

Studying the Effects of Psychological Capital on Employees' Performance in Iranian Private Sector

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Organizational psychological capital is the employee's psychological status beyond intellectual capital in obtaining and sustaining the competitive advantage. The positive core construct of psychological capital (consisting of efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience) has been conceptually and empirically demonstrated to be related to employee performance. However, much of this work has relied on cross-sectional designs to examine these relationships. The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of psychological capital on performance in the Iranian private organizations. This study utilizes longitudinal data from organizations of Tehran Province (N= 385) to examine within-individual change in psychological capital over time, and whether this change relates to change in performance. The data gathering was done using two questionnaires including psychological capital scale and employee's performance scale. The reliability of the questionnaire no.1 (PsyCap) was estimated $\alpha = 89.3\%$. But questionnaire no.2 (performance) was a standard one. Method of study was correlation. Finding indicated significant positive relationship between psychological capital and employee performance. Correlation analysis for the four components of psychological capital showed that self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience had positive relations with the employees' performance in Iranian private sector, but the effect of self-efficacy is more than that of others. The results of research indicate, that organizational climate and demographic characteristics affect the relation between psycho and employees' performance. Ultimately organizational psychological capital was found to be a significant predictor of the employee performance.

Key words: Psychological capital, Hope, Resilience, Optimism, Self efficacy, Employee performance

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1. Introduction

In the management practice, Psychological Capital is a new term. Psychological Capital, or PsyCap, is a core construct consisting of the positive psychological resources of efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience. This new approach explores the psychological capacities and strengths of the positively oriented human resource for improving the organizational and personal performance and achieving the organizational success (Turner et al, 2002). Organizational psychological capital may regarded as a strength that should be retained and managed in promoting the personal development and performance at personal level and in increasing the leverage, performance, income and competitive advantage at the organizational level (Luthans et al., 2007; Wright, 2003).

Previous research has consistently linked PsyCap to workplace outcomes including employee behaviors and attitudes like job satisfaction, commitment and absenteeism. But, the present study focuses on PsyCap development and the relationship to employee engagement and performance. Although some researchers have started to pay attention to the effects of PsyCap and some variables, but we believe the work situations are competently different in the countries. So this study was designed to assess the responds of below questions:

- 1) Does psychological capital affect performance in Iranian private organizations?
- 2) What are the components of conceptual model in relationship between PsyCap and performance?
- 3) Do organizational climate and demographic characteristics affect the relation between psyco and employees' performance in Iranian private sector?

To replying these questions, the research objective was to explore the effects of psychological capital on performance in Iranian organizations to help them in predicting employee performance with the use of psychological capital.

2. Review the literature

2.1. Psychological Capital

Organizational psychological capital is the interrelated construct with the terms of financial, social and human capital (Figure 1). But different from financial capital (i.e. what you have?), social capital (i.e.who you know?) and human capital (i.e. what you know?), psychological capital emphasizes

on “who you are?” and “who you are becoming with regard to psychological development?” (Luthans et al., 2006; Luthans et al., 2004). Psychological capital is the employee’s positive psychological status beyond intellectual capital in obtaining and sustaining the competitive advantage (Luthans et al., 2004). Employee’s psychological status is not like trait or characteristic showing continuity in every condition (self esteem, self discipline etc.) but positive status varying according to the situations. Organizational psychological capital is the whole of these positive attributes changing and improving with education or development (Luthans and Youssef, 2007). Thus psychological capital is becoming a positive improvable construct intended to enhance and redirect the organizational and personal performance. Luthans et al. (2006) found that psychological capital may be developed with the short practices during group training.

