

# The mediation role of positive psychological capital in the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee performance: a research on port administration employees

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – In this study, a conceptual model was developed and analyzed to test the mediating role of positive psychological capital (PPC) in the impact of organizational support perceived by employees who continue their professional lives in the port sector, which is an important sub-branch of the maritime sector, on employee performance (EP).

**Design/methodology/approach** – The data for the analysis of the model in question were collected through a survey method from employees in the work site and units of 14 port enterprises in the Eastern Mediterranean region of Türkiye. A total of 406 usable data were analyzed with the SmartPLS 4 analysis program.

**Findings** – The analysis did not confirm the significant positive effect of perceived organizational support (POS) on EP. On the other hand, the analysis found that POS had a significant positive impact on PPC. Likewise, the significant positive effect of PPC on EP was confirmed. The analysis also concluded that PPC was the full mediator variable in the impact of POS on EP.

**Practical implications** – This study helps managers find out how they can improve employees' EP with qualified POS and PPC.

**Originality/value** – The current study reveals the role of PPC in the mechanism underlying the controversial relationship between POS and EP and, thus, contributes significantly to both literature and practice.

**Keywords** Perceived organizational support, Positive psychological capital, Employee performance

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

As in every profession and business line, humans are the main character and most important capital of port enterprises, which are developing and transforming every day in parallel with the conception of innovation brought by the age (Kuleyin *et al.*, 2013). This sector, which requires that services be produced with more labor and more intensity, undoubtedly, reveals the need to benefit more from human power. Ports, which are among the ship and cargo components with a significant place in world maritime trade, constitute the essential infrastructure of the global transportation network. Of international commercial cargo transportation, 85% is realized by sea. The circulation amount of these cargoes is 45 million



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tons in Türkiye and approximately 11 billion tons in the world. Depending on the intensity in port enterprises with huge cargo circulation, reasons such as increased working hours, extra fatigue of employees, increased burnout levels and reluctant work-related behaviors of employees lead to negative consequences in terms of the efficiency of port enterprises (Yorulmaz *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, to increase efficiency in all loading and unloading operations, it becomes crucial at this point to determine the factors improving employee performance (EP) (Ho and Chan, 2022).

EP comprises a number of diverse activities that contribute to the organization in various ways. In brief, it is employee behavior related to the organization's goals (Liu *et al.*, 2023). The fact that performance in a dynamic working environment does not depend solely on effort makes it necessary to understand the basic positive factors that can contribute to EP (Patnaik *et al.*, 2023). Accordingly, the current research aims to determine the organizational (external) and personal (internal) resources that contribute to the improvement of EP.

In this respect, perceived organizational support (POS) represents a valuable organizational resource that will reveal reciprocity norms in the social exchange process. Accordingly, if an employee receives adequate training, resources, and support from his/her organization, there is a high possibility that he/she will help the organization with achieving its goals. Although previous researchers have determined a positive correlation between POS and EP (Shaheen and Krishnankutty, 2018; Astuty and Udin, 2020; Rockstuhl *et al.*, 2020; Shabbir *et al.*, 2021; Sabir *et al.*, 2022; Wang, 2022; Tian *et al.*, 2023), some studies in the relevant literature have also yielded contrary results. For example, in the studies by Chow *et al.* (2006) and Chiang and Hsieh (2012), this relationship was negative. Peña *et al.* (2024) found a significant but weak relationship between POS and organizational performance. On the contrary, some researchers in the literature have found that there is no significant relationship between POS and EP (Pazy and Ganzach, 2009; Uçar and Kerse, 2022; Gunyakti Akdeniz *et al.*, 2023; Patnaik *et al.*, 2023). Researchers attribute this to the fact that the correlation between POS and EP occurs indirectly (Zhou and Bao, 2005). Patnaik *et al.* (2023) also underline that research aiming to investigate the mechanisms that underlie the correlation between POS and EP is inadequate. As can be seen, the relationship between POS and EP is controversial (Liu *et al.*, 2023). Investigating this relationship on employees of port enterprises, where working conditions are quite intense, is meaningful and may contribute to the literature and practice.

While POS at the individual level refers to differences in perceived organizational support from one employee to another, perceived support at the organizational level refers to differences from one organization to another (Eisenberger and Stinglhamber, 2011). It is emphasized in the literature that there are differences in POS perception from one employee to another due to differences in treatment within the organization (Eisenberger and Stinglhamber, 2011; Kurtessis *et al.*, 2017). For example, managers may establish closer relationships with some employees. In this case, these employees' perception of POS will be high. So, if the employee's POS level is high, EP may develop (Gillet *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, this study hypothesizes that, at the individual level, POS is positively related to an individual's self-reported performance (Rockstuhl *et al.*, 2020; Shabbir *et al.*, 2021; Wang, 2022). First, in line with the assumptions of social exchange theory, port employees can increase their performance with a sense of responsibility when they perceive that they are valued by the enterprise they work for (Astuty and Udin, 2020; Rockstuhl *et al.*, 2020). Second, the conservation of resources (COR) theory posits the assumption that organizational resources are useful for employees to achieve work goals. Therefore, POS as a form of organizational resource (Gunyakti Akdeniz *et al.*, 2023) can positively affect the performance of port employees (Tian *et al.*, 2023).

Some researchers stress that POS impacts EP through mediator factors, including job satisfaction, positive affectivity, emotional commitment, self-efficacy, organizational

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citizenship behavior, and professional commitment (Ford *et al.*, 2018; Firoz and Chaudhary, 2022; Uçar and Kerse, 2022; Liu *et al.*, 2023). This also shows that positive emotions can impact the correlation between POS and EP. Hence, it seems inevitable that some personal resources will impact the role of POS, as an organizational resource, in EP. Therefore, it can be stated that positive psychological capital (PPC), which refers to some positive psychological states such as self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism that emerge during an individual's growth and development, is an essential personal resource for positive work behaviors (EP) (Ho and Chan, 2022). Studies in the literature have demonstrated a positive impact of POS on PPC (Ho and Chan, 2022; Tang *et al.*, 2023). On the other hand, studies have confirmed that PPC impacts EP (Kappagoda *et al.*, 2014; Boamah and Laschinger, 2015; Chen, 2015; Shaheen and Krishnankutty, 2018; Gong *et al.*, 2019; Sarwar *et al.*, 2023; Chen *et al.*, 2024).

