This paper presents the findings from an exploratory investigation into the relationship between reports of psychological capital (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007) and reports of job satisfaction (Hackman & Oldham, 1980) among academic support staff at a private institution of higher education in the northeastern United States. Academic support staff, the unit of analysis in this investigation, are defined as full-time, non-teaching, non-supervisory staff members. The administrative tasks performed by academic support staff include, but are not limited to, student advising, budget and operational management, data analysis, and student recruitment. Published academic research literature has generally ignored the role of academic support staff (Pitman, 2000). A number of international researchers (Gornitza & Larsen, 2004; Kusku, 2003; McRoy & Gibbs, 2009; Strajeri, 2009; Szekeres, 2006) have examined academic support staff within an organizational structure unreflective of the contemporary American model. Noticeably absent from the knowledge base are investigations of the work performed by academic support staff within the American model of higher education and the personal assets they bring to the work. This exploratory case study was designed to address this void by investigating the relationship between academic support staff’s reports of psychological capital and their reports of job satisfaction.

Psychological capital was defined in this study as a positive psychological state of development comprised of self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resiliency (Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007). For the purposes of this study, job satisfaction was defined as the perceived presence of the core job dimensions of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. As defined by Hackman and Oldham (1980), the presence of these job dimensions corresponds to the three psychological states of experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results. Individuals who display self-efficacy (confidence), optimism (positive expectation of future success), hope (perseverance to goals), and resiliency (ability to sustain through adversity) may display high levels of job satisfaction and, by extension, enhanced levels of job performance.

In Support of Others: An Examination of Psychological Capital and Job Satisfaction in Academic Staff

James A. Mello
Assistant Provost for Financial Planning
University of Hartford
West Hartford, Connecticut

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between psychological capital and job satisfaction among academic support staff. An online questionnaire served as the primary data source with follow-up personal interviews used to provide descriptive information that complemented the quantitative data. This study explores the relationship between the personal asset of psychological capital brought to the job and the work characteristics of the job itself.

This study applies the emerging concept of psychological capital to the previously understudied population of academic support staff in higher education. This study is also the first to examine psychological capital and job satisfaction within the context of higher education. This expansion of research into academic support staff offers additional insights for institutional leaders and highlights opportunities for leadership and performance enhancement. It suggests a relationship between reports of psychological capital by academic support staff and their reports of job satisfaction. It shows that institutions of higher education may wish to consider the inclusion of a psychological capital assessment in their hiring process for new academic support staff. Additionally, academic support staff may wish to consider including a self-assessment of psychological capital as part of their annual performance review and professional development planning.

In Support of Others: An Examination of Psychological Capital and Job Satisfaction in Academic Staff

James A. Mello
Assistant Provost for Financial Planning
University of Hartford
West Hartford, Connecticut

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between psychological capital and job satisfaction among academic support staff. An online questionnaire served as the primary data source with follow-up personal interviews used to provide descriptive information that complemented the quantitative data. This study explores the relationship between the personal asset of psychological capital brought to the job and the work characteristics of the job itself.

This study applies the emerging concept of psychological capital to the previously understudied population of academic support staff in higher education. This study is also the first to examine psychological capital and job satisfaction within the context of higher education. This expansion of research into academic support staff offers additional insights for institutional leaders and highlights opportunities for leadership and performance enhancement. It suggests a relationship between reports of psychological capital by academic support staff and their reports of job satisfaction. It shows that institutions of higher education may wish to consider the inclusion of a psychological capital assessment in their hiring process for new academic support staff. Additionally, academic support staff may wish to consider including a self-assessment of psychological capital as part of their annual performance review and professional development planning.

This paper presents the findings from an exploratory investigation into the relationship between reports of psychological capital (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007) and reports of job satisfaction (Hackman & Oldham, 1980) among academic support staff at a private institution of higher education in the northeastern United States. Academic support staff, the unit of analysis in this investigation, are defined as full-time, non-teaching, non-supervisory staff members. The administrative tasks performed by academic support staff include, but are not limited to, student advising, budget and operational management, data analysis, and student recruitment. Published academic research literature has generally ignored the role of academic support staff (Pitman, 2000). A number of international researchers (Gornitza & Larsen, 2004; Kusku, 2003; McRoy & Gibbs, 2009; Strajeri, 2009; Szekeres, 2006) have examined academic support staff within an organizational structure unreflective of the contemporary American model. Noticeably absent from the knowledge base are investigations of the work performed by academic support staff within the American model of higher education and the personal assets they bring to the work. This exploratory case study was designed to address this void by investigating the relationship between academic support staff’s reports of psychological capital and their reports of job satisfaction.

Psychological capital was defined in this study as a positive psychological state of development comprised of self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resiliency (Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007). For the purposes of this study, job satisfaction was defined as the perceived presence of the core job dimensions of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. As defined by Hackman and Oldham (1980), the presence of these job dimensions corresponds to the three psychological states of experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results. Individuals who display self-efficacy (confidence), optimism (positive expectation of future success), hope (perseverance to goals), and resiliency (ability to sustain through adversity) may display high levels of job satisfaction and, by extension, enhanced levels of job performance.