



Personal Resources and Work-Based Identity: Does Work Engagement Matter?

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Abstract. Studies show that work-based identity is an important construct in understanding work-related behaviors such as their involvement in, attachment to and performance at work. Although several studies on individual characteristics have examined the potential precursors of work-based identity, examining this in the context of psychological capital (PsyCap) as an individual characteristic has yet to be explored. The present study aims to examine the association between psychological capital and work-based identity as mediated by work engagement. A sample of 642 faculty from different private and public colleges/universities in Iligan City, Lanao del Norte and Cagayan de Oro City, Misamis Oriental answered a set of questionnaires assessing teachers' level of psychological capital, work engagement, and work-based identity. The results revealed that work engagement significantly mediated the link between psychological capital and work-based identity. This implies that teacher who possess high level of psychological capital (hope, self-efficacy, resilience and optimism) have stronger work-based identity due to higher level of work engagement. Conversely, those who reported lower level of psychological capital have reduced level of work engagement, which in turn, weakens their work-based identity. The findings of the study highlight the important role of psychological capital and work engagement toward teachers' work-based identity.

Keywords: psychological capital, work engagement, work-based identity

Introduction

Teachers feel less motivated due to regularly coping with stressful situations that can disturb their psychological well-being and work performance (Bermejo et al., 2013). Accordingly, factors such as role ambiguity and role conflict can be potential sources of stress (Kahn, 1964; Marqués et al., 2005; Hakanen et al., 2006; Papastylianou et al., 2009; Pas et al., 2010; Ferguson et al., 2012; Travers, 2017). Studies have found that work-based identity is an important construct in understanding work-related behaviors such as their involvement in, attachment to and performance at work (Aryee & Luk, 1996; Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Agostino, 2004; Buche, 2003, 2006, 2008; Pratt et al., 2006; Reijn, 2007; Walsh & Gordon, 2007; Jansen and Roodt, 2014) which would lead to clarifying work identification, enhancing task performance, increasing employee retention and providing organizational advantage (Walsh & Gordon, 2007; Buche, 2008; Bothma and Roodt, 2012). The relevance of work-based identity led to the increasing research on its antecedents. Research have shown that the interaction between individual characteristics

(age, gender, race, language, job level, geographic region, etc.) and job characteristics (job demands and job resources) result in the development of work identities (Jansen and Roodt, 2014). In addition, work identities form as a result of the interface between individual dispositions (personality, self-efficacy, self-regulatory focus, work beliefs, intrinsic motivation, organizational-based self-esteem and optimism and work characteristics (growth opportunities, organizational support and advancement, task identity, team climate, perceived external prestige, skill variety, and relationship with supervisors and peers) (Hackman and Oldham 1975; Anderson and West 1998; Kirpal, 2004; Carmeli et al., 2006; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007; Tims and Bakker 2010; Braine and Roodt, 2014). Although several studies on individual characteristics have examined the potential precursors of WBI, examining this in the context of psychological capital (PsyCap) as an individual characteristic has yet to be explored. This study contends that employees who experience high level of PysCap (i.e., hope, self-efficacy, resilience and optimism) are likely to increase work-based identity. Further, the researchers assert that the link between PsyCap and WBI is brought about by how embedded individuals are with their jobs. This is important as studies have shown the relevance of PsyCap and work-engagement (Youssef & Luthans, 2007; Sweetman and Luthans, 2010; Simons and Buitendach 2013; Paeka et al., 2015; Karatepe and Karadas, 2015; Erbasi and Ozbek, 2017) to different areas of life. The present study aims to examine how psychological capital affects teachers' work engagement, and in turn, influence their work-based identity.

