

Antecedents of Psychological Capital (PsyCap): The Role of Technical and Social Variables

Author: Sofia Theodorovicz Badotti
Co-Authors: João N. Viseu, José L. Condom Bosch & Nuno Rebelo dos Santos

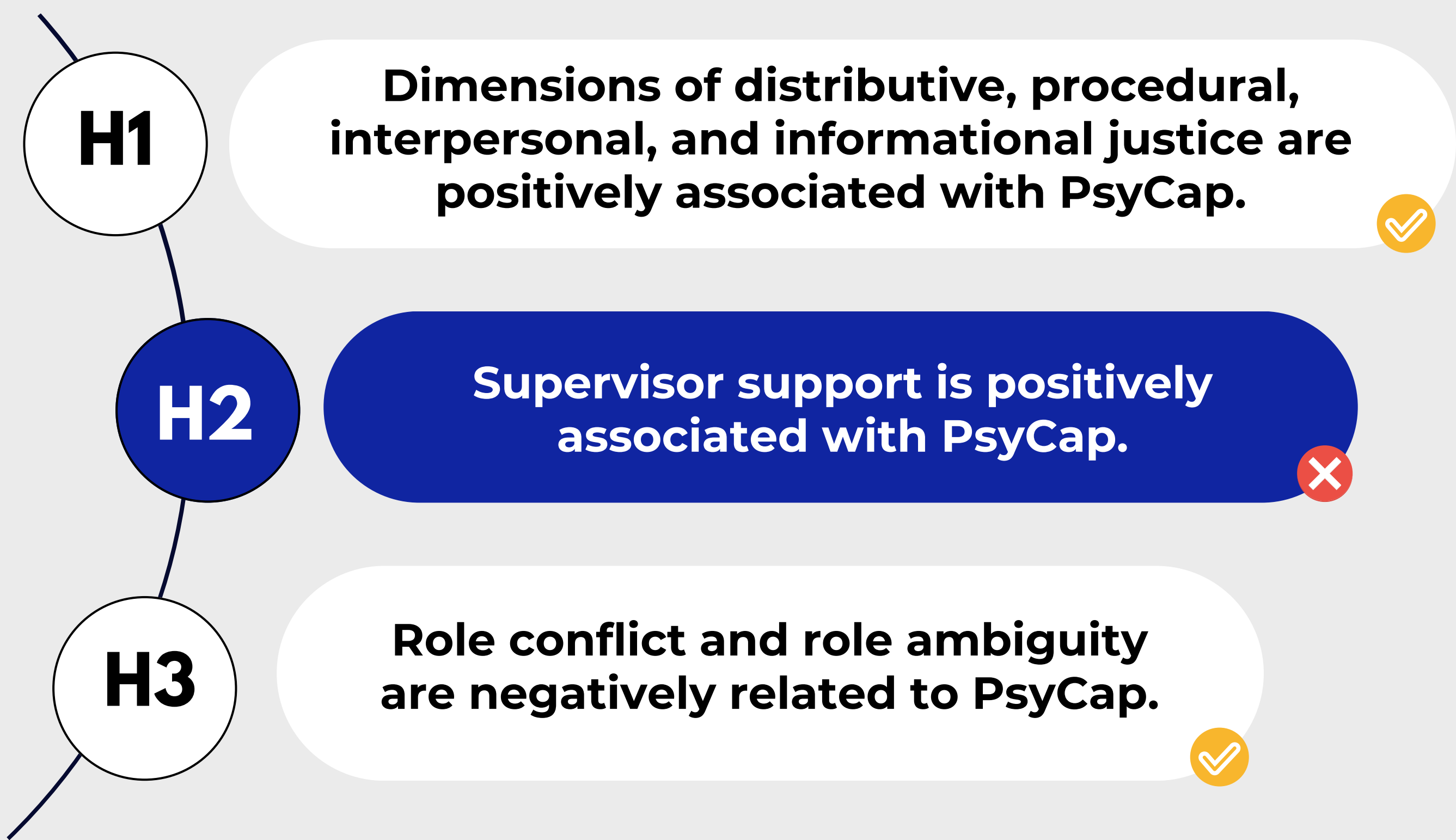
INTRODUCTION

Psychological Capital (PsyCap) is a positive, state-like psychological resource comprising **hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism** (Luthans et al., 2007). Research has shown that PsyCap enhances employee well-being, job satisfaction, performance, and engagement, while reducing stress and cynicism (Avey et al., 2011; Newman et al., 2014).

Despite strong evidence of its benefits, little is known about the organizational factors that foster PsyCap (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). This study addresses that gap by examining social antecedents (organizational justice and supervisor support) and technical antecedents (role ambiguity and role conflict), drawing on Sociotechnical Systems Theory (Trist, 1981), which highlights the interplay between social dynamics and work structure.

AIM OF THE STUDY

To identify key technical and social predictors of PsyCap and test their associations through a hierarchical multiple regression model.



