

The Impact of Positive Psychological Capital on Political Behaviour in Organizations: A Study on Academic Staff

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Extensive Summary

Introduction

Based on positive psychology, positive organizational behavior movement which focuses positive behaviors rather than negative behaviors has emerged in recent years. Positive psychological capital has been an important research subject as a result of the studies on positive organizational behaviour.

Positive psychological capital is defined as positive and developmental state of individual. It is also focuses on strengths of individuals and characteristics which can be changed and developed as a result of experience and training (Luthans & Youssef 2007, p. 326). Made up of positive organizational behaviour criteria meeting capacities of self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resiliency, “positive psychological capital” may be greater than the sums of its parts (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2006 p. 19). Self-efficacy is defined as having confidence to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998), while hope is persevering toward goals and redirecting paths to goals in order to succeed (Snyder, 2002). On the other hand, optimism refers to making a positive attribution about succeeding now and in the future (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2006). Lastly, resiliency is sustaining and bouncing back to attain success (Avey, Wernsing, & Luthans, 2008; Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2006).

On the other hand, employees tend to engage in political behaviour due to the pressure resulting from rapid changes, increasing uncertainty and complexity in work life. Political behaviour is defined as activities which are not within organizational roles and include attempts to influence the distribution of advantage and disadvantages in organizations (Farrell & Petersen 1982, p 405).

Positive psychological behaviour as a new perspective to organizations and political behaviour as an inevitable social phenomenon in organizations are examined in this study. The study aims to determine how positive psychological capital and its

components affect political behaviour of employees in individual level. Therefore, it is examined whether developing positive psychological capital can be effective to eliminate the negative impacts of political behaviour on the organizations. Based on the aims of the study, it is hypothesized that:

H₁: Psychological capital levels of academic staff have a significant negative effect on political behaviour in organizations (making concessions, exaggeration and insincerity, ingratiation, exchange of favors, coalition building, and inspirational appeals).

H₂: Self-efficacy levels of academic staff have a significant negative effect on political behaviour in organizations (making concessions, exaggeration and insincerity, ingratiation, exchange of favors, coalition building, and inspirational appeals).

H₃: Hope levels of academic staff have a significant negative effect on political behaviour in organizations (making concessions, exaggeration and insincerity, ingratiation, exchange of favors, coalition building, and inspirational appeals).

H₄: Optimism levels of academic staff have a significant negative effect on political behaviour in organizations (making concessions, exaggeration and insincerity, ingratiation, exchange of favors, coalition building, and inspirational appeals).

H₅: Psychological resiliency levels of academic staff have a significant negative effect on political behaviour in organizations (making concessions, exaggeration and insincerity, ingratiation, exchange of favors, coalition building, and inspirational appeals).

Methodology

Research Model

Since the study examines the role of psychological capital and its components on political behaviour in organizations, it is designed as causal-comparative research. Therefore, psychological capital and its components, self-efficacy, hope, optimism and psychological resiliency are assigned as independent variables, while the components of political behaviour are assigned as dependent variables.

Sample

The population of the research consists of 17.883 academic staff in 39 foundation and 8 public university. The sample includes 375 academic staff assigned by random sampling.

Instruments

The data were collected through *Psychological Capital Questionnaire* developed by Luthans, Youssef and Avolio (2007: 237) and adapted into Turkish by Çetin and Basım (2012: 121) and *Political Behaviour Inventory* developed by Börü and İslamoğlu (2007a: 135). The data were analysed with SPSS 18.0.

Data Analysis

Ordinal logistic regression was used to determine the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables. As ordinal logistic regression doesn't require assumptions of normality and equal variances, it was chosen as analysis method.

Findings

Hypothesis 1: Psychological capital levels of academic staff have a significant negative effect on political behaviour in organizations (making concessions, exaggeration and insincerity, ingratiation, exchange of favors, coalition building, and inspirational appeals). Hypothesis 1 is accepted for the variables making concessions, exaggeration and insincerity, exchange of favors and rejected for the other variables. The study shows that the academic staff with low level of psychological capital tend to engage in *making concessions, exaggeration and insincerity* and *exchange of favors* more than the academic staff with high level of psychological capital.

Hypothesis 2: Self-efficacy levels of academic staff have a significant negative effect on political behaviour in organizations (making concessions, exaggeration and insincerity, ingratiation, exchange of favors, coalition building, and inspirational appeals). Hypothesis 2 is accepted for inspirational appeals variable and rejected for the other variables. It is showed that self-efficacy levels of academic staff have a significant negative effect on political behaviour in organizations (making concessions, exaggeration and insincerity, ingratiation, exchange of favors, coalition building, and inspirational appeals).

Hypothesis 3: Hope levels of academic staff have a significant negative effect on political behaviour in organizations (making concessions, exaggeration and insincerity, ingratiation, exchange of favors, coalition building, and inspirational appeals). Hypothesis 3 is accepted for making concessions variable and rejected for the other variables. It is found that the academic staff with low levels of hope have a tendency to engage in *exaggeration and insincerity* more than the academic staff with high levels of hope.

Hypothesis 4: Optimism levels of academic staff have a significant negative effect on political behaviour in organizations (making concessions, exaggeration and insincerity, ingratiation, exchange of favors, coalition building, and inspirational appeals). Hypothesis 4 is accepted as political behaviour, ingratiation and coalition building and rejected for the other components. When the optimism levels of the academic staff are examined, the academic staff with medium level of optimism tend to engage in *political behaviours, ingratiation, coalition building* more than the academic staff with high level of optimism.

Hypothesis 5: Psychological resiliency levels of academic staff have a significant negative effect on political behaviour in organizations (making concessions, exaggeration and insincerity, ingratiation, exchange of favors, coalition building, and inspirational appeals). Hypothesis 5 is accepted for political behaviour, exaggeration and insincerity, ingratiation, exchange of favors, coalition building and rejected for the other variables. The academic staff with medium psychological resiliency tend to engage in political behaviours, exaggeration and insincerity, exchange of favors and ingratiation more than the academic staff with high level of psychological resiliency. Moreover, the academic staff with low level of psychological resiliency have a tendency to engage in coalition building more than the ones with high level of psychological resiliency.

Discussion

The results of the study suggest that positive psychological capital effects making concessions, exchanging favors, exaggeration and insincerity negatively. Psychological capital is a psychological capacity making a motivational contribution to individuals to accomplish goals. On the other hand, success expectancy is indicated to increase political behaviour in individual level. It can be deduced that the individuals with high level of psychological capital tend to use their capacity rather than engaging in political behaviour. Therefore, the individuals with high level of psychological capital do not need to engage in making concessions, exaggeration and insincerity, exchange of favors and ingratiation.

Some recommendation can be made based on the findings. First of all, qualitative and quantitative studies can be conducted to determine different political behaviours in academic organizations with different instruments. Also, future studies can be conducted to determine why academic staff engage in specific political behaviours. Lastly, it can be examined which political behaviours are used in combination and their order of use to accomplish goals.