1.1 Work Based Identity

Work-based identity is important in understanding and determining work-related behaviors (Aryee & Luk, 1996; Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Buche, 2003, 2006, 2008; Agostino, 2004; Pratt, Rockmann et al., 2006; Reijn, 2007; Walsh & Gordon, 2007; Bothma and Roodt 2012). Work-based identity is a structured constituent which consists of work centrality, person-organization fit and value congruence components (Jansen and Roodt, 2014). These three dimensions may also be classified as part of the individualpsychological dimension of the work-based identity prototype. The first dimension, workcentrality, pertains to the degree to which people consider that their work plays an important role in their life (Bagger & Li, 2012; Hirschfeld & Feild, 2000; Paullay et al., 1994; Kanungo, 1982; Jiang et al., 2017). According to identity theory, when a certain role is perceived essential, this particular identity takes up a more central position in the self-definition (Thoits, 1992; Jiang et al., 2017). Correspondingly, studies show that work centrality associates personal work identification (Hirschfeld & Feild, 2000; Diefendorff et al., 2002; Kuchinke et al., 2010; Bal & Dorien Kooij, 2011; Lu et al., 2015). The second dimension, person-organization fit, refers to the similarity between individuals and organization that takes place when (a) at least one entity affords what the other needs, or (b) they share comparable important characteristics, or (c) both (Chatman, 1989; Schneider et al. 1995; Youngs et al., 2015). The third dimension, value congruence, represents the degree to which individuals match their own values with the organizational values (Edwards and Cable 2009; Peng et al., 2015). Moreover, values are deemed vital in the personal work identity process because when individual's values are congruent with the organization's values, they demonstrate higher identity with their organizational membership ((Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979; Ryu, 2015).

1.2 Psychological Capital and Work-based Identity

Research suggest that work is central to the building of individual identity and is one of the life spheres and life roles one choose to identify with (Lloyd et al., 2011). Studies show that work identity is influenced by job and individual characteristics (Jansen and Roodt, 2014; Braine and Roodt, 2014). These include personality, self-efficacy, self-regulatory focus, growth opportunities and organizational support and advancement

(Braine and Roodt, 2014). According to Lodi et al., (2020), and Morgan & Luthans (2013), psychological capital is a construct of individual characteristics and qualities that stimulate positive outcomes in dealing with organizational context. PsyCap is defined as the individual's positive psychological state of development that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement in the workplace (Luthans, 2002, (Luthans, 2002; Luthans et al., 2006; Luthans, et al., 2007; Morgan and Luthans, 2013; Karatepe and Karadas, 2015; Bogler and Somech, 2019). This personal characteristic includes 4 elements namely, hope, efficacy, resilience and optimism (Luthans et al., 2007; Cai et al., 2018). Hope refers to a derived sense of motivation or will (agency) and plan (pathways) in order to succeed at specific goal (Steven et al., 2010). Self-efficacy pertains to one's confidence in competency to mobilize the motivation and put in the actions required to accomplish a specific task within a given context (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Resilience refers to bouncing back from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure or even a positive change, progress and increased responsibility (Luthans, 2002; Steven et al., 2010). While optimism refers to making a positive attribution to succeed now in the future (Luthans and Youssef, 2004; 2007). In a study conducted by Tüzün et al., 2018, PsyCap can be associated with identification variables. In line with this, individuals with higher level of PsyCap are more likely to execute better work performance, show increased job satisfaction and easily build strong organizational identity (Huimei and Xuan, 2011). Notably, these attributes contribute positive influence on the workplace which can then be used in predicting work-based identity given the positive nature of identification in the workplace (Avey et al. 2010, Bester 2012, Braine and Roodt, 2014).

1.3 The Role of Work Engagement

Aside from the likelihood of linking PsyCap to work-based identity, this study suggests that work engagement mediates this relationship. Employees who possess high in PsyCap perceive similar state as consuming high resources so they experience more motivational process that increases their level of work engagement (Grover et al., 2018). Work engagement is defined as the “harnessing of organizational member's selves to their work roles” and includes three dimensions namely, vigor, dedication, and absorption (Kahn 1990; Zhang et al., 2017). Vigor refers to high levels of energy and willingness to exert effort in work, dedication refers to one's level of involvement in work and absorption pertains to one's level of concentration on work (Bakker and Schaufeli, 2015). Studies report that employees high in work engagement are likely to form a deep structure of identification at work (Kahn 1992; Braine and Roodt, 2011). Further, engaged employees who shows psychological presence in their work reveal strong identification with work (Bakker et al., 2008; Waal and Pienaar, 2013). This study suggests that when employees have high level of PsyCap, they are likely to form strong work-based identity due to their high level of work engagement.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Participants

