

An Amalgamated Potential Model to Fulfil Employees' Psychological Needs and Develop Inner Resources

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Abstract

This article presents theoretical considerations applying a possible merger instrument from Appreciative Inquiry and Integrated Cognitive Behavioural Coaching model informed practices within the organisational context. Empirical research suggests, separate measures and concepts may already present some promising results, and this amalgamated model applied to organisational context may potentially assist in increasing positive psychological capital resources and satisfying basic psychological needs to deliver even a more profound effect. It is a working paper towards a practical application and scientific research within a broader organisational context.

Keywords: Psychological Capital (PsyCap), Integrative cognitive-behavioural coaching model, Appreciative Inquiry, Social-Determination Theory, employee, organisation

1. Introduction

Even in the more balanced periods of societal and economic development, there have already been numerous challenges that organisations had to cope with such as stress and burnout, constant pressure to change and grow, workplace ferocity, job insecurity, and downsizing (Turner et al., 2002), sustainability issues regardless the size and industry (Tojo et al., 2010), lack of necessary skills, encountering unethical behaviours, lack of leadership training funding, various crises and disasters (Megheirkouni & Mejheirkouni, 2020). However, in the present climate of the pandemic even within the previously thriving economies, the fear transpires about approaching financial recession and uncertain prospects (Nicola et al., 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic could be described as a once-in-a-generation “black swan” event (Taleb, 2007, in Krishnamurthy, 2020) which has brought a surge of additional problems creating an extremely uncertain situation without prepared appropriate strategies to deal with it effectively (Sharma et al., 2020).

2. Positive organisational scholarship, positive organisational behaviour and psychological capital (PsyCap)

It is complicated to project the best possible ways for organisations to bounce back and grow more durable, however, perhaps these are the most relevant times, when every actor within companies may need to accrue their so-termed psychological resources (Hobfoll, 2002) not only to survive but optimise human systems to thrive (Cooperrider & Fry, 2020).

Two decades ago, Seligman (1997) recognised the need of genesis of scientific research in positive psychology, which lead not only to new prospects in personal growth (as cited in Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) but permeated its way into education and business realm (Shatté et al., 2000). Positive Organisation Scholarship marks

the arrival into the sector, and it could be defined as a “movement in organizational science that focuses on the dynamics leading to exceptional individual and organizational performance such as developing human strength, producing resilience and restoration, and fostering vitality” (Cameron & Caza, 2004, p.731). Its individual-orientated counterpart Positive Organizational Behaviour, or POB, could be described as “the study and application of positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement” (Luthans & Church, 2002, p. 59). To coin an actual instrument to measure individual positive resources, Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio (2004) have proposed a term of psychological capital, or PsyCap – a parallel reserve alongside social, intellectual or economic capitals. The latter consumed much emphasis in the past, and other capitals pleaded to gain greater autonomy to propose more advantages (Luthans et al., 2004).

PsyCap could be defined as an individual’s positive psychological stance of development and characterised by self-efficacy: the confidence to employ efforts in accomplishing challenging goals; hope: persevering toward goals and, if necessary, reconstructing paths to ensue; resilience: in times of obstacles and adversity, withstanding and bouncing back and beyond; and optimism: adapting positive attributions about current and future outlooks (Luthans, 2002; Luthans et al., 2004; Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007; Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017).

Self-efficacy holds that humans are active agents in their lives rather than passive responders to the environmental events, and efficacy determines whether an individual will initiate coping strategies, how much vitality will be devoted to that and how long formidable experiences could be sustained (Bandura, 1977). In metanalysis of self-efficacy’s importance to work-related performance, empirical evidence suggests that a self-efficacious employee in his workplace has confidence in his capacity to mobilise the inner resources and choose behavioural strategies to complete tasks (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998).

