components—hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy—each considered a positive psychological capacity with a valid measurement scale. Luthans et al. confirmed the factor validity of this questionnaire through factor analysis and structural equations. The Cronbach's alpha and test-retest reliability of this questionnaire were 0.91 and 0.89, respectively. The positive psychology training sessions with an Islamic approach included eight 90-minute sessions held weekly. The treatment protocol was adapted from Rashid's (2008) positive psychotherapy protocol, incorporating elements of Islamic happiness teachings and verses and narrations (Mohammadi et al., 2021; Saadati & Parsakia, 2023).

2.3. Intervention

2.3.1. Positive Psychology Training with an Islamic Approach

The intervention protocol consists of eight structured sessions designed to enhance psychological capital through positive psychology principles integrated with Islamic teachings. Each session focuses on a specific aspect of psychological capital, fostering hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy. Participants engage in activities and discussions that emphasize acceptance, recognition of emotions and thoughts, and the cultivation of meaningful life goals based on personal values and faith (Fazeli Kebria et al., 2019; Yadollahpour et al., 2019).

Session 1: Introduction

In this initial session, participants are introduced to each other and the therapist. The expectations of the therapy sessions are outlined, and participants share their previous experiences. Emphasis is placed on maintaining confidentiality and mutual respect within the group. An overview of positive psychology training with an Islamic approach is provided, setting the stage for subsequent sessions.

Session 2: Hope and Acceptance

This session focuses on building hope and the anticipation of reducing pressures during the therapy period. The principle of acceptance and recognizing emotions and thoughts surrounding problems is discussed. Participants are given an assignment to practice acceptance of their issues, promoting a positive outlook toward managing their challenges.

Session 3: Cognitive Distortions

Participants are educated about emotions and thoughts based on cognitive distortions related to their worldview. The session includes exercises to identify and challenge negative thoughts stemming from distorted cognitions. An assignment is given to further explore and counteract negative thinking patterns.

Session 4: Visualization and Mindfulness

The session introduces mental imagery techniques and mindfulness focused on breathing. Participants set goals based on personal values such as virtue, faith, and forgiveness, with an emphasis on belief in God and identifying individual values. An assignment is provided to reinforce these practices.

Session 5: Dynamic and Purposeful Living

This session teaches participants that despite accepting pain and suffering, one must enrich and lead a dynamic, purposeful life. Participants are encouraged to engage in purposeful behaviors and are assigned tasks to practice dynamic and goal-oriented actions.

Session 6: Feedback and Emotional Regulation

Participants provide feedback on the training process and express their emotions and feelings. The session includes

training on assertive and valuable communication behaviors and techniques to control negative emotions. An assignment is given to implement these techniques in daily interactions.

Session 7: Meaning in Life

This session emphasizes the existence and value of meaning in life, exploring the concept of meaning from a religious perspective. The necessity of giving meaning to one's actions and behaviors and aligning them with faith to break free from maladaptive schemas is discussed.

Session 8: Overcoming Mental Barriers

The final session addresses overcoming mental obstacles and embracing submission to divine will in one's behaviors. Participants commit to continuing the practices learned after the course ends. Feedback is provided to group members, reinforcing their progress and encouraging continued growth.

2.4. Data analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26 and analyzed using multivariate analysis of covariance.

3. Findings and Results

The experiment results showed that in the experimental group, there were 8 men (53.3%) and 7 women (46.7%), while in the control group, there were 8 women (53.3%) and 7 men (46.7%). Additionally, in the experimental group, 9 participants had a bachelor's degree (60.0%), 5 had a master's degree (33.3%), and one had a doctorate (6.7%). In the control group, 10 participants had a bachelor's degree (66.7%) and 5 had a master's degree (33.3%).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Psychological Capital Components

Component	Group	Index	Pre-test	Post-test
Self-efficacy	Experimental	Mean	7.33	11.93
		Standard Deviation	0.46	0.70
	Control	Mean	9.40	9.26
		Standard Deviation	0.53	0.49
Hope	Experimental	Mean	10.40	13.73
		Standard Deviation	0.60	0.57
	Control	Mean	11.26	10.20
		Standard Deviation	0.75	0.58
Resilience	Experimental	Mean	13.80	18.13
		Standard Deviation	0.71	0.92
	Control	Mean	13.13	13.26
		Standard Deviation	0.60	0.67
Optimism	Experimental	Mean	10.93	14.33
		Standard Deviation	0.54	0.76
	Control	Mean	11.26	11.20
		Standard Deviation	0.56	0.64

As shown in Table 1, the mean scores of the experimental group increased in the post-test compared to the pre-test. Therefore, it can be concluded that the sessions of positive psychology training with an Islamic approach increased the mean scores of the psychological capital components of school managers. Multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was used to examine the impact of positive psychology training with an Islamic approach. The independent variable was the group (experimental and control), and the dependent variable was the post-test scores of the psychological capital components. Before conducting the covariance analysis, the assumptions of normal

distribution of the dependent variable and homogeneity of variance within the groups were confirmed.

