Chapter 3
Optimism and Hope in Work Organizations

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3.1 Introduction

Organizational management has been historically described as an immaterial activity. Or, as some may say, it would be the art of the imponderable. Challenges found in current corporate environments regard increasing competitiveness and how the impersonality of large businesses could be conciliated with the individual perspective of the employee. Psychology has basically managed these challenges in a diagnostic and, many times, in a retrospective way.

The conception and vision on the corporative world has changed and is still changing, moving away from a retrospective and remediating vision toward proactive vision and postures. It is in this context that the notions of emotional intelligence, transformative leadership, and positive psychology arise.

Despite the controversies in literature about the exact moment when the term positive psychology arose in the context of psychology, many authors locate it in the year of 2000, when Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi published the article "Positive Psychology: An Introduction" on the *American Psychologist*. The main purpose then was that the historical focus of psychology on remedial aspects provided it with an incomplete view on human beings and communities. The paper then proposed the focus on positive aspects of human, group, and society development.

Historically and conceptually, positive psychology is supported on three pillars. The first one would be the study of positive emotions; the second would be studies of positive traits such as powers and virtues, intelligence, and even the athletic abilities; and the third would be the study of positive institutions such as family, work, democracy, and the "moral circle" that could promote positive thinking. The authors

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list topics of interest to the psychology's vision such as happiness, faith, enthusiasm, calm, pleasure, and everything that would sustain the individual's and communities' functional aspects.

In the run of the positive psychology propositions, investigations started targeting the work relationships in an attempt to understand the characteristics of harmonious relationships between workers and organizations. The investigation in the area of positive psychology has consistently evidenced that preservation of emotions and positive cognitions at work can be an important determinant of pleasure, happiness, and well-being and also provide more efficient and long-lasting performance. Challenges inherent to the promotion of these feelings in complex organizations remain a niche little explored by literature but with instigating future.

Luthans and Crurch (2002) have proposed the use of positive psychology in the study of organizations. The authors used the term positive organizational behavior to refer to the "[…] study and application of the positively oriented power resources, and of the psychological abilities that start being measured, developed and effectively used to improve performance" (p. 59). Besides a component oriented to scientific investigations, the positive organizational behavior incorporates a component oriented to people's management to expand the employees' positive psychological capacities and its outcomes on the performance in and of organizations (Palma, Cunha, & Lopes, 2007; Siqueira, Martins, & Souza, 2014).

Besides managing financial and material capitals, Luthans and collaborators state that organizations should be capable of developing, maximizing, and managing the workers' psychological capital to improve performance and build competitive advantage. The psychological capital core construct is a positive psychological state characterized by optimism, high perception of self-efficacy, hope, and resilience. These constructs are measurable and have theoretical and empirical grounds and strong impact on the organizational performance (Luthans, Avey, Avolio, & Peterson, 2010; Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007a; Luthans, Luthans, & Luthans, 2004). According to Palma et al. (2007), these psychological states are characterized by being developable, subject to maturation and improvement, and, this way, contribute to more efficient performance management.

This chapter will approach two components of psychological capital: optimism and hope. The first one is approached next.

3.2 Optimism

The rise of positive psychology increased the number of surveys about optimism, evidencing its positive effect on the psychological and physical well-being of individuals or on organizational outcomes.

This increase in the number of studies about optimism brought different conceptualizations to this construct, including the explanatory style of optimism (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978), dispositional optimism (Scheier & Carver, 1985), realistic optimism (Schneider, 2001), positive illusions (Taylor & Brown, 1988), and optimistic cognitive strategies (Norem & Cantor, 1986a, 1986b). Despite the

different approaches to it, the consensual idea is that the construct refers to positive thinking that generates positive expectations to the future. People that perceive the possibility of achieving the likely results keep on fighting even when their progress is slow-paced or difficult, and, as such, it is closely related to motivation (Scheier & Carver, 1993).

