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Psychological Capital Of Healthcare Workers: Importance And Effects

Sağlık Çalışanlarının Psikolojik Sermayesi: Önemi ve Etkileri

ABSTRACT

In healthcare institutions, valuing the human resource is of utmost importance for healthcare professionals working under challenging working conditions. The significance placed on human resource is regarded as a critical factor for institutions to remain competitive and enhance the quality of patient care. The high level of psychological capital (psychological capital) among employees is also crucial in this context. Psychological capital, unlike other forms of capital, is a multifaceted concept that addresses individuals comprehensively. Its aim is to increase individuals' psychological resilience, enhance their emotional intelligence, and encourage them to exhibit positive behaviors.

The healthcare sector is inherently a critical and stressful work environment. The decisions made and actions taken by healthcare professionals can directly impact the lives of patients. Therefore, healthcare professionals carry significant responsibilities. The stress experienced by employees in the workplace can affect their mental and emotional well-being. The ability to cope with such challenges necessitates healthcare professionals to be resilient and psychologically strong. A high level of psychological capital assists employees in performing their tasks more effectively. Moreover, it instills them with the self-confidence to excel in their duties and enables them to handle challenges in a more constructive manner. Consequently, this empowers healthcare professionals to establish better communication with patients, cope with stressful situations more effectively, and engage in more efficient teamwork. Enhancing the psychological capital of hospital staff not only provides a competitive advantage for institutions but also contributes to ensuring that patients receive better healthcare services. Therefore, healthcare institutions should develop various strategies to enhance the psychological capital of their employees and harness this essential resource.

Keywords: Healthcare Professionals, Healthcare Sector, Psychological Capital.

ÖZET

Sağlık kurumlarında zorlu çalışma koşulları altında çalışan sağlık çalışanlarının etkili ve verimli olabilmesi için insan kaynağına değer vermek son derece önemlidir. İnsan kaynağına verilen bu önem, kurumların rekabetçi olabilmesi ve hasta bakım kalitesini yükseltebilmesi için kritik bir faktör olarak görülmektedir. Çalışanların psikolojik sermaye düzeylerinin yüksek olması da bu bağlamda büyük bir önem taşımaktadır. Psikolojik sermaye, diğer sermaye türlerinden farklı olarak insanı çok yönlü bir şekilde ele alan bir kavramdır. İnsanların psikolojik dayanıklılıklarını artırmayı, duygusal zekalarını geliştirmeyi ve pozitif davranışlar sergilemeye teşvik etmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Sağlık sektörü doğası gereği kritik ve stresli bir iş ortamı olarak görülmektedir. Sağlık çalışanlarının aldığı kararlar ve yaptıkları eylemler, hastaların yaşamına doğrudan etki edebilmektedir. Bu nedenle, sağlıkçılar büyük sorumluluk taşımaktadırlar. Çalışanların iş ortamında yaşadığı stres, zihinsel ve duygusal sağlıklarını etkileyebilmektedir. Bu tür zorluklarla başa çıkabilme yeteneği, sağlık çalışanlarının mücadeleci ve psikolojik olarak dayanıklı olmalarını gerektirmektedir. Yüksek psikolojik sermaye düzeyi, çalışanların işlerini daha etkili bir şekilde yapmalarına yardımcı olmaktadır. Ayrıca çalışanlar, işlerini daha iyi yapma konusunda özgüven sahibi olmakta ve karşılaştıkları sorunlarla daha yapıcı bir şekilde baş etme eğilimine girmektedirler. Bu durum sağlık çalışanlarının, hastalar ile daha iyi iletişim kurmalarına, stresli durumlarda daha iyi başa çıkmalarına ve ekip içinde daha etkili bir işbirliği yapmalarına yardımcı olmasını sağlamaktadır. Hastane çalışanların psikolojik sermayelerini geliştirmek, kurumlara rekabet avantajı sağlayabilmekte ve hastaların daha iyi bir sağlık hizmeti almasına yardımcı olabilmektedir. Bu nedenle, sağlık kurumları, çalışanların psikolojik sermayelerini artırmak için çeşitli stratejiler geliştirmeli ve bu önemli kaynağı değerlendirmeye çalışmalıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sağlık Çalışanları, Sağlık Sektörü, Psikolojik Sermaye