Based on Snyder’s (1991) extensive theory-building and research, **hope** is outlined as a reciprocal combination of a sense of an agency to focus on a goal and pathways to achieve it (Snyder et al., 1991). Hope has been shown to relate to performance in the workplace via evidence of many empirical works and theoretical considerations (Jensen & Luthans, 2006; Youssef & Luthans, 2007; Avey et al., 2009; Harms & Luthans, 2012).

Resilience could be defined as a malleable (Luthans, Vogelgesang, et al., 2006) capacity to bounce back from adversity or even positive events (Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007), and it is one of the key psychological aspects because failures that occur over times can stop employees from progressing and lead to helplessness (Hsu et al., 2014).

Seligman (1998) defines **optimism** as an explanatory style, where optimists explain the positive events as internal, stable and global, whereas negative events they hold as external, unstable and specific, and those would be vice versa in pessimistic outlook (as cited in Carvier & Scheier, 2002, Peterson & Steen, 2002). Its positive effects have been empirically investigated within the organisational context (Youssef & Luthans, 2007; Luthans et al., 2010).
Positive PsyCap impact and opportunities for development

The positive psychological state of an employee may foster the confidence to take higher positive risks, recreate pathways to achieve goals and sustain in challenging circumstances (Tang, 2020). However, business and organisational context may require observable results to see whether PsyCap could mark a significant impact. A large body of evidence drawn from a wide range of organisational backgrounds could already provide some promising outcomes (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). In Newman et al. (2014) PsyCap research metanalysis, authors agree that PsyCap can be developed and sustained to generate greater competitive advantage, more resources to pursue the goals, help to solve problems, indicate higher creative performance, and even demonstrate better monetary return in the organisation (Newman et al., 2014).

PsyCap comprising state-like rather than trait-like components, is malleable (Luthans, Avey, et al., 2006, Luthans et al., 2008, Luthans et al., 2010) and it can be developed via mastery experience, mediated experiences or modelling, social persuasion, awareness and management of physiological and psychological resources etc. (Luthans et al., 2004, Youssef & Luthans, 2007). Even though authors have already proposed micro-interventions as opportunities (Luthans, Avey, et al., 2006) to develop the psychological resources, however, there is some scope for alternative considerations.

2. PsyCap relation to Self-determination Theory

Self-determination theory (SDT) proposes that humans are innately proactive and drawn towards liveliness, engaging activities, optimal psychological functioning, and well-being. However, these natural tendencies do not function appropriately if the basic psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness are not satisfied and may result in diminished growth, integrity, and wellness (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Verleynsen et al. (2014) empirically established the link between PsyCap and SDT, where needs are seen as essentially inherent and need to be satisfied rather than being open to development, and they stimulate positive psychological development and realisation of human potential across the lifespan (Verleynsen et al., 2014).

The need for *competence* indicates the inherent pursue to perform well, to be efficient in mastering the environmental factors, learning new skills within the process, and experiencing the satisfaction of being effective. When the need for competence is gratified, it invigorates the sense of self-efficacy (Ryan & Deci, 2017, Verleynsen et al., 2014).

The need for *relatedness* suggests, that people not only need some support from each other in practical terms, rather they require the experience of belonging, seeking acceptance and being important (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

The need for *autonomy*, or in other words, self-regulation, is “the extent to which people experience their behaviour as volitional or as fully self-endorsed, rather than being coerced, compelled, or seduced by forces external to the self” (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p.97). Granting employees autonomy in their performance, it is an opportunity to experience choice and a sense of competence (Turner et al., 2002). As an example, Parker (1998) explored how autonomy may affect employees self-efficacy, and it was found that employees who control the completion of their tasks demonstrate greater confidence in their ability to undertake a more proactive set of work tasks (as cited in Turner et al., 2002).

Paying attention to employees need satisfaction, might enhance employee’s functioning, help reduce costs, turnover, and increase productivity (Broeck et al., 2010) and in turn promote PsyCap and its subcomponents of self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism (Verleynsen et al., 2014).