The first authors to study optimism in psychology were Martin Seligman and collaborators, framing it in an explanatory model of learned helplessness (Abramson et al., 1978). In the 1970s, Seligman and collaborators theorized learned helplessness: individuals or animals subjected to uncontrollable negative events perceive the inefficacy of their own behavior and settle for it, i.e., do not act to inhibit the negative event, becoming passive. The authors, however, have observed that one third of the human beings and animals in the same situation did not settle for it. To explain this phenomenon, Seligman theorized that the explanatory style of the events differentiated the individuals, i.e., the way people typically explain and construe the causes of the events happening to them (Seligman, 1990).

The individuals' future expectations derive from a model used to explain positive or negative past events, using three parameters: permanent/temporary, internal/external causality, and global/specific. In the face of situations perceived as negative, the optimists provide explanations delimited in time (temporary), originated by factors external to them (external causality), and limited to that situation (specific), and in the face of positive events, the explanations are related to internal, stable, and global causes. The pessimists, in turn, provide an explanation opposite to that of the optimists (Peterson, 1992, 2000; Peterson & Steen, 2002; Seligman, 1990).

Optimists do not feel powerless because they keep on acting and overcoming the obstacles they find, even in hard situations (Seligman, 1990). Moreover, they expect to have more control on the future and, therefore, are more resilient (Reivich & Gillham, 2003). Although considered a cognitive trait, the explanatory style can be changed (Peterson & Steen, 2002; Seligman, 1990). Literature points out measuring instruments aimed to measure the explanatory style of optimism, such as the self-report questionnaire Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ) (Peterson et al., 1982), the Content Analysis of Verbatim Explanations (CAVE), the Optimism-Pessimism Scale (PSM) (Colligan, Offord, Malinchoc, Schulman, & Seligman, 1994), and the Revised Optimism-Pessimism Scale (Malinchoc, Offord, & Colligan, 1995). The last two ones were constructed to be used in the clinic scope.

Scheier and Carver (1985) made a second theorization on optimism. According to the authors, the dispositional optimism refers to a relatively stable personality trait characterized by individuals who hope that life events happen as they wish and, in general, believe that more good things will happen to them than bad things. The main idea of this model is that human behavior is goal-oriented, either by avoiding what is undesirable or pursuing what is desirable. When individuals perceive that their current state is detaching from the goal, they behave in such a way as to reduce this discrepancy. In this process, if the individual perceives she/he cannot reduce this discrepancy, then she/he will reduce the efforts and interrupt the action. On the other hand, if expectations are favorable she/he will increase efforts. Personal inclinations can influence expectations. Optimism and pessimisms are then general

expectations on the occurrence of positive and negative results about the own future. Optimistic individuals are highly likely to feel safe after assessing their own expectations and will be more persistent and confident when faced with difficulties. On the other hand, pessimists will be doubtful and hesitant. Optimism and pessimism are considered one-dimension constructs with a bipolar structure of two opposite poles (Carver & Scheier, 1998, 2003; Scheier & Carver, 1985).

Optimists can accept life difficulties more easily and use active coping more frequently when efforts seem to entail positive results. Moreover, they are less prone to give up and interrupt the pursuit for their goals (Carver & Scheier, 2003). Finally, optimists tend to have more confidence and persistent posture, perceiving problems as challenges, while pessimists are more insecure and less confident in their own success (Carver & Scheier, 2002).

First Scheier and Carver (1985) proposed the *Life Orientation Test (LOT) as instrument to mediate the dispositional optimist. After some criticism about its validity, they proposed the Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R) (Scheier, Carver, & Bridges,* 1994*). In Brazil, the LOT-R was adapted and validated by Bastianello, Pacico, and Hutz (*2014*).*

In 2000, Peterson tried to integrate the two definitions of optimism, differentiating the little and the big optimism. This last would be a more comprehensive and dispositional optimism that involves positive expectations to the future. The little optimism, in turn, consists of specific expectations, i.e., situational optimism linked to positive results and related to specific situations. Peterson, Scheier, and Carver's (1982) definition refers to big optimism, while that by Seligman (1990) refers to little optimism as it is focused on concrete and specific events.