In accordance with the COR theory, humans are driven by the primary goal of obtaining, preserving, and developing resources (organizational and personal) that they value as central (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018). An essential assumption of the aforesaid theory is that people should invest in resources to better cope with stressful situations. POS, as a valuable organizational resource, can help employees meet their psychosocial and emotional needs, which can lead to employee development. Hence, with the organizational support they perceive, employees are likely to respond by investing in their personal resources (PPC) to fulfill job demands (high performance) (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2020). In line with the COR theory, the meaningful investment of resources can cause employee development (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018). In this regard, the current study adopts the COR theory and the reciprocity norm of the social exchange theory and assumes that POS will promote the improvement of EP by increasing employees' PPC. Based on all the discussions, this study aims to analyze the following questions with the data collected from employees working in port enterprises. These questions are as follows: (1) does POS impact EP?, (2) does POS impact PPC?, (3) does PPC impact EP?, and (4) does PPC mediate the relationship between POS and EP?. Thus, the present work aims to address the existing gap in the literature (Patnaik *et al.*, 2023) and provide new contributions to both theory and practice. The current study, which examines the mediating process underlying the correlation between POS and EP, develops our understanding of individual positive psychological differences that explain this relationship.

## 2. Theoretical framework and hypothesis development

### 2.1 *The relationship between POS and EP*

Both personal and organizational factors play an essential role in the improvement of EP, defined as the outcome of the function or indicator of a job or profession in a particular period (Liu *et al.*, 2015). POS, which is regarded as an organizational resource, is the degree to which employees believe that their organization values their contributions, cares about their well-being, and meets their socioeconomic needs (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986) and can support the improvement of EP.

The reciprocity norm of the social exchange theory symbolizes a fundamental conception in the relationship between POS and EP. Employees' belief that, due to the positive contributions and activities they carry out on behalf of the organization, the organization will provide feedback to this contribution and the organization's belief that it will increase the positive behavior of the employee by deeming the employee worthy of a reward represents a reciprocal social exchange process. In brief, the social exchange theory indicates the existence of valuable elements that can lead to exchange between the organization and the employee (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). In this regard, it can be said that employees will strive to exhibit higher performance in return for all supportive activities carried out by an organization, such as supporting the contributions of employees carrying out workforce activities, valuing their efforts, fairly implementing both policies and attitudes, as well as

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procedures and decisions to be implemented in the organization, and increasing employees' welfare levels (Miao and Kim, 2010).

On the other hand, the COR theory assumes that individuals have basic motivations to obtain resources suitable for their goals, to protect what they have acquired, and to gain more (Halbesleben *et al.*, 2012). If an individual's work environment provides support in the form of quality relationships, esteem, higher pay, emotional support, adequate training, and promotion, the employee will improve his/her performance to preserve and increase his/her available resources (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002).

When the literature is reviewed, it is observed that studies confirming a positive relationship between POS and EP are in the majority (Shaheen and Krishnankutty, 2018; Ridwan *et al.*, 2020; Shabbir *et al.*, 2021). However, some studies also show that there is no significant relationship between POS and EP (Pazy and Ganzach, 2009; Liu *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, it is remarkable that some researchers in the literature claim that this relationship is negative (Chow *et al.*, 2006; Chiang and Hsieh, 2012). All these studies indicate that the direct correlation between POS and EP is controversial.

No study examining this relationship on employees of port enterprises has been encountered in the literature. Considering that the working conditions of employees in ports are very intense due to the increasing trade volume in maritime transportation (Kuleyin *et al.*, 2013), investigating this relationship in the sector in question can contribute to the literature and practice. According to the COR theory, employees with high POS due to the intense working conditions of port employees will exhibit high performance in order to both preserve and secure the resources offered to them (Kiazad *et al.*, 2015). Likewise, in line with the assumptions of the social exchange theory, port employees will increase their performance by wanting to repay the organizational support provided to them. In this respect, the following hypothesis was developed in the present study by adopting the COR theory and the social exchange theory and assuming that POS will promote the improvement of EP:

*H1.* There is a significant positive relationship between POS and EP.

## *2.2 The relationship between POS and PPC*

PPC represents a high-level construct that includes the sub-dimensions of hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism. Individuals with high levels of PPC are committed to the pursuit of meaningful goals and producing alternative paths (hope) in order to achieve success. Furthermore, they are confident in their ability to successfully execute the necessary action plans (self-efficacy). They also can overcome and bounce back from difficulties, setbacks, and failures (resilience). Additionally, they have a generalized positive perspective by attributing a positive perspective to events (optimism). Conceptually and empirically, PPC represents a latent construct at a higher level than the sum of the sub-dimensions. Researchers stress that the role of suitable social mechanisms and an appropriate psychological environment in the development of PPC should not be ignored (Luthans *et al.*, 2007). It can be asserted that POS, as an organizational resource, can create the positive conditions required for the development of the employee's PPC. For example, employees can develop a source of hope by contingency planning to achieve a goal with a high level of POS. In case of any failure, thanks to POS, employees can develop a source of resilience and foster a sense of optimism that the failure is temporary, situation-specific, or caused by external factors. Similarly, an employee who gains courage and confidence through positive feedback from his manager is likely to improve his skills and beliefs (self-efficacy) (Patnaik *et al.*, 2023).

Although it is known that the increase in individuals' PPC levels more than the previous one is related to the leadership style or characteristics of the job, empirical studies have confirmed that POS plays an essential role and has a significant effect on increasing individuals' PPC levels (Shaheen and Krishnankutty, 2018; Ho and Chan, 2022; Tang *et al.*,

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2023). According to the social exchange theory, it seems likely that employees will respond to POS by developing their personal resources (e.g. PPC) in order to fulfill job demands (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2020). In accordance with the COR theory, the meaningful investment of resources can cause employee development since it protects against resource loss and allows them to acquire resources important for general well-being (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, in line with the assumptions of the COR theory, employees can increase their resilience, optimism, hope, and self-efficacy through organizational support practices such as health and welfare services, education, good collaboration in the workplace, peer support, and mentoring (Murden *et al.*, 2018; Chen *et al.*, 2024). Accordingly, the following hypothesis was developed in this study in line with the assumptions of the COR theory and the social exchange theory:

*H2.* There is a significant positive relationship between POS and PPC.