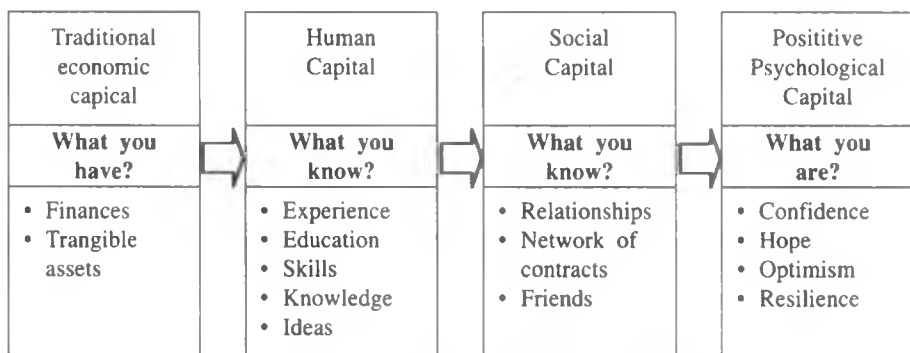


Figure1. Expanding capital for competitive advantage (Luthans et al, 2004)

Organizational psychological capital consists of such integrated psychological status in the organizational context. Various studies have explored these psychological status in the literature for determining the features of the psychological capital as job dependency), psychological health, psychological ownership (Avey vd., 2009), intelligence, courage and forgiveness (Luthans et al, 2007b). But core construct of the psychological capital may consist of psychological status as hope, resilience, optimism and self efficacy (Luthans,2002a; Luthans ve Youssef, 2004; Luthans ve Youssef, 2007).

2.2. Employees performance

A performance appraisal (PA) or performance evaluation is a systematic and periodic process that assesses an individual employee’s job performance and productivity in relation to certain pre-established criteria and organizational objectives (Weir et al., 2007: 75; Manasa et al., 2009: 72). Other aspects

of individual employees are considered as well, such as organizational citizenship behavior, accomplishments, potential for future improvement, strengths and weaknesses, etc. (Steel et al., 2002: 384). To collect PA data, there are three main methods: objective production, personnel, and judgmental evaluation. Judgmental evaluations are the most commonly used with a large variety of evaluation methods (Muchinsky, 2012). A performance appraisal is typically conducted annually. The interview could function as “providing feedback to employees, counseling and developing employees, and conveying and discussing compensation, job status, or disciplinary decisions” (Cederblom, 1982: 219). PA is often included in performance management systems. Performance management systems are employed “to manage and align” all of an organization’s resources in order to achieve the highest possible performance. “How performance is managed in an organization determines to a large extent the success or failure of the organization. Therefore, improving PA for everyone should be among the highest priorities of contemporary” organizations (Muczyk et al., 1987: 41). Some applications of PA are performance improvement, promotions, termination, test validation, and more (EdNisi et al., 2006: 253). While there are many potential benefits of PA, there are also some potential drawbacks. For example, PA can help facilitate management-employee communication; however, PA may result in legal issues if not executed appropriately as many employees tend to be unsatisfied with the PA process (Sudarsan, 2009: 54).

3. The conceptual model of research

Employee Performance system is defined as a process for establishing a shared workforce understanding about what is to be achieved at an organization level. It is about aligning the organizational objectives with the employees’ agreed measures, skills, competency requirements, development plans and the delivery of results. The emphasis is on improvement, learning and development in order to achieve the overall business strategy and to create a high performance. On the other hand, psychological capital is defined as the positive and developmental state of an individual as characterized by high self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resiliency (Luthans et al., 2004: 143). A number of studies have been conducted linking psychological capital to the various organizational variables; In this regard, the purpose of this research is examining the direct relationship between psycho and employee’s performance and indirect relation of them when organizational climate and demographic characteristics have a mediating role. We have provided the conceptual model of this research about psychological capital based on available theories and approaches (See figure 2).