1. INTRODUCTION

The evolving dynamics of society have a significant influence on individuals' expectations regarding their personal lives and careers. Changing circumstances have directed individuals toward higher standards and goals. It is perceived as improbable that traditional psychology can provide a complete response to the evolving global conditions. This is because traditional psychology predominantly focuses on an individual's internal world, whereas coping with these rapid changes necessitates a broader perspective and novel approaches. Individuals are feeling a heightened need to adapt more, exhibit greater flexibility, and effectively adjust to the alterations in their lives. It is within the context of these needs that psychological capital comes to the forefront (Luthans, 2002).

The concept of Psychological Capital was introduced by Fred Luthans and Carolyn Youssef in 2004 and later developed by Luthans and colleagues (2007). While the foundations of the concept were laid by Luthans and Youssef, in subsequent years, further studies and research by Luthans and other researchers have contributed to the refinement of the concept.

Psychological capital refers to the capacity of employees to possess positive psychological resources such as self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience. Psychological capital plays a significant role, particularly in highly competitive business environments. The reason for this significance lies in the fact that psychological capital, which provides a measurable and improvable form of capital, offers a more effective competitive advantage in the business world compared to financial and social capital (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005).

Positive psychology is an approach aimed at positively influencing the functioning of organizations and the behaviors of employees. This approach has introduced the concept of 'positive organizational behavior' for organizations. Positive organizational behavior signifies the display of positive attitudes and behaviors by employees in the workplace. Among the exhibited behaviors, positive qualities such as collaboration, self-esteem, motivation, and emotional intelligence can be found (Luthans, 2002).

In today's rapidly changing business world and evolving work habits, it is evident that work life should undergo a transformation not only in terms of physical skills but also in emotional and psychological capacities. In this context, psychological capital emerges as an indispensable concept that contributes to enhancing success and well-being both in the workplace and in personal life (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

It is a well-established fact that professionals in the competitive and demanding healthcare sector contend with challenging factors such as job stress, work pressure, competition, and uncertainty. Success in the workplace and other areas of life hinges on the effective utilization of an individual's internal resources. The impact of psychological capital on work life and its quality is gaining greater recognition in the current era.

Psychological capital represents the psychological state and developmental capacity of employees. This concept embodies individuals' capacities to possess positive psychological resources such as emotional resilience, hope, self-esteem, and perseverance in the workplace. The dimensions of psychological capital can influence individuals' abilities to cope with job stress, challenges, and changes (Lee, 2005). Therefore, the concept of psychological capital represents a significant approach in the business world aimed at supporting the personal and professional development of employees.

2. WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The definition of Psychological Capital (PsyCap) is as follows (2007):

It is an individual's state of positive psychological development characterized by: (1) possessing the self-confidence (self-efficacy) to exert the necessary effort to succeed in challenging tasks; (2) maintaining positive thoughts about being successful in the present

and future (optimism); (3) moving towards goals and being able to set roadmaps for success, as well as having the ability to reach those goals (hope); (4) being able to sustain effort and leap forward when faced with problems and difficulties, in order to achieve success (psychological resilience).

Psychological capital is the key psychological factor that expresses positivity. It is a type of capital that focuses on who a person is as a separate entity from human capital and social capital, and makes efforts for its development in order to gain a competitive advantage (Narcikara, 2017).

People spend a significant portion of their lives working. However, when they struggle to meet changing expectations and needs and find that traditional psychological approaches do not provide solutions to their problems, they have to embark on new quests (Topaloğlu & Özer, 2014).