A similar idea proposed by Peterson (2000) is that optimism brings components of traits and states. The optimistic traits are stable individual differences, while the state optimists change according to the situations and context (Burke, Joyner, Czech, & Wilson, 2000). Kluemper, Little, and DeGroot (2009) state that Peterson's (2000) differentiation between big and little optimism would be the component of optimistic trait and state, respectively. The optimist trait refers to positive experiences and contributes to individual's health, while the optimistic state refers to positive episodes in specific contexts such as favorable outcomes at work.

Considering what has been said up to now, literature indicates that people with high level of optimism are more prone to reach their goals in comparison to those with high level of pessimism. In fact, many studies showed the positive relation between optimism and physical and psychological well-being of individuals (Peterson & Bossio, 2000; Scheier & Carver, 1992; Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 2000) and the relation between optimism and job satisfaction, performance, productivity, and absenteeism (e.g., Kluemper et al., 2009; Luthans et al., 2007a; Mäkikangas & Kinnunen, 2003; Seligman & Schulman, 1986).

However, Norem (2000) affirms that optimists and pessimists can be high performers. Norem and Cantor (1986a, 1986b) proposed two cognitive strategies labeled defensive pessimism and strategic optimism [these cognitive strategies could be measured by the *Optimism-Pessimism Prescreening Questionnaire* (OPPQ)

(Norem & Cantor, 1986a) and by the *Revised Defensive Pessimism Questionnaire* (DPQ) (Norem, 2000)]. Individuals that employ the defensive pessimism strategy to safeguard their self-esteem in the event of failure develop low expectations about future events. Those using the strategic optimism, in turn, keep high expectations and, if required, reframe the undesired event if it occurs.

The individuals that use the defensive pessimist cognitive strategy have low expectations about situations, even if they have succeeded in similar circumstances. It happens because of their high level of anxiety before important situations and/or goals and because they give deep thought to the likely negative events. This helps them to enhance their feeling of control over the situation and reduce anxiety. Thinking of all likely negative results of a given event makes them struggle to improve their own performance (Norem, 2000).

The strategic optimism, in turn, refers to a cognitive strategy employed by individuals that do not get anxious when dealing with important situations that define the achievement of significant or risky goals. These people feel capable of controlling the situation and have high expectations in relation of the outcomes. They are prepared to achieve high performance and avoid thinking in advance about the potential results and thus do not get anxious (Norem, 2000). Although strategic optimism and defensive pessimism have different expectations and/or behaviors prior to the effective performance, the two cognitive strategies can generate good performance (Norem, 2000). Despite the affirmation that optimists are not more competent than non-optimists, the good performance of optimists could be attributed to their stronger perseverance to reach and prioritize the most important goals (Carver & Scheier, 2014).

Despite the evidence about the benefits of optimism, Weinstein (1980) warns about its disadvantages, defining unrealistic optimism as a distortion, a misperception characteristic to those individuals who believe that, in comparison to others, the probability of negative events happening to them is low, while the probability of positive events is high. Therefore, they do not anticipate negative events. In fact, a study with a sample of smokers showed that unrealistic optimists underestimate the risk of having lung cancer (Weinstein, Marcus, & Moser, 2005).

Taylor and Brown (1988) reviewed research works about positive illusions. The individuals that miss these positive illusions are more prone to depression, distress, and low self-esteem. Thus, according to the authors, positive illusions about the self seem to be useful in adverse conditions, because they help individuals to cope with difficult events that could threaten their self-esteem and vision of future.

Although Weinstein affirms that optimism leads to a distorted vision of reality, Schneider (2001) says that one can be optimistic and realistic at the same time, defining realistic optimism as a tendency to sustain a positive vision before the evidence of the real world. According to the author, being an optimist means to be lenient with one's own past, appreciate the present, and seek for opportunities in the future, including the analysis of reality and active effort to discover and change malleable aspects of the environment, as well as endeavor to fulfill their own goals.

