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Predicting the Academic Performance of Primary School Students based on Psychological Capital and Job Satisfaction of Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Students' academic performance as a cognitive-emotional process is influenced by a wide range of positive psychology variables. The present study was conducted with the aim of investigating the role of psychological capital and teachers' job satisfaction as positive psychological constructs on the academic performance of elementary school students.

Methods: This study adopted a descriptive-correlation research design. Two hundred participants were chosen through multi-stage cluster sampling from the pool of elementary school teachers in Euclid city. They were tasked with completing the psychological capital questionnaires developed by Lutans et al. (2007) and the Minnesota job satisfaction-short form (1967). The data was analyzed using step-by-step multiple regression analysis in SPSS version 25 software.

Results: Results revealed that all components of psychological capital - hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy - exhibited significant correlations with students' academic performance. Additionally, three components of teachers' job satisfaction - satisfaction with advancement opportunities, organizational climate, and leadership style - were found to directly correlate with students' academic performance.

Conclusions: These findings have implications for preventive strategies and effective interventions to address academic challenges in educational programs, particularly for professionals such as educational psychologists and school counselors operating within the realm of education.

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Introduction

In the realm of education, academic achievement, or academic performance serves as the ultimate gauge to determine whether students, educators, or establishments have met predetermined educational objectives in the short or long term, which are anticipated outcomes of students' learning proficiency (Ward et al., 1996). Academic performance of students within educational institutions stands as the primary objective in the development of all educational curricula, typically assessed through examinations or continual evaluations; however, there lacks a consensus on the most effective evaluation methods or the key aspects of academic performance, such as skills, declarative, or procedural knowledge, that hold more significance (Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2020; Ward et al., 1996). Recent studies have extensively explored the structure of academic performance, delving into teaching methodologies, learning challenges, and associated cognitive elements (Pellitteri & Smith, 2007; Privitera et al., 2023; Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2020; Sekhavati et al., 2017).

Nonetheless, limited research has delved into the impact of positive psychological resources on students' academic performance. Hence, the current study aims to investigate the influence of psychological capital and educators' job satisfaction as constructive psychological concepts in elucidating and foretelling students' academic performance within an Iranian context. Research indicates that psychological capital, as a composite element and reservoir of competitive advantage, can forecast emotions tied to education and academic achievement (Datu et al., 2018). Individuals with favorable psychological capital tend to experience positive emotional states related to education, such as happiness, satisfaction, delight, and pride, while being less susceptible to negative emotions like anger, anxiety, and boredom with learning (Hagenauer et al., 2015; Rastegar et al., 2017; Seligman et al., 2009; Stephanou et al., 2013). Initially introduced by Luthans et al. (2007) in the organizational behavior domain, psychological capital comprises a cluster of positivity-related psychological variables that can be gauged, cultivated, and managed to serve as a foundation for human resource development and enhanced productivity. Luthans and Youssef-Morgan (2017) posit that psychological capital is characterized as a positive and progressive state of an individual encompassing four dimensions: hope (will or dynamism and solution-driven approach), self-efficacy (confidence in achieving goals or tasks), resilience (ability to rebound and

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surmount challenges), and optimism (positive interpretation of events and anticipation of a favorable future).

Essentially, psychological capital represents the third generation of human and social capital, a contemporary concept within positive organizational behavior, embodying a constructive psychological state and a pragmatic and adaptable life stance that is malleable, growth-oriented, and significantly linked to favorable outcomes (Peterson et al., 2008). The concept has garnered attention in recent years within the field of organizational behavior and has recently made its way into educational studies as a significant aspect of positive psychology. Various sources have highlighted a bidirectional relationship between psychological capital (e.g., hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism) and academic performance. Studies indicate that higher psychological capital and the positive emotions connected to it play a crucial role in fostering academic motivation and enhancing learners' academic performance. Students displaying higher levels of causal, behavioral, emotional, and cognitive academic engagement are likely to possess elevated psychological resources like self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience, ultimately impacting their academic achievements (Kouhshekan, 2022; Samavi, 2022). Psychological resources such as hope, self-efficacy, adaptability, and optimism play a vital role in guiding students towards improved academic performance. Therefore, examining learners' academic performance through the lens of psychological capital theory is envisioned to establish a solid foundation for ensuring students' academic success.

