

The Impact of Positive Psychological Capital on Psychological Wellbeing of Higher Education Students Mediated Through Academic Stress

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ABSTRACT

Extensive research has affirmed the pivotal role of positive psychological capital in yielding favorable outcomes within work settings for both individuals and organizations. However, there is a conspicuous dearth of empirical studies delving into the application of psychological capital in educational settings, especially in terms of its potential to enhance positive psychological functioning and mental health of students. In response to this research gap, we undertook a quantitative cross-sectional study to explore the extent to which psychological capital predicts psychological wellbeing as mediated by perceived academic stress. Five hundred and sixty-two higher education students, pursuing both undergraduate and postgraduate studies in Eritrean higher education institutions, participated in the study. The participants completed a comprehensive battery of tests designed to measure their psychological capital, academic stress, and psychological wellbeing. The study employed a combination of hierarchical multiple regression and PROCESS macro analyses to estimate predictive and mediational effects with the help of SPSS version 26. The regression analyses substantiated our hypotheses, revealing a statistically significant and positive prediction of positive psychological capital on psychological wellbeing. This implies that higher education students with higher levels of psychological capital demonstrated enhanced positive psychological functioning. Moreover, the findings indicated that students grappling with heightened academic stress experienced compromised psychological wellbeing. The mediational analysis further unveiled that academic stress partially mediated the relationship between psychological capital and psychological wellbeing. This study explores the relationships among psychological capital, psychological wellbeing, and academic stress, contributing to the emerging body of literature on the application of positive psychology in the academic context. Furthermore, the findings are expected to offer valuable insights for higher

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education institutions and policymakers, providing practical guidance on cultivating students' psychological capital. These measures, in turn, could potentially enhance overall positive psychological functioning and mental health among students in the academic environment, while mitigating the detrimental effects of academic stress.

Keywords: positive psychological capital, academic stress, psychological wellbeing, higher education students