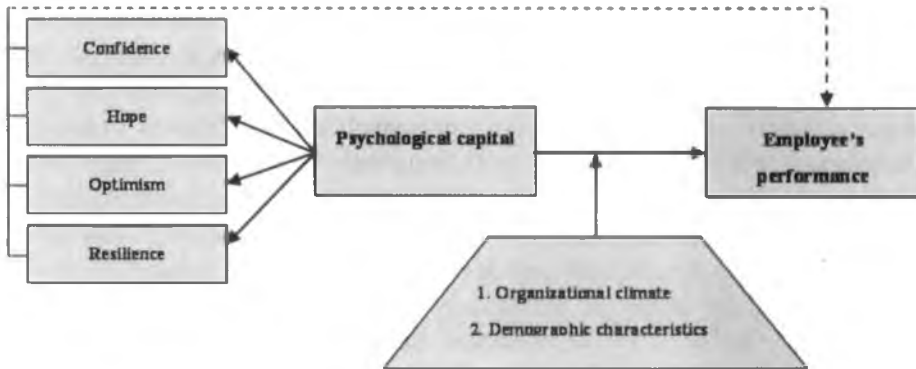


Figure 2: The Conceptual model of the research

On the left side of the model you can see the different dimensions of Psycap. Organizational climate and demographic characteristics are influenced the relation between psycap and employees' performance. Organizational climate creates several positive and negative outcomes in the organization. This influence can be direct or mediated by positive or negative feelings in the organization. Different organizational phenomena have influence on the employee, specifically on the characteristics that assemble his Psycap. For example, while a high Psycap employee observes the good results of his performance, his Psycap grows even more due to the impact of the good performance on self efficacy and hope. The model also shows that each one of the four characteristics of Psycap has the possibility to influence employees' performance directly. Based on the conceptual model, the research design and hypotheses are discussed below.

3.1 Hope

Hope is a motivation construct that initiates and sustains one's progress in goal pursuit through the combination of pathways and agency perceptions (Snyder, 2000). The pathways component of hope is a control belief defined as the perception that one can plan and strategize various routes needed to progress toward a goal (Snyder, 2002). The agency component of hope is a competence belief defined as the perception that one has the energy and ability to successfully utilize viable pathways during goal pursuit. The joint effect of agency and pathways is necessary for goal attainment, and it is through the reciprocal interaction of the two hope subcomponents that goal-directed thinking is sustained. Once goals are achieved, positive emotions cycle back to increase pathways and agency perceptions.

Hopeful perceptions positively affect multiple life domains. Hope is positively related to healthy outcomes in patients coping with psychological and physical health problems (Snyder, 2002). Adults with high hope utilize more adaptive problem solving and coping behaviors. Hope is predictive of student achievement across all educational levels (Curry, Maniar, Sondag & Sandstedt, 1999; Lopez, Bouwkamp, Edwards & Teramoto-Pedrotti, 2000; Snyder, Hoza, Pelham, et al., 1997). Hope also predicts better study skills and the maintenance of goals in adverse academic situations (Onweugbuzie & Snyder, 2000).

Although the relationship between hope and academic achievement is well established, research examining hope theory beyond white populations is largely non-existent and requires additional research (Chang, 1998). We believe when employees hope to continue their activities in the organization, their performance would be developed. So first assumption of the research is:

H1: Hope affects employee's performance in Iranian private organizations.

3.2 Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is a competence belief about one's "judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1986: 391). There are multiple sources of self-efficacy beliefs, but mastery experiences-how one interprets, evaluates, and judges their competence- is the most powerful source (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is an essential thought referencing process for students' success in the academic environment (Bandura, 1997). Efficacy beliefs are highly predictive of academic goal setting and achievement (Bandura, 1997; Zimmerman et al., 1992), and self-regulatory coping strategies and effort (Pajares et al., 2001). We believe employees with self-efficiency had suitable performance. So second assumption of the research is:

H2: Self-Efficacy affects employee's performance in Iranian private organizations.