3.3 Hope

Future always seems favorable since people assign to it the possibilities of promising changes, achievements, and better life. Human beings, in their private thinking, have wonderful visions of tomorrow, since the past is full of events about which nothing can be done (Snyder & Lopez, 2009). The present, in turn, is so quick that it seems to offer few opportunities of effectively performing any change. Therefore, future would be the place where all wishes would come true and full life would be achieved. Human beings are always waiting for something (Sartori & Grossi, 2008). This state related to positive perspectives of future was labeled "hope." Sartori and Grossi (2008) have listed a wide range of concepts to the term. These range from "originated from faith in God" to "give meaning and happiness to life," passing by "coping strategy" and "expectation to reach a goal." The authors state that lack of hope makes the individual opaque, with no perspectives and waiting for death.

In a retrospective on the hopeful thinking, Snyder and Lopez (2009) say it has been presented all over the recorded human history. The authors also affirm that even when hidden, hope is revealed in everyday words that express the belief in a positive future. Planning and believing would reflect an assumption of more generous future and that actions performed could lead to it. In the Greek mythology, for example, the authors (Snyder & Lopez, 2009) mention the myth of Pandora's box that, when opened, releases to the world all the evil stored in it. To the authors, the two possible versions to the myth represent, on one hand, the success of hope and, on the other hand, the antidote to the evil that hope represents. In the religious light, hope, according to the authors, produced great works (physical or philosophic) although in the Middle Ages it could have given rise to an intellectual paralysis that would only be broken in the Renaissance when, in a mercantile society, the so-called worldly goals overrode the preparation for death or post-death salvation. The idea of more concrete possibility of a better future is consolidated in the Industrial Revolution, when an increasing number of individuals start enjoying better quality of life.

Simply defined, hope would be the belief that life could be better. This is not a passive belief; rather, it is followed up and leveraged by motivations and efforts that lead individuals to this direction. Hope is not translated only in a wish; it is a way of thinking that leads to actions to fulfill its content. Therefore, these are meaningful actions.

There is a consensus among authors that early systematizations about the concept of hope are in the work by Snyder et al. (1991) who proposed that hope is the desire to reach a goal and the capacity of conceiving means or strategies to do so. This concept joins affective and cognitive processes since the desire (or willingness) is a feeling, while plan to achieve a goal is a cognitive process (Siqueira et al., 2014). Snyder and Lopez (2009), in a work where they discuss and expand the discussion about the concept, define hope as the thinking directed to goals, in which the individual uses the perceived capacity of finding ways that lead to the intended goals (pathway-based thinking) and the required motivations to use these pathways

(agency-based thinking). The authors consider the possibility of three types of goals. The first would be the goals that differ for their estimated time to be achieved. These could be achieved in the short time (minutes or hours) or in long term, which would take longer to be reached. The second type regards goals aimed at approximation—goals one wants to achieve—or preventive which relates to events one wants to interrupt. The last type of goal listed by the authors refers to the difficulty of achievement (easy or difficult).

According to the authors, people with high indexes of hope have positive emotional configurations and a feeling of pleasure resulting from their history of successes, while those with low indexes of hope experience negative emotions and a feeling of emptiness reinforced by the history of failed attempts to reach their goals. They also affirm that people with high indexes of hope have the capability of elaborating alternative pathways to reach their goals.

The theory proposed by Snyder and Lopez says that hope feeds the pursuit of results and is fed by the experience of successes that brings about positive emotions, in a virtuous circle that can even interrupt the outbreak of negative feelings. According to the proposed theory, hope has no inherited antecedents. Rather, it would be grounded on a cause-and-effect learning transmitted by caregivers to the children who would then mature the belief that hope is the causal power of the consequences of their behaviors. Therefore, hope is a configuration totally learned in relation to the goal-oriented thought with no inherited contributions (Snyder & Lopez, 2009).

In the authors' perspective, hope could predict high academic and sports performance, as well as the observed relationships with high indexes of optimism, happiness, positive emotions, satisfaction (with life), and good relationship with individuals.

The investigations about hope have another new perspective that is still little explored: the collective hope (Snyder & Feldman, 2000). According to the authors that proposed the concept, collective hope refers to goal-oriented thinking of a large number of persons that, otherwise, could not be achieved individually. According to the authors, some topics to investigate the collective hope would be policies on political parties and environmental preservation. However, despite being promising topics, no empirical work was found.