In his book "Psychological Capital: Developing the Human Competitive Edge," Fred Luthans has also defined psychological capital as follows (Luthans, The Need For and Meaning of Positive Organizational Behavior, 2002b):

“Psychological capital (PsyCap) reflects the state of positive psychological development in an individual's success.” Luthans has defined psychological capital as the *“state of positive psychological development in an individual”* and noted that psychological capital seeks to answer the question, *“Who am I?”* in an individual.” Psychological capital encompasses the fundamental components that influence an individual's personal and professional success.

-Self-Efficacy: It denotes the individual's confidence in their ability to exert the necessary effort to undertake challenging tasks and believe that they can accomplish them. This state reflects one's belief in their own capabilities. Furthermore, the concept of self-efficacy, which is considered one of the most important concepts in positive psychology, can also be defined as 'personal beliefs regarding their ability to effectively fulfill their tasks in the face of events and situations encountered by the individual.

-Optimism: It expresses the positive thinking an individual possesses regarding their present and future success. Optimism can also be defined as a positive outlook and belief in success. It is noted that the concept of optimism is associated with an individual's personal perspective. It enables individuals to adopt a positive outlook and act with positive expectations when faced with adverse situations or events.

-Hope: An individual has motivating goals that require determination, such as persevering to achieve goals or creating new ones when necessary. Hope signifies the desired future success. It is regarded as a motivating factor that encourages individuals to move toward their objectives. High levels of hope in employees support them in being solution-oriented when facing events and situations (Erkman & Esen, 2013: 24). The concept of hope is expressed as a condition that encompasses 'will' and 'the power to achieve'.

-Resilience: It is defined as an individual's capacity to recover and improve oneself in the face of uncertainty, adversity, failure, changes that, despite being positive, increase responsibility, and changes that create positive stress (eustress). It is described as a characteristic that enables individuals to adopt a positive approach even in the face of adverse situations and to exhibit resistance against challenges.

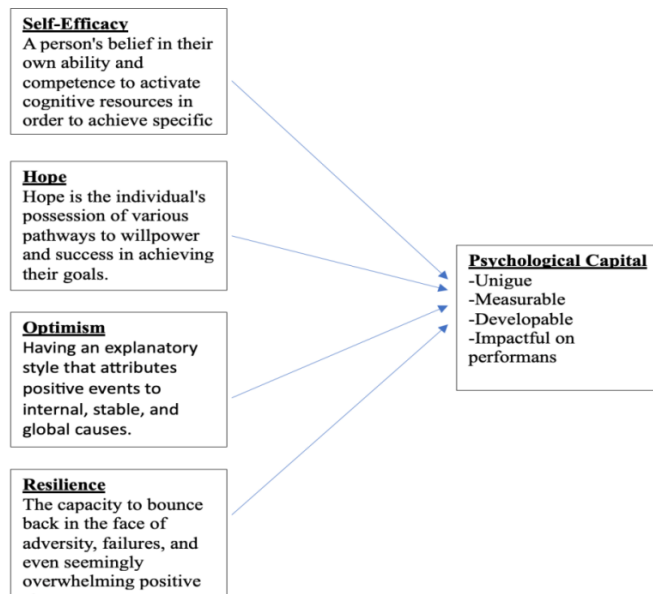


Figure 1: Dimensions of Psychological Capital

(Luthans & Youssef, Human, Social, and Now Positive Psychological Capital Management: Investing in People for Competitive Advantage, 2004)

Psychological capital relies on an individual's internal resources and psychological state, enabling the individual to exhibit a more positive attitude on the path to success and effectively overcome challenges (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Psychological capital is a positive concept encompassing individuals' emotional, mental, and social resources, incorporating robust components such as hope, self-esteem, emotional awareness, and resilience. Psychological capital fosters favorable emotional states, heightened motivation, and job satisfaction levels in the workplace. Furthermore, it can aid employees in more effectively coping with workplace stress (Child & McGrath, 2001). Numerous studies have demonstrated that individuals with high levels of psychological capital exhibit positive outcomes in terms of job performance, motivation, stress management, and personal well-being. Therefore, the development of psychological capital is mutually beneficial for both individuals and organizations. It is regarded as a potent resource that can be utilized as a tool to enhance success and well-being in both the business world and personal life (Child & McGrath, 2001).