3.3 Optimism

Optimism is a control belief involving thought processes associating positive thinking and maintaining a positive attitude to life events and situations (Scheier & Carver, 1994; Seligman, 2002). Optimists have a general expectancy of positive results that is associated with greater success in attaining goals and optimism is viewed as a cornerstone for well-being across life domains (Peterson et al., 2000). Optimistic thinkers strategize differently than pessimists and prepare for the best outcome verses preparing for the worst. The role

of expecting positive outcomes is associated with greater mental and physical health (Scheier & Carver, 1994). It is also influential in educational, occupational, and psychological adjustment, and is related to positive outcomes in achievement, coping strategies, and adjustment in college (Chang, 1998). We believe when employees are optimistic about accuracy, health and actions of management and organization that they work, their performance would be promoted. So third assumption of the research is:

H3: Optimism affects employee's performance in Iranian private organizations.

3.4 Resilience

Resilience is a person's psychological capacity to rebound or bounce back from adversity, conflict, and failure (Luthans, 2002a). Resilience can be developed through asset-focused, risk-focused, and process-focused strategies that are relevant to the workplace (Masten, 2001).

Resilience was thought to be quite rare in people, but now, says Masten (2001), there is evidence that it can come "from the everyday magic of ordinary, normative human resources" and "has profound implications for promoting competence and human capital in individuals and society." According to Coutu (2002), the common themes/profiles of resilient people are now recognized to be (a) a staunch acceptance of reality, (b) a deep belief, often buttressed by strongly held values, that life is meaningful, and (c) an uncanny ability to improvise and adapt to significant change. Except for its application to stress resistance, only surface attempts have been made to use resilience to advocate how leaders, associates, and overall organizations can bounce back from hard times. However, the rich theory and extensive research from clinical and positive psychology suggests that it too, like its three counterparts, can contribute to positive psychological capital with a return of desired performance outcomes (Avey et al., 2010). We believe resilience is a kind of state in employees that enables them to behave suitably when they encounter with failures, disasters and conflicts of work life. So it can affect employee's performance in the organization. In this regards, forth assumption of the research is:

H4: Resilience affects employee's performance in Iranian private organizations.

We know hope, self-efficacy, optimism and resiliency are components of psycho. We can test the relation of their outcome (as psycho) and employees' performance. So the fifth assumption of the research is:

H5: Psycho affects employee's performance in Iranian private organizations.

3.5 Organizational climate

Organizational climate (sometimes known as Corporate Climate) is the process of quantifying the “culture” of an organization, it precedes the notion of organizational culture. It is a set of properties of the work environment, perceived directly or indirectly by the employees, that is assumed to be a major force in influencing employee behavior (Ivancevich et al., 2007).

Organizational climate, on the other hand, is often defined as the recurring patterns of behavior, attitudes and feelings that characterize life in the organization, (Isaksen et al., 2007) while an organization culture tends to be deep and stable. Although culture and climate are related, climate often proves easier to assess and change. At an individual level of analysis the concept is called individual psychological climate. These individual perceptions are often aggregated or collected for analysis and understanding at the team or group level, or the divisional, functional, or overall organizational level. In this regards, the sixth assumption of the research is:

H6: Organizational climate has a mediating role in the relation between psycho and employee's performance in Iranian private sector.

3.6 Demographic characteristics

Demographic characteristics are facts about the make up of a population. Age, gender and education are the three separate demographic characteristics that we believe influence the relation between psycho and employees' performance as a mediating role. In this regard, the seventh assumption of the research is:

H7: Demographic characteristics have a mediating role in the relation between psycho and employee's performance in Iranian private sector.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Method

In this research, “we tried to identifying the relation between PsyCap and employee's performance in Iranian sectors”. So the study adopted a descriptive survey research design in which questionnaires were administered to collect data from the respondents on the variables of the study.

Luthans et al. (2007) has developed the questionnaire no.1 (Organizational Psychological Capital Scale) and we translated into Persian that includes 4 sub-dimensions: hope, optimism, self efficacy and resilience. Confirmative factor analysis was conducted to determine the validity of the scale and the results support an acceptable fit for the 4 factor structure. The reliability of the questionnaire no.1 was estimated $\alpha = 89.3\%$. To determine the validity

of the questionnaire, primary variables and questions were prepared based on the theoretical framework, and then the questions of the questionnaires were adjusted, modified and finally approved according to the opinions of the experts and scholars of different fields of science and profession. On the other hand employee's performance was measured by using the standard staff evaluation questionnaire. This questionnaire is used to annually evaluate the staff of organization in Iran.

