

# Increasing Student Leadership Effectiveness through the Development of Hope and Other Qualities of Psychological Capital

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# Statement of the Problem

- Aim of student leadership development is leadership effectiveness
- Student leadership development models emphasizing relational leadership suggest that awareness of one's strengths contributes to leadership effectiveness
- While this conclusion seems intuitive, this claim has not been substantiated in the research literature on student leadership

# Theoretical Frameworks

- Strengths Philosophy
  - Rooted in positive psychology
  - Focus on developing areas of talent rather than improving weaknesses (Clifton, Anderson, & Schreiner, 2006)
  - Awareness and development of one's strengths, rather than a specific constellation of strengths, leads to effectiveness
- Psychological Capital
  - Rooted in positive psychology
  - Consists of the constructs of Efficacy, Hope, Optimism, and Resiliency (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007)
  - Focus on development of these internal positive qualities to enhance effectiveness

# Psychological Capital

- Psychological Capital (PsyCap) is an individual's positive psychological state of development and is characterized by:
  - Having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks;
  - Making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future;
  - Persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and
  - When beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resiliency) to attain success.
- (Luthans, et al., 2007, p. 3)

# Theoretical Frameworks

- Leadership Challenge Model (Kouzes & Posner, 2002)
  - Rooted in transformational leadership theory
  - Identifies a set of skills and abilities practiced by effective leaders that can be observed, measured, and learned
    - Model the Way
    - Inspire a Shared Vision
    - Challenge the process
    - Enable Others to Act
    - Encourage the Heart

## Research Question:

To what extent do strengths ownership and psychological capital predict effective leadership in college students?

## Hypotheses:

- a) Each of the components of psychological capital will significantly predict students' scores on the SLPI
- b) Student leaders' strengths ownership scores will explain a significant amount of additional variance in scores on the SLPI, over and above that accounted for by the psychological capital variables.

# Research Design

- Hierarchical Multiple Regression
  - Tested the degree to which psychological capital and strengths ownership predicted effective student leadership

# Participants

- 153 student leaders in student development programs

Residence Life	110
Student Government	14
Student Orientation	16
Student Activities	10
Student Organizations	20
Multicultural Programs	8
Student Ministries	10

(Numbers reflect students in multiple leadership roles)

# Measures

- Demographic Information
- PsyCap Questionnaire
- Strengths Ownership Scale
- Student Leadership Practices Inventory
  - *Self* and *Observer* forms
  - Organizational Advisor and Peer ratings averaged separately

# Results

- No significant results for the Advisor and Peer Models
  - Lack of statistical variance in responses
- Student Leader Model results
  - 40.4% of variance on SLPI scores accounted for by Student Leader Model

# Student Leader Model by Scale

<u>SLPI Scale</u>	<u>Predictor</u>	<u>Variance</u>
■ Total	Hope, Gender	40.4%
■ Model	Hope, Gender	37.9%
■ Challenge	Hope	34.1%
■ Inspire	Hope, Efficacy	30.3%
■ Encourage	Efficacy, Optimism	28.6%
■ Enable	Hope, Optimism, Gender	22.5%

# Other Results

- Strengths Ownership was not a significant predictor of effective student leadership
  - Lack of statistical variance in responses

# Implications for Practice

- Student Leadership Selection
- Student Leadership Training
  - Develop effective means of impacting hope and goal-oriented thinking in student leaders
  - Develop effective means of increasing student leader self-efficacy and optimism development in leadership training

# Hope and Effective Leadership

- What accounts for differences between most effective student leaders and the least effective student leaders?
  - Hope accounted for 40.4% of the differences in students' ratings of their effectiveness
- Students with high Hope scores rated themselves high on leadership effectiveness

# Hope

A combination of *willpower* (agency thinking or energy) and *waypower* (pathways thinking or ability to generate alternative plans) to *achieve a goal* .

Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Snyder, 1995

# Hope Scale Items

- If I should find myself in a jam in my role as a leader of this group, I could think of many ways to get out of it.
- At the present time, I am energetically pursuing my goals in my organization.
- There are lots of ways around any problem.
- Right now I see myself as being pretty successful as a leader in this organization.
- I can think of many ways to reach my current goals in this organization.
- At this time, I am meeting the goals that I have set for myself as a leader of this organization.

# Relationships between Effective Leadership and Hope

## Leadership Practices

- Goal setting behaviors
- Vision casting
- Pursuing shared aspirations
- Innovation, change, growth
- Risk taking, challenging status quo
- Collaborative, trust building, empowering
- Skilled in relationships

## Hope

- Goal directed thinking
- Pursuit of meaningful and challenging goals
- Challenge current systems by generating new ideas
- Welcomes an element of risk to achieve a goal that has value
- Motivated
- Connected to others

# Developing Hope

## Hope Finding

- Measuring hope
  - PsyCap Questionnaire
- Sharing personal narratives
  - How have they experienced hope in the past when pursuing goals?
  - What did they think about? How did they feel?
  - What common themes exist across individual's stories?
    - Goals, pathways, obstacles, willpower, reflection on the process of how a goal was pursued and achieved

Lopez, 2004

# Developing Hope

## Hope Bonding

- Forming relationships with mentors and peers who will support and challenge them in the pursuit of their goals
  - Create a supportive environment to share goals, vision for future

Lopez, 2004

# Developing Hope

## Hope Reminding

- Creating feedback processes that will help students recognize their goal thoughts and barrier thoughts
- Use feedback to motivate and encourage leaders to use their thinking to more effectively pursue goals

Lopez, 2004

# Developing Hope

## Stretch Goals

- Ambitious goals that improve performance by motivating leaders to push harder to accomplish a difficult task
- Require knowledge, tools, and means
- Challenging and motivating
- Attainable
- Move leaders away from limiting behaviors and thoughts about themselves and others
- Focused on the future
- Require leaders to “think outside the box”

# Developing Hope

## Strengths development

- Strengths are pathways that can be utilized to reach goals
  - Identify talents, explore strengths themes
  - Teach leaders to intentionally invest in and develop their strengths into effective means for achieving their goals