The possibility of measuring hope, which is one of the conditions to consolidate the construct, was one of the initial concerns of the authors (Siqueira et al., 2014; Snyder & Lopez, 2009; Snyder et al., 1991). At international level, Snyder and Lopez (2009) report two measurements of the construct developed by Snyder et al. (1991) and Snyder, Hoza, and collaborators (1997) that had good psychometric indexes used Likert-type scales and were oriented to the adult and infantile audiences. The first one, composed by 12 items that identified two factors (agency and pathways), was translated into Portuguese by Lopes and Cunha in 2005, keeping the original characteristics. At national level, Pacico, Batianello, Zanon, and Hutz (2013) adapted to the Portuguese language two measurements of hope with good-quality psychometric indexes. More recently, Pacico and Bastianello (2014) developed two scales of hope. The first one (dispositional hope), inspired by the original

scale of Snyder, Harris, and collaborators (1991), has 12 items and is unifactor and mainly oriented to adults. The second one, called cognitive hope, inspired by Staats' scale (originally published in 1989), has two columns on which respondents mark, in 6-point scales, to which extent they expected that some facts (that make up the item) would come to happen and when they expected these. The two scales have good accuracy psychometric indexes. More recently, Siqueira et al. (2014) built and validated a measurement instrument to the psychological capital in the workplace with good psychometric indexes, where one of the factors refers to hope. The 6-item factor related to hope measures two sub-factors: agency, related to the workers' belief about the resources available to them to be successful at work, and pathways that concern the means that workers believe they will use to succeed at work.

3.4 Optimism, Hope, Individual, and Organizations

In studies on positive organizational behavior, optimism is a psychological state associated to expectations of positive outcomes or duties of current and future events, including positive emotions and motivation, characterized for being realistic (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007b).

Individuals with optimistic explanatory style think, behave, and relate with other persons in a way to pursue larger number of positive events in their own lives. In opposition, subjects presenting pessimistic explanatory style insist on thinking negatively, are careless in relation to the others, and behave in a way to be more frequently exposed to problems (Luthans et al., 2007b).

Different surveys show the positive effect of optimism on the physical and psychological well-being (Peterson & Bossio, 2000; Scheier & Carver, 1992, 1993; Scheier et al., 2000) and on social relationships (Carver & Scheier, 2014). For example, Sonnetang (2015) states that well-being is affected by personal resources such as self-efficacy, optimism, and self-esteem.

Dispositional optimism has been positively related to job satisfaction (Luthans et al., 2007b; Mäkikangas & Kinnunen, 2003), performance (Carlomagno, Natividade, de Oliveira, & Hutz, 2014; Kluemper et al., 2009; Luthans et al., 2007a, 2007b; Youssef & Luthans, 2007), happiness in the workplace (Youssef & Luthans, 2007), creativity (Carlomagno et al., 2014), emotional and social support in the workplace, perception of organizational support (Barbosa, 2010), affective organizational commitment (Barbosa, 2010; Kluemper et al., 2009), and productivity (Seligman & Schulman, 1986) and negatively related to emotional exhaustion (Mäkikangas & Kinnunen, 2003; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2007), mental distress, physical symptoms (Mäkikangas & Kinnunen, 2003), burnout (Alarcon, Eschleman, & Bowling, 2009; Kluemper et al., 2009), and absenteeism (Avey, Patera, & West, 2006; Seligman & Schulman, 1986).

Optimism has direct and positive effect on the perception of job resources (Barkhuizen, Rothmann, & Vijver, 2014), proactive coping (Chang & Chan, 2015; Scheier et al., 1994), engagement at work, particularly the components of vigor and

dedication (Salminen, Mäkikangas, & Feldt, 2014), affective commitment, job satisfaction, and task performance (Kluemper et al., 2009) and has direct and negative effect on the burnout (Chang & Chan, 2015; Kluemper et al., 2009) and stress perception (Yew, Lim, Haw, & Gan, 2015). Moreover, the optimistic explanatory style is associated to high motivational levels (Reivich & Gillham, 2003), as well as to perseverance; success in the academic, athletic, military, occupational, and political scope; and popularity (Peterson, 2000).