4.2. Statistical Population and Samples

The statistical population of this research consists of employees working in different units in Iranian organizations of Tehran including social security organization, Jihad-agriculture organization, finance and economic Affairs organization, education department, technical and vocational organization, vital records services, labor and social affairs organization, social security department, medical service insurance, rural water and sewage organization and power Supply Company of western region. Considering the large volume of the statistical population and the time limit of the research (8 months), it was not possible to research the whole population, therefore the population defined as an unlimited statistical universe, was sampled based on the formula of sampling from unlimited populations.

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{\alpha^2} = \frac{(1.96)^2 (.6) (.4)}{(.05)^2} = 369$$

Based on the above mentioned formula, the members of the sample were 369 individuals, who received 500 questionnaires, and finally 385 filled questionnaires were returned and analyzed.

4.3. Analyzing the data

Once the survey was completed, all raw data were coded and entered in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17. Several types of statistical analysis were conducted. First, descriptive statistics is analyzed. Then, we analyzed the data using regression and Pearson correlation for testing hypotheses.

5. Findings

5.1. Demographic information

The demographic profile of the respondents is shown in table 1.

Table1: Demographic profile of respondents

Measure	Item	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Men	315	75
	Women	105	25
Age	20-30	94	22.4
	31-40	163	38.8
	41-50	51	12.2
	> 50	112	26.6
Educational Level	Diploma	7	1.7
	Junior	7	1.7
	Bachelor	278	66.1
	Master	121	28.8
	Ph.d	7	1.7

In addition, Almost 80% of the responders have entered the organization between 1360 and 1380 and near 20% of them has been a member of this organization since 1380. 52% of people have studied in human sciences group and almost 43% have majored in other fields like basic sciences, language, technical and engineering. The organization consists of five main groups in which the employment and operation office are included. It should be mentioned that the service group is not in the statistic sample of this research; the proportional percentage of people in technical and engineering group is 13/6%, data production 23/7%, information technology 32/2% and official and financial 30/5%.

5.2. Study the direct relation between variables

Table 2 shows the overall status of the research main components based on Student's t-test in Iranian private sector.

Table 2: The overall status of the research main components

the triple factors of this research	Numbers	t-test	df	Sig. Value
Hope	380	-8.151	379	Less than 0.05
Self-efficacy	379	12.904	378	Less than 0.05
Optimism	381	-9.421	380	Less than 0.05
Resiliency	384	10.742	383	Less than 0.05
Psyco	383	12.523	382	Less than 0.05
Organization Climate	385	11.633	384	Less than 0.05
Employees Performance	385	12.313	384	Less than 0.05

According to the table above, whereas the significant value of the research components are less than error level of five percent, ($\alpha=0.05$); Therefore it can be claimed that the value of the research components are different meaningfully from the mean value. The signs of t-test of hope and optimism are negative; so we can say that their average is less than the mean value. This indicates that the participants evaluated the status of hope and optimism in their organizations more than mean value. But the signs of t-test of others are positive; so we can say that their average is more than the mean value. This indicates that the participants evaluated the status of components in their organizations more than mean value.

On the other hand, the direct relation between the independent variables (Psyco and its components: hope, self-efficiency, optimism and resiliency) and the dependent variable (employee performance) has been studied in table 3.

