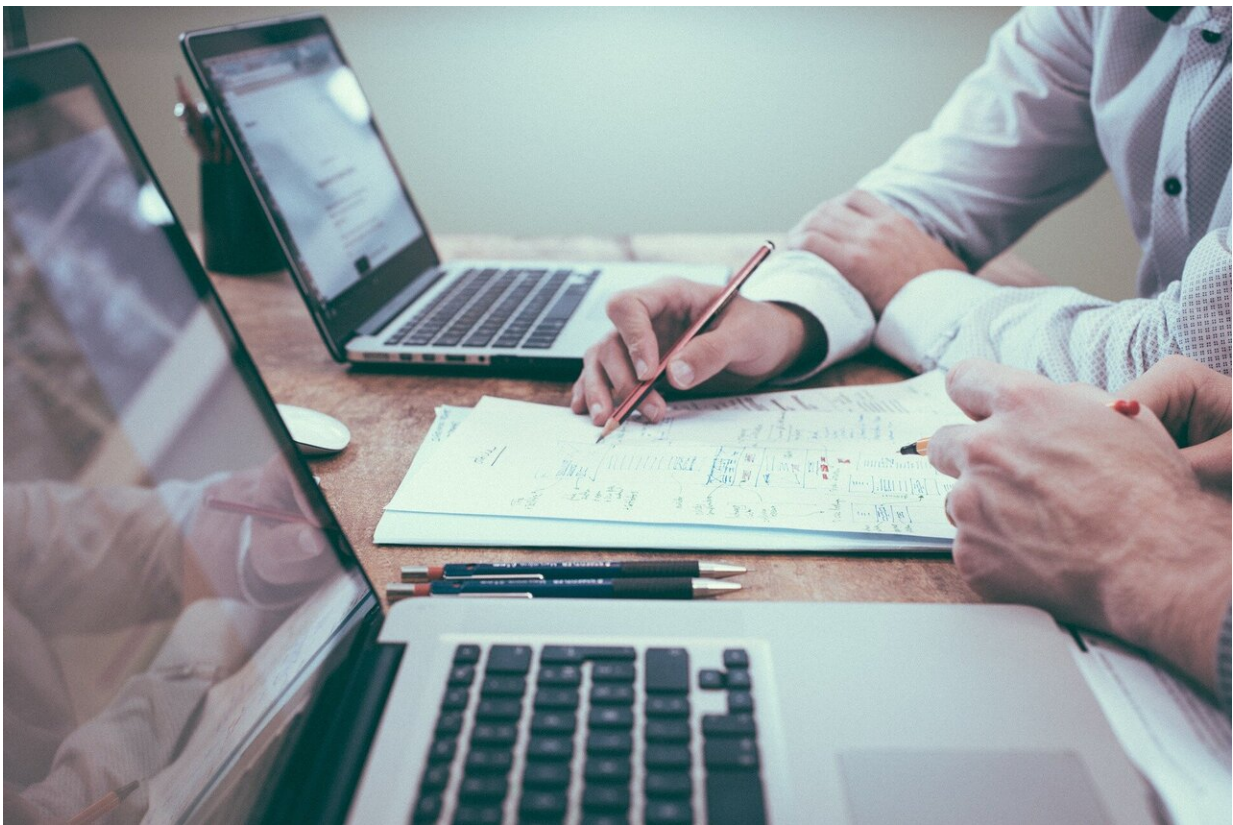


Study explores whether psychological capital will help with work engagement in tough moments

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A quarrel with a co-worker, task overload, a difficult relationship with the boss; each of us reacts slightly differently to problematic events in

our professional lives. Such events often result in decreased work motivation and engagement.

How important is our own bank of positive resources, called PsyCap, in all this? Are Polish employees different from Americans in this respect? Researchers from SWPS University in Wroclaw, Poland have analyzed this issue. Their findings are [published](#) in the journal *Polish Psychological Bulletin*.

In psychology, PsyCap (psychological capital) is a concept used to describe an employee's pool of positive mental resources. This individual resource bank enables us to get through tough situations in both personal and professional life. Psychological capital consists of efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience.

To better understand PsyCap and its potential in the context of employee functioning, it is necessary to refer to the definitions of its individual components. Self-efficacy is defined as the belief in one's ability to successfully manage [specific tasks](#). Optimism involves making positive judgments about the current and future situation, which increases [work engagement](#).

Then there is hope, which equips the employee with perseverance in achieving goals, and if necessary, the ability to change the strategy. The last component of PsyCap, mental resilience, allows employees to return to a state of mental balance when they feel overwhelmed, explains Aleksandra Penza from the Faculty of Psychology, SWPS University.

The researchers investigated the importance of PsyCap in the context of work engagement. Will it act as a buffer to help employees cope with negative events? Or will it act as a bank of positive resources, making the employee's engagement at work less dependent on emotions that accompany specific work events?

According to a 2014 study, North Americans show higher levels of PsyCap compared to Poles. Are the effects of PsyCap nationality-specific?

For the new study, the researchers recruited 748 participants from Poland and the U.S., all of them employed in companies and administration units. Each participant filled in five questionnaires measuring work engagement, PsyCap, positive and negative work-related emotions, and recent positive and negative work events.

The study results show that people with high psychological capital have a lower level of negative emotions in response to [negative events](#) at work compared to people with low PsyCap. However, this difference does not affect their level of work engagement.

American PsyCap, Polish PsyCap

Analyzing data separately for the sample of Polish and North American employees revealed significant differences in these relationships.

PsyCap serves as a buffer between a challenging work environment and work engagement only among North American employees.

In turn, among Polish participants, PsyCap functions as a reservoir of positive resources, reducing the dependency of work engagement on [positive emotions](#) resulting from positive work events, says Penza, the first author of the study.

"From an international perspective, we have empirically demonstrated that the role of PsyCap in the relationship between work-related events, associated emotions and work engagement is culture-specific. Our findings have confirmed that North Americans have higher levels of PsyCap compared to Poles. They also perceive fewer negative work events and generally experience weaker work-related emotions and

engagement at work than Poles," the researcher explains.

Understanding the processes that shape work engagement, including the role of personal resources such as PsyCap, can provide important information for HR professionals. Incorporating this perspective can offer valuable insights for HR developers to tailor internal organizational policies to the specific needs and characteristics of employees.

"In the context of changes taking place in the [labor market](#), such as intensive digitalization and increased [social isolation](#) resulting from remote work, strengthening employees' psychological resources appears to be one of the most accessible methods of protection against the negative consequences of these threats," concludes Penza.

More information: Aleksandra Penza et al, Linking Work Events with Work Engagement: Mediating Role of Emotions and Moderating Role of Psychological Capital, *Polish Psychological Bulletin* (2024). [DOI: 10.24425/ppb.2023.148848](#)

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