The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicate that the assumption of normality of the data in the pre-test and post-test for the psychological capital components was met ($p > .05$). The results of Levene's test on the dependent variables show that the variance of the experimental and control groups in the variables was not different, confirming the assumption of homogeneity of variances ($p > .05$). The results of the Box's M test also indicate that the covariances of the post-test variables in the two groups were equal and not significantly different ($F = 0.855, p = 0.576$).

Table 2

Results of Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) for Post-test Scores of Psychological Capital Components in Experimental and Control Groups

Test	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Pillai's Trace	0.846	135.63	4.000	21.000	.001
Wilks' Lambda	0.154	135.63	4.000	21.000	.001
Hotelling's Trace	5.51	135.63	4.000	21.000	.001
Roy's Largest Root	5.51	135.63	4.000	21.000	.001

The results of Wilks' Lambda test in Table 2 indicate that there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of the dependent variables.

Table 3

Results of Univariate Covariance Analysis in MANCOVA for Post-test Scores of Psychological Capital Components

Source	Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Group	Self-efficacy	104.62	1	104.62	31.47	.001
	Hope	119.16	1	119.16	56.22	.001
	Resilience	120.49	1	120.49	61.23	.001
	Optimism	70.41	1	70.41	17.20	.001

As shown in Table 3, the univariate covariance analysis in MANCOVA for the post-test scores of the dependent variables indicates significant differences between the experimental and control groups in at least one of the dependent variables. The F ratios for self-efficacy ($F = 31.47, P = .001$), hope ($F = 56.22, P = .001$), resilience ($F = 61.23, P = .001$), and optimism ($F = 17.20, P = .001$) show significant differences between the experimental and control groups in the dependent variables.

teachings on the psychological capital of managers. The results showed that positive psychology with an Islamic approach had a positive and significant impact on the psychological capital of managers. These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating the positive impact of positive thinking on enhancing hope, self-efficacy, happiness, mood improvement, well-being, and resilience (Fazeli Kebria et al., 2019; Hosseinik et al., 2023; Huffman et al., 2011; Meyers et al., 2013; Sengers, 2013; Vink et al., 2011; Yadollahpour et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2023).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to determine the effectiveness of positive psychology with an Islamic approach and Islamic

To explain these findings, it can be stated that the spiritual aspect of Islamic positive thinking helps managers to increase their resilience and tolerance by adopting behaviors

and attitudes such as patience, prayer, trust, and heartfelt belief in divine support when facing stressful life events. Moreover, individuals enhance their limited strength by relying on an unlimited source, such as the power of God, which increases their self-efficacy and hope (Huffman et al., 2011; Sadeghiniri & AllahyariNezhad, 2013; Sin et al., 2011). Resilient individuals are less vulnerable and have better stress management and resilience skills, which help managers achieve peace and well-being (Baron et al., 2013). Additionally, resilient individuals are better able to cope with work-related stress and demonstrate greater flexibility in managing negative emotions resulting from a challenging work environment. According to the positive psychology perspective and in line with Islamic and Quranic teachings, positive emotions and strengths are the best factors for preventing psychological and physical harm. Prevention researchers believe that prevention emphasizes empowerment rather than correcting weaknesses; therefore, human strengths protect against physical and psychological diseases. Examples of these strengths include hope, courage, kindness, optimism, interpersonal communication skills, patience, self-esteem, openness, and honesty (Dimsdale, 2008; Sadeghiniri & AllahyariNezhad, 2013). According to the results, psychological capital is one of the job resources provided by organizational managers. According to Hodges' research (2010) and the claims of Luthans et al. (2004) and some experimental studies (Hodges, 2010; Luthans et al., 2004; Sadeghiniri & AllahyariNezhad, 2013), it can be said that positive and negative emotions are contagious in organizations. Therefore, increasing the psychological capital of managers can enhance the positive emotions and job enthusiasm of employees. Moreover, employees may model their behavior on their managers, making the managers' psychological capital an exemplar and leading to increased enthusiasm, commitment, and job satisfaction among employees.

5. Limitations & Suggestions

One limitation of this study is the use of convenience sampling and the lack of a follow-up period. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies use a larger sample size with random sampling methods. Additionally, it is suggested that positive psychological training with an Islamic approach be compared with other therapeutic methods in long-term follow-up studies and include other psychological variables.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed in this article.

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