Table 3: Direct relation between research variables

Hypothesis	Variables	F	Sig. value of F	T- test	Sig. value of T	result
H1	Hope and employees performance	47.776	0.03	6.913	0.03	Accepted
H2	Self-efficacy and employees performance	33.750	0.00	5.809	0.00	Accepted
H3	Optimism and employees performance	26.157	0.001	5.114	0.001	Accepted
H4	Resiliency and employees performance	35.338	0.00	5.998	0.00	Accepted
H5	Psyco and employees performance	28.501	0.00	5.339	0.00	Accepted

According to the above table, the significant value of all relations is less than error value of five percent ($\alpha=0.05$). This indicates that psyco and its' components as independent variables influences directly employees performance in Iranian private organizations. In other words, develop of psyco and its' components helps to promotion employees performance in Iranian sector.

5.3. Study the indirect relation between variables

Hypothesizes no.6 and 7 have tested the indirect relations between research variables. In this hypothesizes, organizational climate and demographic characteristics have mediating roles in relationship between psyc components and employees performance in the Iranian private sectors. These relations have studied in Table 4.

Table 4: Indirect relation between research variables

Hypothesis	Variables	F	Sig.value of F	T- test	Sig.value of T	result
H6	Psyco components, organizational climates characteristics and employees performance	29.078	0.00	3.329 5.119	0.03 0.00	Accepted
H7	Psyco components, demographic characteristics and employees performance	35.338	0.00	2.303 5.998	0.02 0.00	Accepted

According to the above table, improving the organization climate and changing the verity of demographic characteristics in the organizations can help to promote the relationship between these components of psyc and employees performance in Iranian organizations. On the other hand, according to correlation test, table 5 shows intensity of relationships between research variables.

Table 5: Intensity of relationships between research variables

variables	mean	Std. Deviation	Psyco	hope	Self- efficacy	Optimism	Resiliency
Psyco	3.15	.78					
hope	2.64	.83	.53				
Self-efficacy	3.26	.95	.65	.27			
Optimism	2.81	.84	.69	.36	.35		
Resiliency	3.20	.80	.44	.19	.13	.15	
performance	3.37	1.01	.49	.35	.37	.30	.32

According to the above table, the intensity of relation between psycho and employees performance is 49%. On the other hand, the intensity of relation between self-efficacy and employees performance is the highest and the intensity of relation between resiliency and employees performance is the lowest. At last, the overall model fit for the proposed research model was truly adequate as is shown in table 6.

Table 6: Model fit summary

Fit index	Value	Recommended	Result
χ^2/df	0.87	$\chi^2/df < 2$	Supported
p-value	1	$P > 0.05$	Supported
RMSEA	0.00	$RMSEA < 0.09$	Supported
GFI	0.99	$GFI > 0.9$	Supported
AGFI	0.98	$AGFI > 0.85$	Supported
NFI	0.99	$NFI > 0.9$	Supported
CFI	1.00	$CFI > 0.9$	Supported

According to output of Lisrel software, value of χ^2 is 0.87. This indicates that the model is fitness; because low value of χ^2 , shows fitness of model.

6. Discussion

The aim of this paper was to study the direct relationships between psycho and its' components with employees performance in Iranian private sector, and indirect relationship of them when organization climate and demographic characteristics have mediating roles. The results showed that psycho and its' components have direct relations with employees performance in Iranian private sector. It means that with improved psycho and its' components such as hope, self-efficacy, optimism and resiliency, the employees performance improves too.

The research shows hope is relatively low in Iranian private organizations. In this study, the average level of hope was **2.64** (from 5). We can say that this amount is less than expected. Hope as one of the sub dimensions of psychological capital is a motivational state including one's determination of precious objectives and belief of getting over the impediments to reach these objectives. The research has showed that the relationship between hope and employees performance is 35%. It means employees who are hoping

to situation of company and continued operation and healthy competition in the organizations, have more performance.

The result of research indicates that self-efficacy affects employee performance; and this relation has the highest relation. In this study, the average level of self-efficacy was 3.26 (from 5). We can say that this amount is less than expected. So in Iranian private organizations, there are other factors that have effect employees' performance. According to Albert Bandura, self-efficacy is "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (1995, p. 2). In other words, self-efficacy is a person's belief in his or her ability to succeed in a particular situation. Bandura described these beliefs as determinants of how people think, behave, and feel (1994). This shows when the people have good feelings; it helps to improve self-efficacy that has direct relation with their performance. It means employees with high self-efficacy, influence some variables such as performance.