3. Appreciative Inquiry and Integrated Cognitive Behavioural Coaching Model

After clarifying how interconnected and fundamental is the satisfaction of basic psychological needs and psychological capital resources growth within the organisational context, it is worth to consider what are the possible choices to fulfil both successfully. In the following part, there will be offered theoretical considerations how organisational leader may satisfy both with the help of two independent but inter-reliant models that could be utilised within the organisational lifecycle. The first part - Integrated Behavioural Coaching Model - stems from coaching psychology field, whereas Appreciative Inquiry is closely related to the positive psychology field.

3.1. Integrated Cognitive-Behavioural Coaching Model

In the past decades, coaching psychology as a promising field emerged. The psychologists and practitioners primed to explore and apply the empirical science into the practice although a content stance has not been reached, where substantial statements could be made about the impact (Fillery-Travis & Corrie, 2019). Palmer & Whybrow (2006) define coaching psychology as a discipline “for enhancing well-being and performance in personal life and work domains underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established adult learning or psychological approaches” (Whybrow & Palmer, 2019, p.8).

As one of the coaching psychology’s discerned methodologies could be a well-established, evidence-based Integrated Cognitive-Behavioural Coaching model, which comprises of cognitive behavioural coaching (CBC), solution-focused and positive psychology approaches. The principles of the original CBC model stem from cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), which suggest that not environmental factors cause the distress but how individuals position their interpretations about them, hence a coachee may learn to identify the cognitive patterns, become aware of unhelpful, performance-interfering beliefs and accommodate more helpful thinking systems (G. Dias et al., 2017). By adjusting those cognitive patterns via an array of cognitive, imagery, and behavioural techniques it would enable coachees to achieve their goals potentially improving their performance, increasing psychological resilience, enhancing well-being, etc. (Palmer & Szymanska, 2019).

Solution-focused coaching (SFC) is a practical approach focused on outcomes and competences, co-creating solutions to coachee's problems, uncovering their skills, strengths knowledge, and experience (O'Connell & Palmer, 2019).

Positive psychology coaching is prominent in wide-ranging research within the field (Green & Palmer, 2018). The essence is underpinned by shifting focus from what is flawed about the client towards strengths, visions, and dreams (Kauffman, 2006). The themes encompass strengths, hope, happiness, resilience, etc.

Selected instruments could be used not only within a coaching specialist's practice, but some key elements could be applied to enhance leadership conversational skills within a broader scope of organisational life. CBC can offer the process of identification, dispute and replacement of unhelpful beliefs and producing action plans to experiment new behaviours, which in turn may enhance the sense of self-efficacy (Palmer & Szymanska, 2019). The solution-focused approach can help to improve the sense of hope and self-efficacy by searching for positive strengths, and exceptions within faulty behaviours (O'Connell & Palmer, 2019). Positive Psychology approach by focusing on strengths, meaning and purpose, gratitude, and positive emotions, may help to develop resilience and optimism. Even if just using a practical model of GROW (Whitmore, 2003), a significant increase in PsyCap has already been found as a result of the coaching intervention, and its mediating role on job attitudes (Fontes & Dello Russo, 2020).

3.2. Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a strength-based approach to organisation development, broadly defined as "the cooperative co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them" (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p.3), asking questions that elevate a system's cooperative capacity to appreciate strengths and potentials, draw meaning and share goals (Cooperrider & Fry, 2020). Its impact could be observed to the whole company's system co-constructing positive futures (Finegold et al., 2002), or the presence or absence of transformational change (Bushe & Kassam, 2005) revitalising individuals and empowering them to access new possibilities (Egan & Lancaster, 2005).

The quantitative study had already found that Appreciative Inquiry has an effect on individuals' psychological capital (PsyCap) via satisfying their basic psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness and that the interaction between AI and PsyCap seem to be significant (Verleysen et al., 2014). The need and advantage of the integration of two models may become apparent as AI may lack certain attributes that fundamentally ICBC could offer. Merging those two together and applying within the organisational context, the organisations may benefit from multiple positive outcomes.