### *2.3 The relationship between PPC and EP*

Positive psychologists have pointed out the importance of personal resources in improving employees' performance (Gupta and Shaheen, 2018). Gupta *et al.* (2019) also emphasize that personal resources such as PPC affect employees' self-evaluation of themselves and their work environment. PPC helps in positive evaluation of the challenging work environment, which can lead to positive attitude and high EP (Shaheen and Krishnankutty, 2018). Because the personal resources possessed by the employee act as a source of energy and motivation and enable them to exhibit different work behaviors (Gupta *et al.*, 2017).

PPC, which is regarded as a personal resource, helps employees face challenges, solve problems at work, and increase their well-being (Ho *et al.*, 2022). Based on the lens of the COR theory, employees with high PPC are stronger in the face of challenges and obstacles, and since they regard challenging job demands and problems as an opportunity for personal development, they can increase their performance by aiming to preserve and increase their personal resources (PPC) (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018). For example, an employee with high self-efficacy may struggle and strive to achieve his or her own goal. An employee with a high sense of hope can identify new ways to achieve his goal (Snyder, 2002). Employees with strong resilience; approach life with gusto and energy, are curious and open to new experiences, and often develop their resources and succeed despite challenging work demands (Murden *et al.*, 2018). Similarly, optimism gives employees the capacity to fulfill important duties and obligations, fostering EP (Tolentino *et al.*, 2022).

Studies have supported that PPC positively affects various employee outcomes involving psychological well-being, work-related well-being, job satisfaction, organizational loyalty, and job performance (Durrain *et al.*, 2016; Shaheen and Krishnankutty, 2018; Gong *et al.*, 2019; Sarwar *et al.*, 2023; Chen *et al.*, 2024). When the literature is reviewed, it is seen that there is a strong relationship between the sub-dimensions of PPC and EP (Avey *et al.*, 2011; Gong *et al.*, 2019). In the present research, the following hypothesis was developed in line with the assumptions of the COR theory by arguing that the PPC levels of port employees may impact EP:

*H3.* There is a significant positive relationship between PPC and EP.

### *2.4 The mediating role of PPC*

When the literature is reviewed, it is seen that POS affects EP through mediator factors such as job satisfaction, positive affectivity, emotional commitment, self-efficacy and organizational citizenship behavior, organizational identification, individual sense of gratitude, work environment quality, job proficiency, job satisfaction, and professional commitment (Chiang and Hsieh, 2012; Liu *et al.*, 2023). Hence, it can be stated that positive emotions explain the

correlation between POS and EP (Armeli *et al.*, 1998). Furthermore, some studies in the literature emphasize that this relationship mostly occurs indirectly (Zhou and Bao, 2005).

It is emphasized that job resources have an internal motivational role in the growth, learning, and development of employees' personal resources (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017). As an organizational resource, POS can develop PPC, which is a personal resource. The literature review revealed that employees with high levels of POS have high levels of PPC (Ho and Chan, 2022; Tang *et al.*, 2023).

PPC represents a developmentally changing phenomenon that allows employees to restructure their balance depending on their transactions with job demands and to display psychologically high job performance, particularly in periods of crisis and transition (Patnaik *et al.*, 2023). Empirical studies also demonstrate that PPC positively impacts EP (Boamah and Laschinger, 2015).

The COR theory is based on the assumption that a bundle (store) of resources should be acquired and accumulated in order to prepare for future investments. In case of a supportive environment, personal resources (PPC) can be developed together as resource caravans (Salanova *et al.*, 2010). Individuals working in a supportive organization are likely to be hopeful, resilient, and optimistic and have high self-efficacy. It is expected that this resource caravan pass will lead to employee development in the long term. When employees perceive that the organization cares for their well-being, appreciates their contributions, and makes efforts to meet their needs, they improve themselves in line with the assumptions of the social exchange theory and create positive effects on job outcomes through social exchange processes (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2020). For personal development, POS helps employees meet their psychosocial and emotional needs, which can lead to the improvement of EP. Based on all the discussions, the present study investigates the mediating role of PPC in the correlation between port employees' POS and EP. Patnaik *et al.* (2023) indicated the mediating role of PPC in the relationship between POS and EP. In the study conducted by Shaheen and Krishnankutty (2018), the mediating role of PPC in the relationship between flexible employees' POS level and extra-role performance behaviors was confirmed. Nevertheless, the fact that no other study addressing the aforesaid relationship has been encountered in the literature limits the generalizability of the result obtained. Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed in this study by asserting that organizational support supported by the COR theory and the social exchange theory can support the improvement of EP by increasing PPC (Ho and Chan, 2022; Tang *et al.*, 2023):

*H4.* PPC mediates the positive relationship between POS and EP.

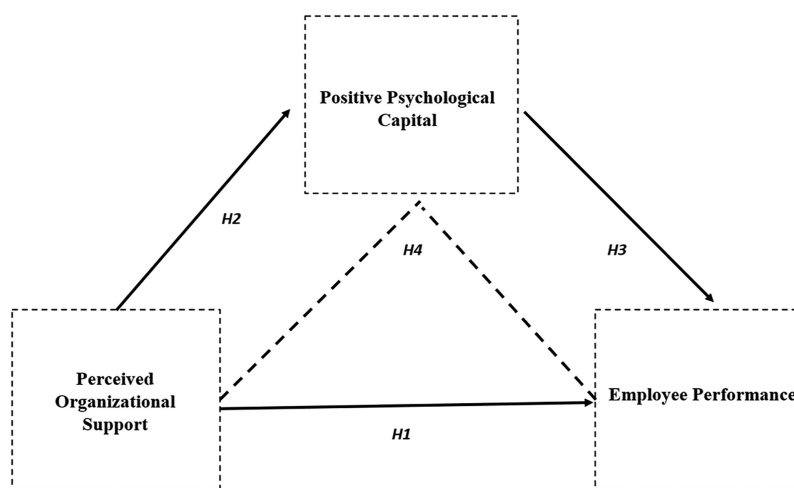
Figure 1 displays the research model of the current study.