Job satisfaction among teachers stands out as another pivotal concept intertwined with the teaching and learning process. Despite its protective influence against monotony in teaching and negative emotions among teachers, its impact on students' academic performance has been relatively overlooked. It is postulated that teachers' job satisfaction contributes to heightened motivation levels and enhanced academic performance among students. Enhanced job satisfaction among teachers correlates with decreased stress and emotional exhaustion linked to teaching, reduced pessimism towards teaching, and the cultivation of positive interpersonal relationships with students (Zeinaddiny Meymand, 2021). Consequently, this aids teachers in effectively addressing classroom issues and obstacles, thereby potentially enhancing learners' academic performance. Job satisfaction serves as a metric to assess employees' contentment with their jobs, reflecting their

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satisfaction across personal, social, financial, job nature, and supervisory aspects. Furthermore, job satisfaction can be evaluated in terms of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions.

Evaluation of job satisfaction in the field of industrial and organizational psychology was initially addressed through scientific inquiry by scholars such as Overbrook (1934) and Hopak (1935). Staw and Ross (1985) dispositional approach posits that individuals vary in their inclination towards job satisfaction, suggesting that personal characteristics play a role in shaping attitudes and behavior. Furthermore, the core evaluations model introduced by Judge (1997) indicates that key self-evaluations encompass self-esteem, general self-efficacy, internal locus of control, and lower levels of neuroticism, all of which impact one's predisposition towards job satisfaction.

Consequently, there appears to be a reciprocal relationship between teachers' job satisfaction and various facets of individual and organizational performance, including the educational process and student learning. Theoretical literature and research findings support the notion that higher job satisfaction among teachers correlates with enhanced academic performance among students (Amani, 2019; Singh & Ryhal, 2023).

Notably, while students' traits and teaching methodologies are crucial factors influencing academic outcomes, enhancing teachers' job satisfaction remains a contentious issue in the realm of student achievement. Addressing the dissatisfaction gap among teachers is recognized as pivotal for educational advancement and improved academic success among students (Hagenauer et al., 2015; Mahmood & Ismail, 2018; Rodrigo-Ruiz, 2016). In essence, to enhance students' academic performance, evaluating the predictive influence of "psychological capitals" and "teachers' job satisfaction" on student achievement is imperative. Hence, this study aims to scrutinize the predictive role of psychological capital and teachers' job satisfaction in the academic performance of elementary school students in Euclid city.

Material and Methods

The present study was conducted utilizing the descriptive-correlation method. The statistical population under investigation comprised all primary school teachers within Euclid city. A total of 200 primary teachers participated in the study, selected through the multi-stage cluster sampling technique. The mean age of the participants was 33.84 ± 3.78. Moreover, 122 (61%) of the teachers involved in the research were female, while 78 (39%) were male. Prior to their involvement,

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informed consent and willingness to cooperate were established as prerequisites for participation. Furthermore, teachers employed under military service plans or service purchase contracts were excluded from the study. To uphold ethical standards concerning data confidentiality, participants were guaranteed confidentiality and only entered the study following the provision of informed consent.

Research tools

To assess students' academic performance, the mean grades of their courses were utilized. The descriptive evaluation system was established in primary schools along with qualitative indicators. Initially, the qualitative indicators were quantified (very good = 4, good = 3, acceptable = 2, need for more effort = 1), followed by calculating the average scores for each student. Subsequently, the overall average scores for all students in each class were computed for analysis purposes. Consequently, each teacher involved in the study was assigned an aggregate score for the academic performance variable of their students.

The Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ:: This scale developed by Luthans et al. (2007) comprises 24 questions divided into four subscales: hope (questions 1 to 6), resilience (questions 7 to 12), optimism (questions 13 to 18), and self-efficacy (questions 19 to 24). Responses to the questionnaire items are rated on a 6-point Likert scale (from 0=completely disagree to 5=completely agree) (Luthans et al., 2007). The reliability of the entire questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, yielding 0.84, while the subscales ranged between 0.83 and 0.91 (Luthans et al., 2007). In a study conducted in Iran, Rastegar et al. (2017) reported reliability coefficients of 0.81 for the entire scale and 0.78, 0.76, 0.83, and 0.78 for the hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience subscales, respectively, indicating good internal consistency. The researchers determined the reliability of the Psychological Capital Questionnaire and its factors to be between 0.87 and 0.91 using Cronbach's alpha.

The Minnesota Job Satisfaction Questionnaire-Short Form (MSQ-SF): This scale developed by Weiss et al. (1977) is comprised of 19 questions categorized into six subscales: payment system (questions 1 to 3), type of job (questions 4 to 7), advancement opportunities (questions 8 to 10), organizational atmosphere (questions 11 and 12), leadership style (questions 13 to 16), and physical condition (questions 17 to 19). Responses to this questionnaire are provided on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1=very dissatisfied to 5=very satisfied). Previous studies have widely endorsed

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the questionnaire, with initial Cronbach's alpha values reported to be between 0.85 and 0.91 (Fields, 2002; Weiss et al., 1977). In Iran, Kamali et al. (2020) affirmed the reliability and validity of the tool with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.88, indicating strong consistency across different sections of the scale. The researchers have determined the reliability of the Psychological Capital Questionnaire and its factors to be between 0.88 and 0.93 using Cronbach's alpha methodology.

Data analysis in this study was carried out through step-by-step multiple regression analysis using SPSS version 25 software.

Results

First, as the results of Table 1 show, according to the obtained values of Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and Shapiro–Wilk test and the significance level of $p < 0.05$ at the 95% confidence level, the assumption of normality of data distribution in this research is confirmed.

Table 1. Data normality test results

Variable	Kolmogorov–Smirnov test		Shapiro–Wilk test	
	Z value	P-Value	Value S	P-Value
Psychological Capital	0.387	0.204	0.619	0.427
Job satisfaction of teachers	0.371	0.211	0.726	0.413
Academic Performance	0.265	0.391	0.677	0.407

As the results of Table 2 show, among the components of psychological capital, the variable "Hope" alone had the ability to predict 0.243 of the variances of the academic performance variable, which with the addition of three other variables, namely "Resilience", "Optimism" and "self-efficacy", this value increased to 0.288, 0.325 and 0.384 respectively. Based on this, in the next step, step by step regression coefficients of these variables were calculated. As the results of Table 3 show, the results of this study confirmed that among the multiple components of psychological capital, in the first step, the self-efficacy component ($\beta = 0.178$; $t = 2.673$ and $p < 0.01$) has the highest predictive power. It had a direct and significant assessment of students' academic performance. In the second step, the components of self-efficacy ($\beta=0.183$; $t=2.684$ and $p<0.01$) and optimism ($\beta=0.121$; $t=2.267$ and $p<0.05$) respectively had a high direct and significant ability to predict students' academic performance. In the third step, the components of self-efficacy ($\beta=0.185$; $t=2.891$ and $p< 0.01$), resilience ($\beta=0.144$; $t=2.337$ and $p<0.05$) and optimism ($\beta=0.126$;

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t=2.365 and p<0.05), respectively, had a high ability to directly and significantly predict students' academic performance. And in the fourth step, self-efficacy components (β=0.201; t=3.011 and p<0.01), resilience (β=0.173; t=2.664 and p<0.01), hope (β=0.152; t = 2.34 and p < 0.05) and optimism (β = 0.126; t = 2.2365 and p < 0.05) were respectively the most important components of psychological capital predicting students' academic performance.