4. Theoretical and Practical Implications of Applying AI and ICBC within the Organisational context

There have already been some suggested leadership development paths, such as action learning, 360-degree feedback, networking, and coaching (see more in Megheirkouni & Mejheirkouni, 2020). The last element will be elaborated suggesting that by accommodating some relevant practices from coaching psychology ICBC model and merging with Appreciative Inquiry could be applied in organisational teamwork, supervisions, performance conversations, and performance appraisals. The latter is considered particularly important yet problematic area, which could be described as a conversation process between manager and employee about performance goals and outcomes (Buckham, 2018), a would-be-key activity, however, turned into a one-sided rating and judging process without letting employees to be accurately informed about their performance and behaviour (Coens & Jenkins, 2000). Mount (1984) suggested that to enhance satisfaction during the performance appraisal process requires shifting perspectives (as cited Buckham, 2018). Hence the suggested working model may propose how this process may be enhanced with the support from AI and ICBC. It needs to be examined through the qualitative and quantitative research, nevertheless, theoretical considerations and practical tools have been suggested in the revisited scientific literature.

The following model is the incorporation of Appreciative Inquiry 4-D model with Integrative Cognitive Behavioural Coaching model elements to potentially allow more scope to grow PsyCap and satisfy basic psychological needs (SDT) within the working context. It is an opportunity for managers and leaders to use another tangible instrument to converse, to motivate, to empower their employees. The following suggested model is a working paper towards more extensive research within the organisational context.

Despite having a positive appreciation and immense popularity (Verleysen et al., 2014), Cooperrider and Fry (2020) at the wake of the pandemic, ask whether AI is still applicable whilst proclaiming the positive and perhaps ignoring challenging and demanding, even fatal environmental factors and events amidst anxiety and uncertainty (Cooperrider & Fry, 2020). And even though their reply congeals the need to search for a deeper meaning during the dreadful moments, the AI earlier evidenced critique insinuates, that the transformational change will not occur applying AI unless it addresses actual problems of organizational members (Bushe, 2012). Hence, additional elements of solution-focused and cognitive-behavioural elements might fill the gap and contribute to the addressing of those important issues of organisational life, where self-efficacy, resilience, optimism and hope could be the measurements of the necessary resources to tackle the difficult circumstances.

1. Discovery: In the first AI discovery phase, people usually engage in a comprehensive exploration of their paramount previous experiences to identify and understand common motivating factors of their accomplishments, or so-termed “positive core” (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p.3). This model could also be applied in one-to-one manager-employee working conversations, supervisions, appraisals, where the initial part of the meeting conversation could begin with identified celebrated working experiences thus far (Buckham, 2018). Discovery stage might be even more cooperative if the employee is encouraged to identify their core strengths and values which may help them to flourish by establishing goals that will provide more meaning and purpose (Dias et al., 2017).

By recognising any successful exceptions from typical unproductive working behaviour can help to stay solution rather problem-focused (O’Connell & Palmer, 2019) by stimulating past self-efficacy patterns. Appreciation of the past preeminent experiences helps in bringing more positive emotions to the conversation and may produce more innovative thoughts which could help in developing expert knowledge, as according to the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, developed by Fredrickson (1998); because negative emotions mobilise focus to deal with immediate threat but narrow the thinking scope (as cited in Cohn et al., 2009). Leader’s efforts to notify employee’s strengths or being attentively present when they are explicit about their positive working experiences could benefit both the leader and employee. Mutual awareness of strengths could serve in assigning the most appropriate tasks and challenges. Strengths which are recognised, appreciated and utilised by individual and organisation, may become a consistent pattern, to become the first rather than the last resource for growth (Lewis, 2011).

This part could satisfy all three basic psychological needs suggested by SDT: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. By bringing into awareness their positive experiences and identifying their strengths, employees may identify themselves as more competent and adept. Work since the pandemic to a large extent has moved to online platforms, and if previously, positive practices could have been observed working in each other’s presence, now explicitly identified success experience may become vital.