In addition to the direct effect, optimism has an indirect effect (in moderation relationship) on burnout, engagement at work, health conditions, and organizational commitment (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). It also mediates the relationship of control at work and dedication, i.e., even in situations of low control, optimist individuals maintain high dedication (Salminen et al., 2014). In addition, it moderates the effect of the relation of organizational variables (organizational climate, insecurity at work, and temporal pressure at work) with mental distress in women (Mäkikangas & Kinnunen, 2003). There is also evidence of a negative relationship between optimistic entrepreneurs and performance in new businesses (Hmieleski & Baron, 2009).

Taking this evidence in consideration, optimist collaborators can bring advantages to the organizations. Optimism as state has stronger predictive power for organizational outcomes than the dispositional optimism (Kluemper et al., 2009). Therefore, organizations should consider optimism as an important result and develop it in their collaborators since, as it is a psychological state rather than a stable trait, it is more flexible and likely to be promoted by the organizations (Luthans, 2002).

Several cognitive techniques have been proposed and applied to change pessimism into optimism and to promote optimism (Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Norman, & Combs, 2006; Luthans, Avey, & Patera, 2008; Riskind, Sarampote, & Mercier, 1996; Seligman, 1990). The strategies of cognitive change proposed by Schneider (2001) involve being indulgent in relation to the past, appraise the present, and pursue opportunities to the future, besides the development of an affective social network to help breaking the pessimism cycle. Techniques like mentoring, coaching, role modeling, and teamwork, for example, can also promote optimism. The constructive feedback, social recognition, and attention foster positive behaviors and enable changing the beliefs and attitudes of pessimist individuals toward the optimism (Luthans et al., 2007b).

Luthans et al. (2008) have presented empirical evidence that psychological capital can be developed. The authors analyzed the psychological capital developed through Internet-based 2-h training with the participation of 187 workers randomly appointed to the group that was given training to develop psychological capital, while 177 workers were appointed to the control group. Two training sessions were held, and in both groups, the psychological capital was measured in the beginning and at the end. The research gathered evidence that psychological capital can be developed through training, considering the development of the psychological capital among workers that had been trained.

In addition to individual interventions, the organizational interventions are crucial to promote optimism. In fact, to Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, and Schaufeli (2009), the psychological processes are dynamic, and resources and well-being cyclically interact. In other words, the organizational and personal resources predict the organizational commitment that, in turn, predicts the organizational and personal resources.

Hope, in turn, although being a relatively recent topic, has already generated significant production in the international and national literature in the organizational and work areas (Reppold, Gurge, & Schiavon, 2015). Carlomagno et al. (2014), reviewing the literature, report to find studies that confirmed the positive and significant correlations between hope and professional performance, hope and positive performance evaluations made by supervisors, besides predicting positive performance self-evaluations, and increase motivation and confidence in the workplace. Hopeful individuals also proved to be more capable of selecting more efficacious strategies to overcome challenges. In 2013, Pacico showed that hope is significantly correlated with better education, lower absenteeism, self-efficacy, optimism, satisfaction with life, and positive affects. Still in 2007, Martinez, Ferreira, Sousa, and Cunha, in a study carried out in Portugal, say that hope would be positively and strongly related to presenteeism and negatively with depression and anxiety. Although present in literature, there are fewer works on organizational actions (Palma et al., 2007). The authors mention the significant contributions of hope (and the psychological capital as a whole) in environments considered entrepreneurial. Marujo, Miguel Neto, Caetano, and Rivero (2007) also report the contributions of positive thinking to organizations and societies. The authors affirm that the institutionalization of virtuous and "noble" actions, in organizations and in the society, would generate positive results in the light of performance and could also suppress negative effects. They also affirm that, although the negative is not insignificant, joining the individual's and organization's positive motivational powers could change organizations and communities through the analysis of positive actions in the past and of the virtues and powers that have proved to be efficacious.