Psychological capital denotes what you are at present and what you can become through positive development (Akdoğan & Polatçı, 2013).

In research on psychological capital, it has been consistently found that higher levels of psychological capital positively influence employees' job satisfaction, commitment, innovativeness, career development, leadership, creativity, participation, decision-making competence, learning ability, and entrepreneurship (Luthans, 2002). In this context, psychological capital can be regarded as a phenomenon that can make significant contributions to an organization's success.

1. Psychological Capital and Health

Psychological capital refers to individuals' capacity to possess positive psychological resources such as emotional resilience, hope, self-esteem, and perseverance. Individuals with these resources can have a significant advantage in terms of psychological well-being and quality of life (Nelson & Cooper, 2007). The impact of psychological capital on personal health can be explained through factors such as stress management, life satisfaction, physical health, optimism, and health behaviors. Below, some key aspects of this relationship have been explained;

Stress Management: The concept of stress, derived from the Latin word 'stringere,' originally conveys meanings of difficulty, distress, and discomfort (Prasad et al., 2015: 67-68). With a

complex psychological nature, the concept of stress is more commonly defined today as a change occurring in an individual's physical or mental structure in response to threats and uncertainties. Studies have shown that individuals with high levels of psychological capital are more effective in coping with stress (Luszczynska, Gutiérrez-Doña, & Schwarzer, 2005).

An individual's emotional resilience can assist in reducing their stress levels, which in turn can have positive effects on their physical and psychological health. Individuals with psychological capital can enhance their emotional awareness, improve their emotional intelligence skills, and thus effectively cope with stress while preserving their mental well-being.

Emotional awareness and emotional intelligence are components of psychological capital that have a significant impact on mental health. Emotional awareness represents individuals' ability to recognize and understand their emotional states, while emotional intelligence encompasses the capacity to utilize this emotional awareness and enhance emotional intelligence skills (Lee, 2005). Individuals with high psychological capital can improve their emotional awareness and enhance their emotional intelligence skills, making it easier for them to establish healthier personal relationships.

Psychological capital denotes individuals' internal resources such as psychological resilience, emotional well-being, and a positive outlook. These internal resources significantly impact individuals' mental health, quality of life, and overall well-being. Strengthening and preserving psychological capital can assist individuals in leading healthier and more balanced lives. Therefore, mental health is a crucial component of overall well-being, and the role of psychological capital in this area can contribute to individuals leading a better life (Lee, 2005).

Research indicates that individuals with psychological capital are more resilient against anxiety disorders. The increase in factors such as hope and emotional resilience has been shown to alleviate anxiety symptoms. Additionally, the decrease in hopelessness and the increase in self-esteem help alleviate depression symptoms, enabling individuals to cope with negative thoughts and acquire positive mental skills. The relationship between psychological capital and mental health is complex and significant. Therefore, efforts to enhance individuals' psychological capital hold great importance for mental health. This relationship can be considered as an effective strategy that mental health professionals can use to improve individuals' quality of life.

Life Satisfaction: Components such as optimism and hope can provide individuals with a more positive outlook on life, which can in turn enhance their overall level of life satisfaction.

Physical Health: Research indicates that individuals with psychological capital achieve more positive outcomes in terms of physical health. This could imply that emotional resilience may have positive effects on the immune system.

Optimism: Optimism, a component of psychological capital, can have a positive impact on physical health. They can be more optimistic in cases of illness or injury. Optimistic individuals can cope more effectively with illnesses, have a faster recovery process, and tend to better maintain their health (Lee, 2005).