Table 2. The amount of variance explained by the components of psychological capital in predicting academic performance

Predictors	R	R^2	F	p
Hope	0.243	0.031	7.109	0.001
Hope, Resilience	0.288	0.045	6.168	0.002
Hope, Resilience, Optimism	0.325	0.061	5.987	0.001
Hope, Resilience, Optimism, Self-efficacy	0.384	0.083	5.981	0.001

Table 3. Regression step-by-step models of psychological capital components in predicting academic performance

Step	Predictors	B	β	t	p
1	Self-efficacy	0.456	0.178	2.67	0.001
2	Self-efficacy	0.481	0.183	2.68	0.001
	Optimism	0.178	0.121	2.26	0.024
3	Self-efficacy	0.487	0.185	2.89	0.001
	Resilience	0.227	0.144	2.33	0.021
	Optimism	0.145	0.126	2.36	0.019
4	Self-efficacy	0.511	0.201	3.01	0.001
	Resilience	0.421	0.173	2.66	0.001
	Hope	0.231	0.152	2.34	0.034
	Optimism	0.147	0.126	2.36	0.019

As the results of Table 4 show, among the components of teachers' job satisfaction, the variable "advancement opportunities" alone had the ability to predict 0.234 of the variance of the students' academic performance variable, which with the addition of two other variables, namely "organizational climate" and "leadership style", this value increased to 0.402 and 0.451, respectively. Based on this, in the next step, step by step regression coefficients of significant variables were calculated. As the results of Table 5 show, the results of this study confirmed that among the multiple components of teachers' job satisfaction, in the first step, the component of advancement opportunities (β = 0.174; t = 2.148 and p < 0.01) has the highest power. The prediction of students' academic performance was direct and significant. In the second step, the components of advancement opportunities (β=0.181; t=2.224 and p<0.01) and organizational climate (β=0.153; t=2.011 and p<0.01) respectively had high direct and significant ability to predict students' academic performance. In the third step, the components of leadership style (β=0.171; t=2.142 and p<0.01), development opportunities (β=0.168; t=2.113 and p<0.01) p) and

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organizational climate (β=0.144; t=2.037 and p<0.01) had a high ability to predict students' academic performance in a direct and significant way.

Table 4. The amount of variance explained by the components of teachers' job satisfaction in predicting academic performance

Predictors	R	R^2	F	p
Advancement opportunities	0.234	0.053	3.11	0.001
Organizational climate, Advancement opportunities	0.402	0.076	5.22	0.001
Leadership style, Organizational climate, Advancement opportunities	0.451	0.084	5.40	0.001

Table 5. Regression step-by-step models of teachers' job satisfaction components in predicting academic performance

Step	Predictors	B	β	t	p
1	Advancement opportunities	0.365	0.174	2.14	0.001
2	Advancement opportunities	0.371	0.181	2.22	0.001
	Organizational climate	0.214	0.153	2.01	0.002
3	Leadership style	0.354	0.171	2.14	0.001
	Advancement opportunities	0.312	0.168	2.11	0.001
	Organizational climate	0.248	0.144	2.03	0.001

Discussion

The outcomes of this study revealed that all four elements of psychological capital, namely hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy, exhibit a direct and significant association with students' academic achievement. Furthermore, the outcomes of various multivariate regression models with incremental steps indicated that all facets of psychological capital can accurately and meaningfully forecast students' academic performance. These discoveries align with past literature findings that endorse the impact of psychological capital (hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy) on students' academic success (Carmona–Halty et al., 2019; Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017; Mirzaee & Jafari harandi, 2020; Slåtten et al., 2021). In interpreting these findings, it can be posited that drawing from the theoretical underpinnings of positive psychology, emphasizing psychological capital as a positive psychological construct characterized by elevated self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience offers a more lucid comprehension of physical and mental well-being and accomplishments in education.

Indeed, positive psychological capital furnishes a theoretical framework that aids in comprehending how the encounter with positive emotions in conjunction with personal resources such as high self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience may elucidate students' academic performance (Seligman et al., 2009). According to Luthans and Youssef-Morgan (2017), despite

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being conceptually distinctive, self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience overlap and form part of a cohesive array of positive psychological assets that complement each other. In essence, these four elements of psychological capital may coalesce and synergistically interact to yield unique demonstrations of academic accomplishment and success over time and various settings. Building upon this, in accordance with the outcomes of this study, certain prior literature findings contend that there are compelling theoretical justifications for the individual constituents of psychological capital (self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience) to play a pivotal role in the realm of education and possess a direct correlation with academic performance, intrinsic motivation, empowerment in learning, and engagement in educational activities (Carmona–Halty et al., 2019; Datu et al., 2018; Luthans et al., 2007).