### 3. Research

#### 3.1 Population and sample of the study

The sample of the present study comprises individuals working in 14 port enterprises located in the Eastern Mediterranean region of Türkiye. The unit of analysis of the current research is at the individual level, and the data were collected by face-to-face survey method in the port work site and units. While it would be ideal to survey all employees in 14 port enterprises, many port enterprises do not make this possible. Therefore, following past research (e.g. Kim *et al.*, 2021), the random selection method was used to maintain both practicality and research rigor. In this study, 50 employees from each port enterprise were randomly selected to further reduce potential concerns regarding sample representativeness (Kim *et al.*, 2022). A total of seven hundred employees were asked to fill out surveys. The data collection process took four months, from March to July 2023. Five hundred participants responded to the survey, with 406 usable data. Table 1 shows the participants' demographic profile according to their





Source(s): Figure by authors

Figure 1.  
Research model

gender, age, education, marital status, working position, time worked in the industry, and time worked in the enterprise. Concerning the gender distribution, it is seen that all participants are male. The participants are distributed in various age groups in terms of age: 17.49% are in the 18–24 age range, 33.50% are in the 25–34 age range, 36.95% are in the 35–44 age range, 9.85% are in the 45–54 age range, and 2.21% are 55 years old or older. The educational backgrounds of the survey respondents also vary: 1.23% have primary education, 72.41% have high school education, 15.02% have an associate degree, 8.37% have a bachelor's degree, and 2.94% have a master's degree. Of the participants, 97.78% work as blue collars. Considering marital status, 60.10% of the participants are married, and 39.90% are single. Of the participants, 38.67% have worked in the industry for 6–10 years, and 36.70% have worked in the industry for 1–5 years. It can also be said that 60.84% of the participants have worked in the current enterprise for 1–5 years.

The data collected through the sampling survey method has raised concerns about common method bias (CMB). Therefore, this study adopted both procedural and statistical methods to reduce concerns regarding the CMB (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Regarding procedural methods, participants were assured that the data collected were confidential and would be used for research purposes only. In this study, Harman's single-factor test was applied primarily as a statistical technique. The result of the test revealed that the single factor explained 32.12% of the total variance. The second statistical technique suggested by Kock (2015) is to have the variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values < 3.3. As seen in Table 2, the VIF value of all items is < 3.3. Therefore, it can be said that there is not a severe issue about CMB. Both techniques (Harman's single factor and the VIF) are widely used in PLS-SEM studies (e.g. Begum *et al.*, 2022; Cegarra-Navarro *et al.*, 2021).

### 3.2 Development of the data collection tool

All constructs employed in the current study were measured using reflective items. All measurement items are listed in the Appendix. POS and EP were measured with a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree). PPC was measured with a 6-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 6 = Strongly agree). The first section of the prepared survey form includes demographic questions. In the second section, the POS scale, which was

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Demographic	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	0	0
Male	406	100
<i>Age</i>		
18–24 years	71	17.49
25–34 years	136	33.50
35–44 years	150	36.95
45–54 years	40	9.85
Above 55 years	9	2.21
<i>Education</i>		
Primary education	5	1.23
High school	294	72.41
Associate degree	61	15.02
Degree	34	8.37
Master's degree	12	2.96
<i>Marital status</i>		
Unmarried	162	39.90
Married	244	60.10
<i>Working position</i>		
Blue collar	397	97.78
White collar	9	2.22
<i>Time working in the industry</i>		
1–5	149	36.70
6–10	157	38.67
11–15	58	14.29
16–20	29	7.14
21–25	7	1.72
26 and more	6	1.48
<i>Time worked in the business</i>		
1–5	247	60.84
6–10	137	33.74
11–15	18	4.43
16–20	2	0.49
21–25	2	0.49

**Table 1.**

Demographic data

**Source(s):** Table by authors

reduced to 8 items by Eisenberger *et al.* (1997) from the 36-item scale developed by Eisenberger *et al.* (1986) and whose validity and reliability were tested, was used. The second section includes the 4-item EP scale, which was first used in the study by Kirkman and Rosen (1999) and then in the study by Sigler and Pearson (2000). The final section used the 24-item PPC scale developed by Luthans *et al.* (2007). The PPC scale comprises four sub-dimensions: self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience.

Previous research suggests that employees' age, education, experience, and tenure at the company can affect EP (Sturman, 2003). Therefore, these were chosen as control variables in this study. Age (1 = 18–24 years, 2 = 25–34 years, 3 = 35–44 years, 4 = 45–54 years, 5 = above 55 years), education (1 = primary education, 2 = high school, 3 = associate degree, 4 = degree, 5 = master's degree), experience (1 = 1–5, 2 = 6–10, 3 = 11–15, 4 = 16–20, 5 = 21–25, 6 = 26 and more), and tenure at the company (1 = 1–5, 2 = 6–10, 3 = 11–15, 4 = 16–20, 5 = 21–25) were coded to control for the potential impact of control variables on EP.