The sample was composed of 642 faculty from different private and public colleges/universities in Iligan City, Lanao del Norte and Cagayan de Oro City, Misamis Oriental. Using purposive sampling, participants were chosen based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) must be at least 12 months in the service; and (2) faculty (lecturer, contractual, temporary, permanent) of the college/university. There were 37.7% (n=242) males and 62.3% (n=400) females. They have mean age of 37.24 (SD = 10.99 years).

2.2 Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was sought from the respective school authorities. Upon approval, the test administration was then coordinated. Respondents were given the right to be informed about the purpose and objective of the research and that participation is voluntary. Confidentiality is assured and ethical principles were observed. Clear instructions were given and the necessary contact information of the researchers were made available to the respondents in case of problems or clarifications to any aspect of the research.

2.3 Measures

The level of psychological resources was assessed using the psychological capital questionnaire (Luthans et al., 2007). It has 24 items measuring self-efficacy (e.g., “I feel confident contacting people outside the company to discuss problems”); hope (e.g., “At present time, I am energetically pursuing my work goals”); resiliency (e.g., “I can get through difficult times at work because I’ve experienced difficulty before”); and optimism (e.g., “When things are uncertain for me at work, I usually expect the best”). The items are rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Each of these four selected scales has considerable psychometric support across multiple samples in prior research and has also been verified in workplace studies by themselves or in combination (Peterson & Luthans, 2003; Luthans et al., 2005; Larson & Luthans, 2006; Jensen & Luthans, 2006; Luthans et al., 2007; Adil & Kamal, 2019). In this study, this scale has a Cronbach’s alpha of .901. Work engagement was measured using the Utrecht work engagement scale (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). It has 17 items that measure three subscales: vigor (e.g., “At school, I feel bursting with energy”); dedication (e.g., “I am proud of teaching”); and absorption (e.g., “I am immersed in teaching”). The items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always). Previous studies have verified the reliability and validity of the scale (Torabinia et al., 2017; Nazari et al., 2020). In this study, this scale has a Cronbach’s alpha of .933. Work identity was assessed using the work-based identity scale (Bothma and Roodt, 2012). It includes the items from different scales such as Roodt’s (1997) organizational-related commitment scale (e.g., “To what extent do you regard work as the most important aspect in your life?”); Lodahl and Kejner’s (1965) job involvement scale (e.g., “How likely are you to regard your work as only a small part of who you are?”); three subscales of the functions of identity scale (Serafini et al., 2006) namely, structure, goals and future; organizational identification from Mael and Ashforth’s (1992) scale (e.g., “How often do you say ‘we’ rather than ‘they’ when you talk about the organization that you work for?”); and person-organization fit from Lauver and Kristof-Brown’s (2001) scale (e.g., “To what degree do your values match or fit the values of the organization that you work for?”). The items are rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very little) to 6 (very much). Previous studies have determined the reliability and validity of the instrument by submitting the 36-item questionnaire to a first and second level factor analysis to determine factor structure. This yielded a 28-item, uni-dimensional Work based Identity Scale with a Cronbach alpha of .95 (Roodt et al., 2009). In this study, this scale has a Cronbach’s alpha of .995.

2.4 Data Analysis

The statistical procedure for the gathered data was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 2.0. To replace values that are missing at random, the researchers had examined and used the estimation-maximization technique of imputation. The researchers also utilized a simple mediation analysis that enables the researchers to examine the effects of psychological capital (self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resiliency) on Work-Based Identity (WBI) as mediated by Work Engagement.