2. The dream stage is usually set to visualise together new possibilities about the most common preferred organisational future. The ICBC model often invites the client to visualise and realise their best possible self (Dias et al., 2017), and the leader could transfer it into working conversations. This stage could be enriched by introducing an aspect of meaning (Lewis, 2011), as those who find their work meaningful are more likely to find it engaging. That, in turn, may help to choose the dream target more related not only to personal professional development but remain allied with the wider organisational community’s needs and aspirations while belonging to a greater company’s mission as that can be seen in the transformational leadership, which brings more enthusiasm about attaining shared goals with motivating factors such as self-actualisation and sense of accomplishment (Turner et al., 2002).

The dream stage may increase the optimism via broaden-and-build theory (Frederickson, 2002), with the leader serving to employ more optimistic explanatory style to failures and errors. This would help to assign personal impact to greater development instead of experiencing a sense of loss and helplessness. Finally, if leaders are able to offer empathy and support to their employees’ development (Turner et al., 2002), it will satisfy the need for relatedness. Once again, that could satisfy all three self-determination needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, by owning the responsibility, sharing wider vision, and exercising proficiency.

3. During the **design** phase, individuals co-construct their future model, where they direct their focus to proactive behaviour to attain the outcomes, and it usually results in actionable future statements, or provocative propositions (Cooperrider et al., 2008). This phase may be enhanced by CBC aspect, by setting the appropriate and self-assigned challenges for behaviours to advance beyond the comfort zone that could benefit individual and organisational growth. This part could also be potentially open for developing more hope factor, where alternative paths to the goal attainment could be designed, and which would expand the sense of autonomy and competence.

The leader can motivate their employees if they invite them to be their very best and empower to go with and above expectations (Dias et al., 2017) which in turn may heighten employees' sense of self-confidence and self-efficacy, and to help perform optimally (Turner et al., 2002).

4. In the **destiny** phase, generally, the groups begin to set up activities and projects to realise their selected future with an aim to build an appreciative learning system (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Setting up concrete actionable goals to fulfil the work dream could be applicable in the effective conversation between the leader and employee, too. However, second wave positive psychology begins to acknowledge the difficulties and adversity the life may bring (Ivtzan, 2016), hence building the resilience aspect could be particularly important in this stage, as AI may lack instrumental support. Therefore, the part may benefit from cognitive behavioural psychology or cognitive aspect of resilience programmes, which aim at teaching attendees to identify, evaluate and where appropriate, change their negative thinking patterns (Ivtzan et al., 2016), to prepare for future setbacks. For instance, using dual-system stemming from CBC (Dias et al., 2017) to identify what obstacles - psychological or practical - might be encountered in the task completion process, and work through them appropriately. Psychological blocks may be associated with unhelpful thinking patterns and by identifying them and replacing with more helpful thinking patterns, may help to build more resilience resources (Shatté et al., 2000). Also, autonomy, competence and relatedness needs would be satisfied via the growing sense of being able to cope with unforeseen problems in the future. An employee is able, as he feels supported, to achieve their goals autonomously via multiple paths, which in turn, increases the levels of hope employing problem-focused rather than emotion-focused coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), or even better, solution-focused, rather than problem-focused approach (O'Connell & Palmer, 2019).

5. Conclusions and Future Implications

To summarise, the organisational leaders could be much more both constructive and inspirational by actively trying to empower their employees discover and identify their strengths and positive past experiences; helping to recognise their non-productive thought patterns and help to mould them into more helpful, rational and evidence-based; encouraging them to be their best versions within the working context; supporting and allowing them to achieve goals in multiple ways. This combined approach may satisfy the most basic psychological needs and proliferate employees' psychological resources to contribute not only to their wellbeing, but the growth of organisational sustainability, productivity, and flexibility. Nevertheless, it needs to be examined using quantitative and qualitative measures, introducing experiment designs across all layers within organisations.

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