Constructs	Items	Factor loadings	<i>P</i> values	Cronbach's alpha	rho A	Composite reliability	AVE
Perceived organizational support (POS)	POS1	0.725	0.000	0.881	0.886	0.905	0.545
	POS2	0.800	0.000				
	POS3	0.764	0.000				
	POS4	0.717	0.000				
	POS5	0.806	0.000				
	POS6	0.758	0.000				
	POS7	0.742	0.000				
	POS8	0.738	0.000				
Self-efficacy (SE)	SE1	0.813	0.000	0.901	0.902	0.924	0.670
	SE2	0.821	0.000				
	SE3	0.818	0.000				
	SE4	0.824	0.000				
	SE5	0.766	0.000				
	SE6	0.769	0.000				
Hope (HOP)	HOP1	0.780	0.000	0.904	0.905	0.926	0.675
	HOP2	0.823	0.000				
	HOP3	0.839	0.000				
	HOP4	0.789	0.000				
	HOP5	0.826	0.000				
	HOP6	0.814	0.000				
Optimism (OPT)	OPT2	0.849	0.000	0.902	0.902	0.927	0.718
	OPT3	0.818	0.000				
	OPT4	0.819	0.000				
	OPT5	0.853	0.000				
	OPT6	0.849	0.000				
	RES1	0.860	0.000				
RES2	0.843	0.000					
RES3	0.832	0.000					
RES4	0.838	0.000					
RES5	0.816	0.000					
RES6	0.743	0.000					
Employee performance (EP)	EP1	0.796	0.000	0.855	0.857	0.902	0.697
	EP2	0.842	0.000				
	EP3	0.856	0.000				
	EP4	0.784	0.000				
Positive psychological capital (PPC)	RES1	0.779	0.000	0.965	0.965	0.968	0.566
	RES2	0.718	0.000				
	RES3	0.711	0.000				
	RES4	0.743	0.000				
	RES5	0.774	0.000				
	RES6	0.727	0.000				
	HOP1	0.709	0.000				
	HOP2	0.769	0.000				
	HOP3	0.801	0.000				
	HOP4	0.714	0.000				
	HOP5	0.758	0.000				
	HOP6	0.744	0.000				
	SE1	0.738	0.000				
	SE2	0.724	0.000				
	SE3	0.764	0.000				
	SE4	0.743	0.000				
	SE5	0.715	0.000				
	SE6	0.720	0.000				
	OPT2	0.717	0.000				
	OPT3	0.729	0.000				
	OPT4	0.739	0.000				
	OPT5	0.709	0.000				
	OPT6	0.707	0.000				

Source(s): Table by authors

**Table 2.**  
Measurement model results

### 3.3 Data analysis and findings

SmartPLS 4 analysis program, which is based on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), was utilized to analyze the research model in the current study. SmartPLS 4 represents a flexible data analysis method that can be applied to small and large data sets. It is used for both exploratory and confirmatory research (Hair *et al.*, 2019). The SmartPLS 4 analysis program first evaluates the measurement model and then analyzes the structural model.

**3.3.1 Analysis of the measurement model.** To determine the causality relationship between indicators and constructs in the measurement model, confirmatory factor analysis, internal consistency reliability, composite reliability, and convergent and discriminant validity are evaluated. As a result of analyzing the measurement model, OPT1 in the optimism sub-dimension of the PPC scale was excluded from the analysis since its factor loading was below 0.70, and the analysis was repeated. Table 2 contains the results of the factor analysis, including factor loadings, internal consistency reliability, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE). According to Table 2, all factor loadings are higher than the recommended value of 0.70 for all latent constructs. Furthermore, the fact that the rho\_A and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values of all dimensions are higher than 0.70 indicates satisfactory internal reliability (Hair *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, the AVE value higher than 0.50 demonstrates that convergent validity is provided.

Discriminant validity is tested after evaluating convergent validity. Discriminant validity was tested with three methods in the current study. Table 3 contains the results of the discriminant validity test using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which revealed that the constructs were different and did not overlap or measure the same concept. Whereas the lower triangle of the table indicates the correlations between the constructs, the diagonals show the square root of the AVE values. The constructs have discriminant validity according to the values in Table 3 since the square root of AVE, shown in italic, is stronger than the correlation values with the other constructs. This demonstrates that the constructs differ sufficiently from each other to measure separate elements of the variables in question.

The heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) was used as the second method to test discriminant validity. It is thought that the HTMT criterion is a more accurate method to assess discriminant validity. According to Table 4, this value is below the desired value of 0.90, indicating that discriminant validity is ensured.

Finally, upon examining the cross-loading criterion to test discriminant validity, it can be said that all constructs meet the cross-loading criterion since the indicator loadings of each construct are higher in the construct to which they belong (highlighted in italic), as shown in Table 5. The above-mentioned results support the validity and reliability of the measurements employed in the current research and ensure a strong foundation for subsequent analyses of the relationships between constructs.

Constructs	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Age	2.46	0.96	<i>1</i>						
Education	2.39	0.77	0.262	<i>1</i>					
Experience	2.03	1.09	0.173	-0.119	<i>1</i>				
Tenure	1.46	0.65	0.142	-0.016	0.840	<i>1</i>			
EP	3.88	0.75	0.046	-0.014	-0.005	-0.020	<i>0.835</i>		
POS	3.25	0.78	-0.046	0.032	-0.069	-0.015	0.272	<i>0.738</i>	
PPC	4.39	0.63	0.025	0.045	-0.047	-0.012	0.607	0.356	<i>0.752</i>

**Note(s):** Italic diagonal values represent the square of AVE

**Source(s):** Table by authors

**Table 3.**  
Fornell-Larcker  
criterion

SmartPLS uses the resampling method. The resampling approach employed in the analysis allows for robust and accurate estimation of standard errors, which helps to evaluate measurement and structural models in a more precise way. The significance of t-values was

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Age							
Education	0.262						
Tenure	0.142	0.016					
Experience	0.173	0.119	0.840				
EP	0.051	0.062	0.038	0.019			
POS	0.055	0.051	0.035	0.074	0.303		
PPC	0.048	0.050	0.037	0.054	0.670	0.381	

Source(s): Table by authors

**Table 4.**  
Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)

Items	POS	PPC	EP
POS1	0.719	0.265	0.176
POS2	0.804	0.274	0.183
POS3	0.729	0.245	0.165
POS4	0.702	0.186	0.149
POS5	0.716	0.285	0.185
POS6	0.745	0.271	0.210
POS7	0.739	0.267	0.207
POS8	0.747	0.285	0.296
SE1	0.330	0.755	0.473
SE2	0.302	0.761	0.495
SE3	0.265	0.781	0.430
SE4	0.274	0.765	0.524
SE5	0.312	0.740	0.476
SE6	0.282	0.740	0.496
HOP1	0.225	0.715	0.473
HOP2	0.297	0.777	0.436
HOP3	0.295	0.827	0.450
HOP4	0.227	0.743	0.461
HOP5	0.278	0.774	0.448
HOP6	0.239	0.756	0.451
OPT2	0.303	0.720	0.377
OPT3	0.287	0.736	0.449
OPT4	0.287	0.753	0.361
OPT5	0.236	0.719	0.463
OPT6	0.239	0.718	0.370
RES1	0.234	0.784	0.490
RES2	0.239	0.718	0.474
RES3	0.249	0.720	0.481
RES4	0.251	0.752	0.454
RES5	0.269	0.786	0.474
RES6	0.235	0.751	0.499
EP1	0.110	0.520	0.811
EP2	0.289	0.515	0.857
EP3	0.290	0.484	0.868
EP4	0.209	0.510	0.802

Source(s): Table by authors

**Table 5.**  
Cross-loadings

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assessed with the 5,000 resampling approach. As shown in Figure 2, the indicators of each construct were meaningfully loaded onto the construct to which they belonged.