PROCESS MACRO for SPSS by Preacher and Hayes (2012) was used to compute the results.

3. Results

3.1 Descriptive Analysis

The means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations between the variables of the study are shown in Table 1. Results of correlation analyses showed that psychological capital was positively associated both with work engagement and work-based identity. It is also interesting to note that work engagement is positively correlated with work-based identity.

Table 1. Results of Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations

		PCQ TOT	UWES TOT	WBIS TOT
PCQ_TOT	Pearson Correlation	1	.611**	.540**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	642	642	642
UWES_TOT	Pearson Correlation	.611**	1	.525**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	642	642	642
WBIS_TOT	Pearson Correlation	.540**	.525**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	642	642	642

Note: A total of 642 faculty and staff participated in the study. PCQ = psychological capital questionnaire; UWES = work engagement scale; WBIS = work-based identity scale;

3.2 Mediation Analysis

Table 2 shows the total, direct and indirect effect of psychological capital and work-based identity through work engagement. The findings of the study revealed that work engagement significantly mediated the link between psychological capital and work-based identity. The fit indices are: $S-B\chi^2(75, N = 642) = 2934.292, p < .001, CFI = .956, TLI = .943, RMSEA = .058$ (90% CI = .049 to .068). The results indicate that all measures have adequate fit to the data.

Table 2. Mediation Analyses of work engagement between psychological capital and work-based identity (MPLUS)

(IV)	(MV)	(DV)	Effect of IV on MV (a)	Effect of MV on DV (b)	Direct Effect (c')	Total Indirect Effect	Total Effect (c)	Indirect Effects	Std. Error	BC 95% CI	
										LL	UL
PSYCAP	UWES	WBI	0.031**	10.967**	0.535**	0.339**	0.875**	0.339	0.339	0.204	0.475

Note: All coefficients are unstandardized; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; significant indirect effects are indicated in boldface.

IV = independent variable; = MV mediating variable; DV = dependent variable; SE = standard error; BC = Bias-corrected; CI confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; PSYCAP = psychological capital; UWES = work engagement scale; WBI = work-based identity; $N = 413$

4. Discussion

The primary objective of this study is to determine if psychological capital (hope, self-efficacy, resilience and optimism) increased one's work-engagement, and in turn increased the likelihood of developing a work-based identity. The results yielded that higher level of psychological capital increased work-based identity due to the high level of work engagement.

The findings of the study reveal that psychological capital (hope, self-efficacy, resilience and optimism) is significantly correlated with work-based identity. This suggests that teachers who are hopeful, self-efficient, resilient and optimistic are likely to commit to the corresponding work identity. The results are parallel to the study of Huimei and Xuan (2011), which stated that employees' psychological capital and its structural elements are explicitly positively associated with identification at work. Research has further claimed that employees who possess higher level of PsyCap tend to be more effective when it comes to creating an authentic and harmonious work team, stronger mutual trust, elevated team identity, sense of belongingness and organizational commitment (Chen et al., 2017). In this regard, organizations are obliged to reinforce their teachers' psychological capital development and growth which can be implemented by exercising individual care, ensuring high level of employee performance internally and setting a solid foundation for refining employees' performance (Huimei and Xuan, 2011). Further, fostering individual differences, positive supervision climate and job characteristics (skill variety, task significance, job feedback, job identity and job autonomy) acts to promote positive work qualities of employees such as their psychological capital (Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Sameer et al., 2019).