Health Behavior: Individuals with psychological capital have greater self-confidence and tend to prefer a healthier lifestyle. This may involve healthier behaviors such as regular exercise, healthy eating, and avoiding harmful habits.

Research on the effects of psychological capital on personal health highlights a significant connection between positive psychology and the field of health. Understanding this relationship is crucial for improving personal health and promoting healthy lifestyles (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985).

2. Psychological Capital and Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction is the assessment of individuals of the present moment and their overall lives. It is a concept that evaluates how positively and meaningfully individuals perceive their lives. This

condition is an important criterion used to understand individuals' general well-being, happiness, and the meaning of life (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985). Psychological capital is strongly associated with life satisfaction. The key elements of this relationship;

Reduction in Hopelessness: Individuals with high psychological capital can reduce their levels of hopelessness, thereby increasing their levels of life satisfaction and assessing their lives in a more positive manner. Additionally, a decrease in hopelessness enables individuals to adopt a more positive outlook on the everyday adversities and challenges they face (Robbins, 2018).

Increasing Self-Esteem: Psychological capital can enhance individuals' self-esteem. The respect they have for themselves can be associated with life satisfaction. The elevation in self-esteem encourages individuals to appreciate their achievements more and evaluate them positively in their lives. A tendency for individuals to have more confidence in their abilities and competencies contributes to their more effective coping with life's challenges and achieving their goals. The increase in self-esteem is considered a factor that elevates the level of life satisfaction (Hmieleski & Carr, 2008).

Emotional Awareness: Individuals with psychological capital can enhance their emotional awareness, allowing them to better appreciate the enjoyable and meaningful moments in life. Developing emotional awareness helps individuals better understand and evaluate their emotional experiences (DeDonno & Demaree, 2008). Furthermore, an increase in an individual's level of emotional awareness can contribute to a greater appreciation of the value of every moment in life. Emotional awareness can enhance positive emotional experiences and enable more effective coping with negative emotional experiences.

Enhanced Resilience: Resilience refers to an individual's ability to withstand difficulties in life. Individuals with high psychological capital tend to be more resilient, better adapted to stressful situations, and capable of recognizing the positive aspects of life even when facing adversity. This increased resilience can lead to higher levels of life satisfaction (Hmieleski & Carr, 2008).

The relationship between psychological capital and life satisfaction reflects a significant connection that makes individuals' lives more fulfilling and meaningful. Psychological capital's ability to reduce hopelessness, enhance self-esteem, improve emotional awareness, and increase resilience contributes to the elevation of life satisfaction. This underscores the importance of psychological capital in enhancing personal development and quality of life.

It is evident that there is a positive relationship between psychological capital and life satisfaction. Psychological capital can contribute to individuals leading a more satisfying and meaningful life.

3. Psychological Capital and Happiness

According to most researchers in the fields of psychology and sociology, the highest level of satisfaction that can be achieved as a result of human actions is happiness. The state of well-being is often synonymous with happiness, which is generally considered the ultimate goal of human life (Lodha, 2019). Happiness is seen as the result of various aspects that provide satisfaction in all aspects of human life, such as coping with difficulties in life and self-fulfillment.

Happiness is one of the fundamental goals in people's lives. Individuals evaluating their own lives positively, having high emotional well-being, and experiencing positive internal states are considered indicators of happiness (Luthans, 2002). The relationship between psychological capital and happiness is an important concept for understanding individuals' overall life satisfaction and well-being. The relationship between psychological capital and happiness can be examined in terms of happiness being a result or a mediator of psychological capital (Nelson & Cooper, 2007).

Increasing happiness as a result of psychological capital: Psychological capital can enhance hope, self-esteem, emotional awareness, and resilience. This can naturally lead to an increase in happiness.