3.3.2 Analysis of the structural model. In this study, structural model analysis was carried out in two stages: first, only control variables were entered (model 1), then control and all variables were analyzed together (model 2). In the study, employees' age, education, tenure in the current company, and total experience were controlled in terms of EP. However, the results revealed that none of the control variables had a significant effect on EP (Table 6).

VIF values, which indicate multicollinearity, were examined first in the analysis of the structural model (model 2). As seen in Table 7 values range from 1.000 to 2.665 and are below the recommended value of 3 (Hair et al., 2019). According to this result, it can be stated that there is no multicollinearity problem among the variables in the research model. Then, model fit indices are assessed. Model fit indices give information about how well the model fits the data. The first index, SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual) value is 0.06, indicating a good model fit according to the rules of Hair et al. (2019). The second index, NFI

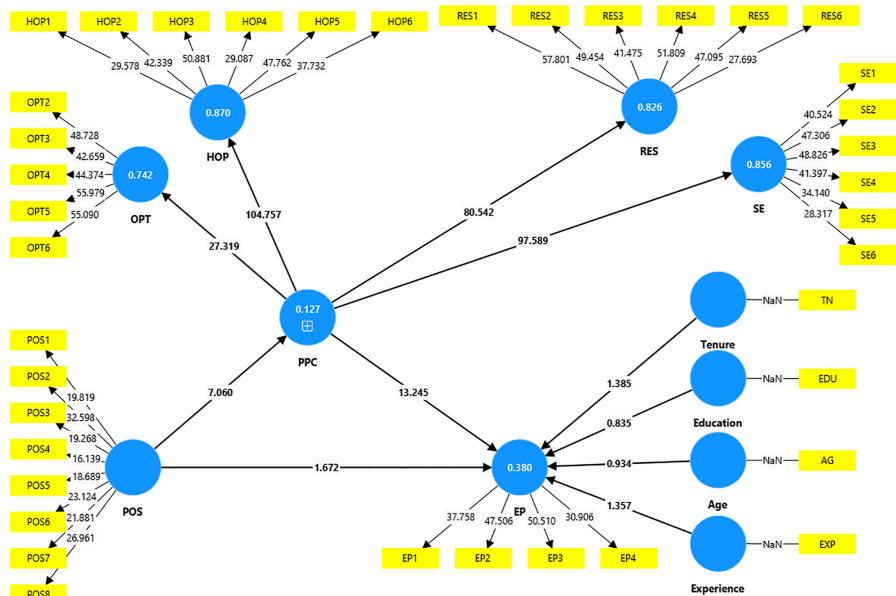


Figure 2. Results of the structural model

Source(s): Figure by authors

Path coefficients	Coef ( $\beta$ )	S.D.	T-values	p-values
Age $\rightarrow$ EP	0.072	0.065	1.107	0.268
Education $\rightarrow$ EP	-0.023	0.070	0.323	0.746
Tenure $\rightarrow$ EP	-0.113	0.144	0.787	0.431
Experience $\rightarrow$ EP	0.062	0.124	0.498	0.619

Table 6. Hypothesis testing (model 1)

Note(s): Control variables were regressed on the employee performance (No other variable was added to analysis)

Source(s): Table by authors

(Normed Fix Index) value is 0.85, showing the good fit of the model. Consequently, it can be said that the model has a good fit considering the SRMR and NFI values.

A bootstrapping (5,000 resampling) approach was employed to evaluate the statistical significance of the relationship between the variables. Table 7 shows  $R^2$  and  $f^2$  values and the results of hypothesis testing. According to the results, POS does not directly impact EP ( $\beta = 0.069$ ;  $t = 1.672$ ;  $p = 0.095$ ). On the other hand, POS positively impacts PPC and explains 12.7% of PPC ( $\beta = 0.356$ ;  $t = 7.060$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Furthermore, the effect size value ( $f^2$ ) of POS on PPC is 0.155, which is considered medium. Likewise, PPC positively impacts EP ( $\beta = 0.588$ ;  $t = 13.245$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). The effect size value ( $f^2$ ) of PPC on EP is 0.456 (Cohen, 1988). This value is evaluated in the large category. Hence, hypotheses H2 and H3 were supported. On the other hand, hypothesis H1 was rejected.

Furthermore, the study used mediation analysis in SmartPLS in order to evaluate the mediation effect of PPC (Zhao *et al.*, 2010). According to Table 8, the mediating role of PPC in the relationship between POS and EP is significant in the positive direction ( $\beta = 0.209$ ;  $t = 6.383$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). This result confirms that PPC is a mediator variable. Considering the direct effect between POS and EP to determine the type of this mediation, the fact that this relationship is insignificant shows that PPC plays a full mediating role. Hence, hypothesis H4 was accepted. According to the results of the analysis, in which PPC plays a mediating role in the relationship between POS and EP, it can be stated that 38.0% of EP is explained (see Figure 2).

## 4. Conclusion and recommendations

### 4.1 Discussion

In this study, conducted in 14 port enterprises operating in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, the mediating role of PPC in the relationship between employees' POS and EP was examined. Data were collected from 500 port employees in total. However, 406 usable data were analyzed with the SmartPLS 4 program.