Hypotheses no.3 is also supported. In other words, optimism as well as hope will lead to higher levels of employees' performance in Iranian private organizations. According to the research, the average level of optimism in these organizations was 2.81 (from 5). We can say that this amount is less than expected. So in Iranian private organizations, the feeling of optimism isn't good. Optimism is a purpose oriented state when a desired result has high value. Optimistic person explains the negative events as external, temporary and situation-specific, but pessimistic person defines the negative events as internal, constant and general. The employees with good feelings of optimistic would have more performance in the organizations. So they are defined as people that make "internal" or "dispositional", fixed and global attributions for positive events and "external" or "situational", not fixed and specific attributions to negative events.

The result of research indicates that high level of resiliency in Iranian organizations will lead to high level of employees' performance. According to the research, the average level of resiliency in these organizations was 3.20 (from 5). Resilience is a person's psychological capacity to rebound or bounce back from adversity, conflict, and failure. The employees, who feel more resiliency in the company, they are defined as people who are able to coping with danger or distress, conflict, failure, change or increase in responsibility; so their performance increase.

According to the finding of research, organizational climates play a mediating role in the relation between psyco and employees performance. The result of research indicates Pyscap and positive supportive climate are necessary for human resources in order to achieve stable organizational growth. Supportive climate is defined as the total support that an employee receives

from their coworkers, other departments and their supervisors which helps them with their job demands. So it helps employees to increase their performance.

Hypotheses H7 that studied the moderator role between independent and dependent variables is supported too. The results of the study showed that after controlling for the demographic variables (gender, age and education), employees' hope, optimism, and resiliency separately had positive impacts on their job performance. So we can say, high diversity of demographic characteristics influences the relationship between psycho and employees performance. They are justified with Carter and Belanger (2004) and Nathan and Ahmad (2008), but different from Colesca and Liliana (2008), Dobrica and Colesca (2008) and Sukasame, (2004).

This study aimed to expand the sampling area to produce more realistic results and solve the limitations of most studies considered in the literature. As a result, the multi-stage manner of sampling was conducted to gather the data from Tehran province. However, it could be expanded over the other provinces to consider the different cultures all over Iran.

7. Conclusion

Employees are large segments of the population of societies, and therefore their psychological health is very important. On the other hand, employee performance is an important factor for the organization that ensures the survival of them. Employee performance affects economical and social systems of them; and Psycho improvement in the society is one of the indicators of empowerment of social system. So, the policy-makers must pay attention to the methods and instruments that can help to improve psycho in the organizations. Because employees in Iranian private sectors are less social, economical and organizational supports, the psycho and its' components are not in good position. Therefore, their performance amounts are less than expected. Employees who feel good about them are typically able to focus better, need less time off and generally get along well with coworkers. Employees with low hope, self- efficacy, optimism and resiliency, may work slower, make more mistakes and hesitate to put out their best efforts. Though the moral levels of employees are technically not manager's responsibility, the cost of low hope, self- efficacy, optimism and resiliency to their bottom line makes it worthwhile to investigate ways to boost it. Group activities, individual efforts and motivational tools all work toward building workers' self-worth, thereby improving their performance and organizational productivity. Managers with long-term contracts and social protection of employees can help them to improve psycho in the private sector and then promote the employees

performance. Also, the government should with approving and executing the related laws, support the employees socially.

As an implication to this study the direct and indirect of relation between psycho as dependent variable can be studied in further researches. On the other word, the other researchers can study the direct and indirect effect of some variables on psycho, or researchers can study the direct and indirect effects of psycho on other dependent variables such as trust, corruption, etc.

The method of study was correlation, so we can't state the relations between variables cause and effect relationships. So we suggest pay attention in future researches.

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