The role of psychological capital in increasing happiness: High psychological capital can contribute to individuals evaluating their lives more positively and enhancing their positive emotional states. This can be considered an effective tool in increasing happiness.

Coping with stress and increasing happiness: Psychological capital can help individuals cope with stress more effectively. This can contribute to an increase in happiness because reducing stress leads to improved emotional well-being.

The relationship between psychological capital and happiness provides valuable insights into individuals leading more satisfying and joyful lives. It demonstrates that psychological capital can be an effective strategy in increasing happiness (Sparrow, Liu, & Wegner, 2011).

In conclusion, this profound relationship between psychological capital and well-being can assist individuals in leading more satisfying and happier lives. The positive effects of psychological capital support efforts in personal development and enhancing the quality of life, serving as a key to a more meaningful life (Luthans & Youssef, 2007).

4. Psychological Capital of Healthcare Workers

Increasing the performance of healthcare workers is important for both improving the quality of service provided and ensuring patient satisfaction, as well as achieving organizational objectives. Psychological capital, a developing field of positive organizational behavior, is seen as a psychological resource that can promote personal development and performance at an individual level (Lee, 2005). Elevating the levels of psychological capital among healthcare workers can be effective in obtaining the desired productivity and enhancing their performance. Healthcare personnel who work more effectively and efficiently can provide better service to patients. Enhancing the performance of healthcare workers can lead to increased patient satisfaction and the improvement of healthcare service quality. High levels of patient satisfaction are essential for the sustainability of healthcare services and enhancing the reputation of healthcare institutions.

Healthcare workers are crucial individuals who take on the responsibility of preserving and improving the health of society. However, the healthcare sector is a challenging field filled with high levels of stress, job intensity, and ethical decisions (Luthans & Youssef, 2007). For healthcare workers to effectively perform their jobs, they need not only medical knowledge and skills but also a strong psychological capital. Psychological capital for healthcare workers is observed to function as a defense mechanism that helps them cope with work-related stress and difficulties. This contributes to making the organization more effective and competitive.

Healthcare workers employ various strategies to enhance their psychological capital. Among these strategies are emotional intelligence training, participation in support groups, learning stress management skills, and implementing measures to achieve a work-life balance. Furthermore, healthcare institutions and managers can develop policies and programs to support employees' psychological capital.

Research generally suggests that employees with high levels of psychological capital are more likely to express their opinions and improvement ideas, and that their silence behaviors decrease. Employees with high levels of psychological capital will boldly put forward their ideas, stand up against the difficulties they may encounter when they speak the truth, and speak out their beliefs in the organization as if it were their own, for the development and progress of the organization (Yu and Liu, 2016).

3. CONCLUSION

The psychological capital of healthcare workers is a critical factor for their success in their jobs and for maintaining their personal well-being. Components such as emotional resilience, hope, self-esteem, and resilience assist healthcare workers in dealing with job-related stress, intensity, and ethical decisions. Therefore, it is essential for leaders and managers in the healthcare sector to

develop strategies that support the psychological capital of their employees. This way, healthcare workers can maintain a more satisfying work-life and provide better services to their patients.

The psychological capital of healthcare workers is a fundamental resource that helps them cope with the challenges they face in fulfilling critical roles in the healthcare sector. Components such as emotional resilience, hope, self-esteem, and resilience enable healthcare workers to effectively deal with job-related stress, hospital conditions, ethical decisions, and the demands of patient care. The components of psychological capital can have positive effects on healthcare workers' job satisfaction, emotional well-being, stress management, and collaboration abilities. This can enhance both the personal well-being of healthcare workers and their capacity to provide better service to patients.

In conclusion, the psychological capital of healthcare workers is an important concept both at the individual and organizational levels. Paying attention to the emotional and physical needs of those working in the healthcare sector can help them maintain a more satisfying work life and provide better service to patients. Therefore, it is of critical importance for leaders in the healthcare sector to continue their efforts to support the psychological capital of their employees.

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