The second critical finding notable for further discussion is the significant relationship between PsyCap and work engagement. This implies that teachers who possess high level of PysCap are found to be highly energetic, strongly involved and fully absorbed in their work. The result is consistent with numerous studies which revealed that PysCap as an utilizable psychological state that individual performs during growth and development processes has been an essential tool for employee's progress such as improved attitudes to work engagement and in various work contexts (Luthans et al., 2006; Youssef & Luthans, 2007; Simons and Buitendach, 2013; Chaurasia and Shukla, 2014; Wang et al., 2017; Wirawan et al., 2020). To illustrate, employees who are determined to pursue goals and identify pathways (hope) tend to afford energy (vigor) and willingness (dedication) to reach goals; employees who are competent in executing work assignments and dealing with work context (self-efficacy) turn out to be more mentally absorbed in attaining the goal of the work without getting diverted (absorption), become more ready to spend effort to yield the expected results (vigor), and intensely identified with what they are doing (dedication); employees who are able to provide a positive adaptation to difficult situations and to succeed in challenging experiences (resilience) successfully bring themselves in the work through the three components of work engagement; and employees who render internal acknowledgement in the event of success and external acknowledgements in the event of difficulties and failures (optimism) strengthens dedication (Sweetman and Luthans, 2010; Alessandri et al., 2018). Moreover, the combined power of these 4 elements of PysCap are likely to produce even higher level of work engagement (Avey et al., 2008; Nigah et al., 2012). On the other hand, Soni and Rastogi et al (2019) suggested that low level of PsyCap results to reduced vigor, dedication and absorption among employees in their work.

Finally, the results show that work engagement is positively associated with work-based identity. This denotes that teachers who are equipped with high levels of energy, enthusiastically involved and fully immersed in their work are more likely to form their work identity. The result finds support from the study of Kanste (2011), demonstrating that work engagement is associated to identification with organization. Accordingly,

engaged employees possess psychological presence in their work that becomes incorporated into their identity (Kahn, 1992; Braine and Roodt, 2011) as they assume that putting more effort on their task advance themselves and feel that the organization's success is also their own personal success (Dick, 2001; Zhang et al., 2017). Hence, employees with strengthened work engagement are likely to internalize their organization's aims and goals with their own (Murray et al., 2015). It is also significant to note that dedication, as a dimension of work engagement bears some similarity in its conceptualization with work-based identity as it is considered as "an identification-based component of engagement" (Bakker et al. 2008; Halbesleben, 2010; Braine and Roodt, 2011; Bargagliotti, 2011). Hence, when teachers are strongly engaged in their work due to their high level of psychological capital, it is likely that they will be able to firmly identify with their work/organization.

5. Conclusion

Teachers who have high level of PsyCap are more likely to increase their work-based identity (Huimei and Xuan, 2011). The mediation of work engagement between psychological capital and work-based identity could be well explained with the notion that teachers who persevere toward goals (hope), who have confidence to put in the necessary effort (self-efficacy), who sustain and bounce back from adversity (resilience), and who make a positive attribution (optimism) to attain success tend to be more engaged at their the work, which in turn, cause them to display higher identity formation towards their organization and occupation. Despite the potential contribution of this study to the extant literature, some limitations must be considered in interpreting its results. First, the study used self-report indicators that make responses susceptible to prejudices towards social desirability. Future studies could use social desirability measures to statistically monitor perceived biases. Second, the study used a cross-sectional design; hence, definitive causal relationships between the predictor and outcome variables cannot be identified. Longitudinal designs would offer greater evidence for proposed causal interactions. Lastly, the generalizability of the findings may be limited to the faculty from different private and public colleges/universities in Iligan City, Lanao del Norte and Cagayan de Oro City, Misamis Oriental sample only. Future research may test this model in a variety of samples because the results may vary depending on level of psychological capital. Nonetheless, this study makes an essential contribution to teachers' work-based identity literature. First, this is one of the very few studies showing the relationship between PsyCap and work-based identity among teachers. Second, while several studies on individual characteristics have examined the potential precursors of WBI, examining this in the context of PsyCap as an individual characteristic; and the mediating role of work engagement between PsyCap and work-based identity are yet to be explored. This study addressed these gaps and found that PsyCap affects the development of work engagement, and in turn, affects teachers' work-based identity. Finally, the current findings affirmed the theory of work-based identity as it is being influenced by the job and individual characteristics. This is relevant given that work-based identity theory, to the authors' knowledge, has been rarely used in the context of teachers.

6. References

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