The first finding of this study indicates the absence of a direct significant correlation between POS and EP. Hence, hypothesis H1 was rejected. This situation requires further

Path coefficients	Coef ( $\beta$ )	S.D.	T-values	p-values	Adj. $R^2$	$f^2$	VIF	Conclusion
POS $\rightarrow$ PPC	0.356***	0.050	7.060	0.000	0.127	0.155	1.000	H2 Supported
PPC $\rightarrow$ EP	0.588***	0.044	13.245	0.000	0.380	0.456	1.145	H3 Supported
POS $\rightarrow$ EP	0.069	0.041	1.672	0.095		0.007	1.145	H1 Rejected
Age $\rightarrow$ EP	0.044	0.047	0.934	0.350			1.131	
Education $\rightarrow$ EP	-0.043	0.051	0.835	0.404			1.138	
Tenure $\rightarrow$ EP	-0.106	0.077	1.385	0.166			2.519	
Experience $\rightarrow$ EP	0.103	0.076	1.357	0.175			2.665	

**Note(s):** Complete model was run and the employee performance was controlled

**Source(s):** Table by authors

**Table 7.**  
Hypothesis testing  
(model 2)

Path coefficients	Coef ( $\beta$ )	S.D.	T-values	p-values	Conclusion
POS $\rightarrow$ PPC $\rightarrow$ EP	0.209***	0.033	6.383	0.000	H4 Supported Full Mediation
POS $\rightarrow$ EP	0.069	0.041	1.672	0.095	

**Source(s):** Table by authors

**Table 8.**  
Mediation analysis

discussion. This finding contrasts with previous studies showing that POS has a positive effect on EP (Shaheen and Krishnankutty, 2018; Astuty and Udin, 2020; Rockstuhl *et al.*, 2020; Shabbir *et al.*, 2021; Sabir *et al.*, 2022; Wang, 2022; Tian *et al.*, 2023). However, this study confirms and extends the findings of studies supporting that there is no significant relationship between POS and EP (Armeli *et al.*, 1998; Pazy and Ganzach, 2009; Uçar and Kerse, 2022; Gunyakti Akdeniz *et al.*, 2023; Patnaik *et al.*, 2023). Researchers attribute this to the fact that the relationship between POS and EP occurs indirectly (Zhou and Bao, 2005; Uçar and Kerse, 2022). Liu *et al.* (2023) stressed that POS impacts EP in various ways in different work scenarios. Furthermore, the study by Walumbwa *et al.* (2010) determined that unclear or negative perceptions of employees of the organization cause decreased EP. According to Cegarra-Leiva *et al.* (2012), even if practices to ensure work-life balance exist in an organization, if employees cannot achieve balance in work and family life, employees will not feel a supportive climate in the organization. On the other hand, according to Sánchez-Vidal *et al.* (2012), organizational support offered for work-life balance practices may lead to differences in perception among employees due to an inadequate communication system within the organization. In such a case, POS is unlikely to positively affect EP. Moreover, some researchers suggest that high levels of POS may put pressure on some employees, as employees internalize POS and accept it as a drive to perform better (Zhou *et al.*, 2013; Kumar *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, the lack of a direct effect between POS and EP can be attributed to the harsh working conditions of port employees, their unclear perception of the organization, and the inadequate communication system within the organization.

The second finding of the study indicates a significant positive correlation between POS and PPC, and hypothesis H2 was supported. The above-mentioned result is consistent with previous studies that have demonstrated a positive relationship between POS and PPC (Shaheen and Krishnankutty, 2018; Ho and Chan, 2022; Tang *et al.*, 2023).

The third finding of the current research revealed a positive correlation between PPC and EP. In this regard, hypothesis H3 was supported. This result supports the studies in the literature indicating that PPC positively impacts EP (Shaheen and Krishnankutty, 2018; Boamah and Laschinger, 2015; Sarwar *et al.*, 2023; Chen *et al.*, 2024).

The fourth finding of the study indicated that the indirect relationship between POS and EP was significant, and it was understood that PPC played a full mediating role in the aforesaid relationship. Hence, hypothesis H4 was confirmed. The current research contributes to the literature by supporting researchers who argue that the impact of POS on EP occurs indirectly (Zhou and Bao, 2005; Shaheen and Krishnankutty, 2018; Uçar and Kerse, 2022; Patnaik *et al.*, 2023). For example, Ford *et al.* (2018) asserted that POS impacts the job performance of employees by producing positive emotions and gratitude based on social exchange processes. Likewise, studies have confirmed that POS affects EP through mediator factors, including job satisfaction, positive affectivity, emotional commitment, self-efficacy and organizational citizenship behavior, organizational identification, quality of the work environment, job proficiency, job satisfaction, and professional commitment (Chiang and Hsieh, 2012; Ford *et al.*, 2018; Liu *et al.*, 2023). The current study makes both theoretical and practical contributions.

#### 4.2 Theoretical contributions

The present research has various theoretical contributions. First, this study fills the current gap in the literature by examining the direct impact of POS on EP on port employees whose working conditions are very challenging. The present study contributes to the field literature by demonstrating that POS does not have a direct impact on EP and supporting studies that stress that factors such as unclear working conditions, the inadequate communication system within the organization, and employees' perceptions of the organization may be essential in this relationship (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2010; Sánchez-Vidal *et al.*, 2012; Liu *et al.*, 2023).



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Second, the current study strengthens the assumptions of the reciprocity norm of the social exchange theory by indicating that when employees' goals are valued, their achievements are deemed important, and their interests are considered, this, in turn, improves employees' levels of PPC. The COR theory, on the other hand, suggests that employees strive to obtain, retain, protect, and develop valuable resources (Hobfoll, 2001). Additionally, this theory predicts that employees who have more resources are also more capable of gaining resources (Salanova *et al.*, 2010). The above-mentioned finding strengthens the position of the COR theory by demonstrating that organizational resources (POS) should be preserved and improved for the development of personal resources (PPC). In other words, this study, which confirms the idea that resource gain facilitates new resource gains in the future and that individuals invest in resources to obtain and accumulate more resources, also supports the proposition of COR theory (Halbesleben *et al.*, 2012).