Furthermore, the outcomes are in line with theoretical forecasts. Recent research data concerning the association between positive psychological resources like self-efficacy, optimism, confidence, and resilience aligns with the brain's cognitive ability for acquiring knowledge (Peterson et al., 2008). To enhance the academic achievement of students, educational institutions should not only address interventions to enhance students' skills but also concentrate on establishing a supportive learning atmosphere and reinforcing their positive psychological resources.

The outcomes of this investigation revealed that contentment with progression prospects, organizational ambiance, and leadership approach as three elements of teachers' job satisfaction exhibit a direct and substantial connection with students' academic performance. The current discoveries demonstrate that gradual regression coefficients hold significance in predicting the impact of these elements on students' academic performance. Nevertheless, three other aspects of teachers' job satisfaction, such as satisfaction with payment structures, job category, and physical surroundings, displayed no notable correlation with students' academic performance. These results are consistent with the literature on educational psychology and learning disorders, supporting the role of teachers' job satisfaction in the emotional aspect of the teaching process and students' academic performance capabilities (Amani, 2019; Singh & Ryhal, 2023). Research findings suggest that teachers' job satisfaction influences their likelihood of professional decline and departure from teaching, impacting their emotional engagement with students and the teaching process, subsequently influencing the quality of education and learners' academic performance (Hagenauer et al., 2015). A decline in teachers' job satisfaction, particularly concerning

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dissatisfaction with progression opportunities, organizational ambiance, and leadership style, can act as a moderating factor by inducing negative emotions related to the teaching profession, such as anxiety, discomfort, anger, stress, adopting a pessimistic view towards teaching, and diminishing the sense of personal achievement, diverting teachers from educational objectives. Consequently, they struggle to address classroom issues due to decreased cognitive performance and focus resulting from practical anxiety (Koohi et al., 2019).

The enhanced job satisfaction among teachers is linked to the cultivation of positive emotions like joy and affection towards the teaching process. This enhances their ability to effectively manage stress stemming from emotional behaviors in school, handle classroom dynamics, motivate students emotionally, and enhance their emotional, motivational, and academic performance skills (Rodrigo-Ruiz, 2016). Consequently, these findings underscore the protective and beneficial impact of teachers' satisfaction with career progression opportunities, organizational atmosphere, and leadership style on enhancing students' academic achievements.

In light of the outcomes of this study, professionals in school health management and specialization areas, including educational psychologists, can leverage these findings to enhance the academic performance of elementary school students within educational settings and counseling centers. These findings prove valuable for planning, preventive measures, and effective interventions to address academic challenges faced by students in educational programs, particularly for educational psychologists and school counselors operating in the education sector. Based on the study's results, it is advisable to boost teachers' job satisfaction to equip them with cognitive flexibility empowerment and positive enthusiasm and address educational hurdles encountered by students through training in psychological capital management.

Furthermore, future researchers are advised to compare the enthusiasm for the teaching process and academic performance between two distinct groups - normal and problematic - while considering a normative group of teachers and students with and without satisfaction and positive psychological capital to gain a comprehensive insight. To delve deeper into the role of personal and organizational factors in the psychology of learning, primary education, and educational issues among children and adolescents. It is also recommended for researchers to utilize semi-experimental research techniques to explore and analyze the impact of various theoretical approaches in academic and career counseling on enhancing teachers' job satisfaction and students'

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positive psychological capital, thereby offering robust scientific backing for the model integrating biological-psychological and social dimensions in the education of school-aged children and adolescents.

This research, akin to prior studies, comes with certain constraints. Firstly, it relied on a single self-report scale to gauge job satisfaction, psychological capital, and academic performance. Secondly, the study participants constituted a small subset of the population, potentially skewing the range of variance changes and dispersion sizes, hence caution is warranted in generalizing the outcomes. Thirdly, this study followed a cross-sectional design, and it is plausible that psychopathological symptoms may have influenced the reports of job satisfaction, psychological capital (e.g., hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy), and academic performance by teachers and students.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by ethics committee of Islamic Azad University.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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