METHOD

- **Design:** Cross-sectional, quantitative
- **Sample:** 723 Portuguese employees
- **Measures:**
 - PsyCap: CPC-12 (Lorenz et al., 2016)
 - Organizational Justice: (Rego, 2000)
 - Role Ambiguity/Conflict: (Schuler et al., 1977)
 - Supervisor Support: COPSOQ-II (Kristensen et al., 2005)
- **Analysis:** Hierarchical Multiple Linear Regression (HMLR), conducted in 3 steps - using R software.

RESULTS

- 01 Model 1:** Included organizational justice dimensions. Procedural ($\beta = .20$, $p < .01$) and interpersonal justice ($\beta = .20$, $p < .01$) significantly predicted PsyCap. Distributive and informational justice were not significant. $R^2 = .152$.
- 02 Model 2:** Added supervisor support, which was not a significant predictor ($\beta = -.02$, $p = .74$), and did not improve the model's explanatory power ($R^2 = .152$). Although correlated with PsyCap, its effect may overlap with justice perceptions.
- 03 Model 3:** Added role ambiguity and role conflict. PsyCap was negatively associated with ambiguity ($\beta = -.47$, $p < .001$) and positively associated with conflict ($\beta = .17$, $p < .01$). This model explained 31.3% of the variance ($R^2 = .313$), showing that technical variables add substantial predictive power.

DISCUSSION

- **Fairness matters:** Procedural and interpersonal justice enhance PsyCap, reinforcing the role of organizational justice in employee well-being (Avey et al., 2011; Colquitt et al., 2001).
- **Supervisor support** was not significant, potentially due to overlap with justice perceptions (Buroway, 1989).
- **Role ambiguity** diminished PsyCap, confirming its destabilizing effects (Kahn et al., 1964; Rizzo et al., 1970).
- **Role conflict**, surprisingly, boosted PsyCap — possibly due to adaptive coping and resilience-building in challenging roles (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).
- These results align with **Job Demands–Resources Theory** (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), suggesting that role challenges can promote growth under the right conditions.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

- Promote fair procedures and respectful treatment to build PsyCap.
- Ensure clear job roles to reduce harmful ambiguity.
- Recognize that moderate role conflict can foster growth.
- Organizational justice practices may be more influential than direct supervisor support alone.

REFERENCES

Avey, J. B., Luthans, F., & Youssef, C. M. (2011). The additive value of positive psychological capital in predicting work attitudes and behaviors. *Journal of Management*, 36(2), 430–452. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206308329961>

Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2017). Job demands-resources theory: Taking stock and looking forward. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 22(3), 273–285. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000056>

Buroway, M. (1989). El consentimiento en la producción: Los cambios del proceso productivo en el capitalismo monopolista. Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social.

Colquitt, J. A., Conlon, D. E., Weseloh, M. J., Porter, C. O. L. H., & Ng, K. Y. (2001). Justice at the millennium: A meta-analytic review of 25 years of organizational justice research. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(3), 425–445. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.86.3.425>

Kahn, R. L., Wolfe, D. M., Quinn, R. P., Snoek, J. D., & Rosenthal, R. A. (1964). Organizational stress: Studies in role conflict and ambiguity. Wiley.

Kristensen, T. S., Hannerz, H., Hogh, A., & Borg, V. (2005). The Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire – A tool for the assessment and improvement of the psychosocial work environment. *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health*, 31(6), 438–449. <https://doi.org/10.5271/sjweh.948>

Lorenz, T., Beer, C., Pütz, J., & Heinitz, K. (2016). Measuring psychological capital: Construction and validation of the Compound PsyCap Scale (CPC-12). *PLOS ONE*, 11(4), e0152892. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0152892>

Luthans, F., Youssef, C. M., & Avolio, B. J. (2007). Psychological capital: Developing the human competitive edge. Oxford University Press.

Luthans, F., Norman, S. M., Avolio, B. J., & Avey, J. B. (2008). The mediating role of psychological capital in the supportive organizational climate–employee performance relationship. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 29(2), 219–238. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.507>

Newman, A., Ucbasaran, D., Zhu, F., & Hirst, G. (2014). Psychological capital: A review and synthesis. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 35(1), 120–138. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.1916>

Rego, A. (2000). Justiça organizacional: Desenvolvimento e validação de um instrumento de medida. *Psicologia*, 14(2), 285–307. <https://doi.org/10.17575/rpsicol.v14i2.515>

Rizzo, J. R., House, R. J., & Litzman, S. I. (1970). Role conflict and ambiguity in complex organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 15(2), 150–163. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2391486>

Schuler, R. S., Aldag, R. J., & Brief, A. P. (1977). Role conflict and ambiguity: A scale analysis. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 20(1), 111–128. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0030-5073\(77\)90047-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0030-5073(77)90047-2)

Trist, E. L. (1981). The evolution of sociotechnical systems. Ontario Quality of Working Life Centre.

Wrzesniewski, A., & Dutton, J. E. (2001). Crafting a job: Revisioning employees as active crafters of their work. *Academy of Management Review*, 26(2), 179–201. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2001.437801>