Third, this study supports the assumptions of the COR theory by indicating that employees can increase their performance by preserving and increasing their personal resources (PPC) to meet challenging job demands. The basic principle of the COR theory is that people have both intrinsic and learned motivations to create, develop, preserve, and protect the quality and quantity of their resources (Hobfoll, 2001). According to this theory, PPC will help employees perform well when faced with job demands because it prevents the depletion of psychological resources (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018). Additionally, in line with the assumptions of this theory, PPC, characterized by hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism, confirms that it serves as a reservoir of strength that allows employees to succeed despite difficulties. The significant relationship between employees' PPC and EP is a result of their self-efficacy, which drives their desire to achieve their work. The increase in EP is equally attributed to their rippling optimism, hope, and resilience (Chen *et al.*, 2024).

Fourth, the present study demonstrates the importance of the underlying explanatory positive mechanism (PPC) in the correlation between POS and EP and, thus, fills the gap in the literature by revealing the full mediating role of PPC in the relationship between POS and EP (Patnaik *et al.*, 2023). The aforesaid result strengthens the COR theory by showing that the development of personal resources is supported when organizational resources are available, and thus, the existing resource bundle enhances EP (Halbesleben *et al.*, 2012). On the contrary, this result strengthens the assumptions of the social exchange theory by showing that when employees perceive the support offered to them, they improve their personal resources in line with social exchange processes, and, thus, their EP increases.

#### *4.3 Practical contributions*

The findings of the current work provide important implications. First, the finding of the present study demonstrates that POS is an antecedent of PPC. In this respect, since POS contributes significantly to employees' personal resources (PPC) and well-being, it is recommended that organizations should implement employee-oriented human resource practices that value employees' contributions, appreciate their achievements, recognize their personal goals and values, encourage them to express their ideas, take care of their well-being, and enhance the sense of belonging in the workplace (Gavino *et al.*, 2012). Second, the present study indicates that PPC impacts EP. Especially managers can design and develop training programs in order to promote PPC (Luthans *et al.*, 2006). Additionally, human resources professionals may consider hiring employees high in PPC (Patnaik *et al.*, 2023). Third, it was found that PPC plays a full mediating role in the relationship between POS and EP. Hence, to provide the expected efficiency of employees and to ensure that their performance is at the desired level, it may be recommended that employees be evaluated in units appropriate to their demands and abilities, that the work be distributed fairly, that employees be provided with a healthy communication environment, that their complaints be

listened to, that feedback be provided to their suggestions, that reward activities be carried out equally, and that role ambiguity be eliminated (Kim *et al.*, 2022). Managers should consider that with such support they provide, the psychological capital levels of employees will increase, which will be reflected in EP.

#### 4.4 Limitations and recommendations

As every study, the current research also has some limitations. First, this study used organizational (POS) and personal resources (PPC) to evaluate the EP of port employees. Future research can examine the relationships of these variables with each other in different sectors. Second, the present study examined PPC as a mediator variable. Future researchers can consider different mediating mechanisms that impact the correlation between POS and EP, including stress, anxiety, and leadership style. Third, the current study used cross-sectional data to reveal causality. Although the aforesaid approach is quite common among academic studies, scientists have expressed some concerns about its validity regarding causal inference. Therefore, future studies may use longitudinal and experimental designs to examine absolute causality. Fourth, although Harman's single-factor test results showed that common method bias was not significant in this study, this remains a limitation due to the same data source. Therefore, future researchers can use their managers to evaluate employees' performance to minimize the impact of common method variance. Finally, four control variables were used in this study: employee age, education, tenure and experience. The results show that the relationships between employee age, education, tenure and experience and EP are not significant. Since all participants in this study were male, gender could not be included in the analysis as a control variable (Barrick and Mount, 1991). Future research should aim to include personality dimensions such as extraversion, conscientiousness, and so on, as well as gender as control variables. Additionally, researchers could examine whether conscientiousness, self-construal, or other personal characteristics may serve as moderators of the relationship between POS, PPC, and EP.

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## Appendix Measurement Items

### Perceived organizational support

- POS1 The organization I work for values the contributions I make to the good of the organization.
- POS2 The organization I work for does not appreciate the extra efforts I make. (Reverse)
- POS3 The institution I work for does not take my complaints into consideration. (Reverse)
- POS4 The organization I work for really cares about my well-being.
- POS5 Even if I do my job to the best of my ability, the organization I work for won't notice. (Reverse)
- POS6 The organization I work for cares about my overall satisfaction with my job.
- POS6 The institution I work for does not care about me. (Reverse)
- POS7 The organization I work for is proud of my work achievements.

### Employee performance

- EP1 I complete my tasks on time.
- EP2 I exceed my work goals.
- EP3 I am confident that I have exceeded the standards in the quality of service I offer.
- EP4 When a problem arises, I produce a solution as quickly as possible.

### Positive psychological capital

#### *Self-efficacy*

- SE1 I feel confident analyzing a long-term problem to find a solution
- SE2 I feel confident in representing my work area in meetings with management.
- SE3 I feel confident contributing to discussions about the organization's strategy.
- SE4 I feel confident helping to set targets/goals in my work area.

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SE5 I feel confident contacting people outside the organization (e.g. suppliers, customers) to discuss problems.

SE6 I feel confident presenting information to a group of colleagues.

### Hope

HOP1 If I should find myself in a jam at work, I could think of many ways to get out of it.

HOP2 At the present time, I am energetically pursuing my work goals.

HOP3 There are lots of ways around any problem.

HOP4 Right now I see myself as being pretty successful at work.

HOP5 I can think of many ways to reach my current work goals.

HOP6 At this time, I am meeting the work goals that I have set for myself.

### Resilience

RES1 When I have a setback at work, I have trouble recovering from it, moving on.

RES2 I usually manage difficulties one way or another at work.

RES3 I can be “on my own,” so to speak, at work if I have to.

RES4 I usually take stressful things at work in stride.

RES5 I can get through difficult times at work because I’ve experienced difficulty before.

RES6 I feel I can handle many things at a time at this job.

### Optimism

OPT1 When things are uncertain for me at work, I usually expect the best.

OPT2 If something can go wrong for me work-wise, it will.

OPT3 I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job.

OPT4 I’m optimistic about what will happen to me in the future as it pertains to work.

OPT5 In this job, things never work out the way I want them to.

OPT6 I approach this job as if “every cloud has a silver lining.”

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