Snyder and Lopez (2009) report that hopeful individuals in the workplace were those conscious about their jobs, presented positive attitudes toward their peers and local communities, were kind with fellows and clients, did not blame the colleagues management or clients when complications arose at work, found good strategies to achieve the proposed goals, and, above all, could get motivated in normal circumstances and were dynamic in hardships. Corporations identified as hopeful, in turn, were those whose managers were not feared, that provided chances of success for all, whose environment was respectful to all, that use feedback as a tool of improvement rather than a punishment, whose decisions considered the position of all actors, that delegated the responsibility of implementing new ideas to their authors, and that sought long-lasting relationships with clients, in detriment to goals (Carlsen, Hagen, & Mortensen, 2012; Snyder & Lopez, 2009).

In a meta-analysis that investigated the psychological capital impact on attitudes (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and well-being), behaviors (organizational citizenship), and employees' performance (self-evaluation and evaluation by

Table 3.1 Effects of optimism and hope in the organizational context

Optimism		Hope	
Variables/results	Authors	Variables/results	Authors
Perception of resources at work	Barkhuizen et al. (2014)	Professional performance, positive performance evaluations and motivation in the workplace, and confidence	Carlomagno et al. (2014), Marujo et al. (2007)
Proactive coping	Chang and Chan (2015), Scheier et al. (1994)	Lower absenteeism, self-efficacy, optimism, satisfaction with life and positive affects	Pacico (2013)
Work engagement	Salminen et al. (2014)	Presenteeism, less reports of depression, and anxiety	Martinez et al. (2007)
Affective commitment, job satisfaction, and task performance	Kluemper et al. (2009)	Better relationship with peers, greater dynamism at work, good strategies to reach goals	Snyder and Lopez (2009), Carlsen et al. (2012)
High motivational levels	Reivich and Gillham (2003)	Life quality and organizational citizenship	Nafei (2015)

supervisors), Avey, Reichard, Luthans, and Mhatre (2011) computed 51 works and a sample of 12,567 employees. The keyword *capital psicológico* (psychological capital, in Portuguese) was searched in published and unpublished works, in an exhaustive search from 1874 to the time when the study was produced. The results pointed out positive and significant relationships among all the variables investigated in all studies comprised by the meta-analysis.

In another meta-analysis published in 2015, Nafei reports positive, significant, and strong links between optimism, hope, and other elements that make up the psychological capital (resilience and self-efficacy) with behaviors of organizational citizenship and reports of better quality of life.

Table 3.1 summarizes the main findings of investigations that related optimism and hope with outcomes in organizational contexts.

The results reported in the paragraphs above foresee managerial actions to implement or improve optimism and hope in work organizations. This will be approached next.

3.5 Applications

Considering the evidence found in several works that show the positive relations among optimism, hope, and desired results in the scope of work corporations, authors investigated strategies to improve the psychological capital through organizational actions.

The strategies listed by the authors are based on two common assumptions: the psychological capital entails benefits to quality of life and satisfaction of employees as well as to the competitive effectiveness of organizations (Luthans & Youssef, 2004), and its characteristics are subject to change (pessimism/optimism and hopelessness/hope) through educational or environmental interventions (Carlsen et al., 2012; Nafei, 2015).

In an attempt to increase managers' and employees' hope, Luthans and Youssef (2004) postulate that organizational goals should be clearly defined and communicated. Subgoals should be outlined as stages to be surmounted to reach the final goals. According to the authors, these subgoals should be reachable in the short or medium term so that employees and managers perceive them as attainable. The scope of small goals could increase general hope through the perceived likeliness of success (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). Regarding optimism, Luthans and Youssef (2004) postulate that organizational interventions should lead employees to rethink and reassess their past mistakes, appraise the positive aspects of the present life, and proactively identify the opportunities for future success. The authors conclude their work saying that flexible corporate environment attentive to contemporary demands is crucial to enhance the psychological capital of their teams.

In 2010, Luthans, Avey, and Avolio proposed a training program with tasks specifically aimed to the development of hope and optimism in work organizations. The tasks had the following purposes: (1) plan the goals; (2) define pathways to reach the goals, including the obstacles (increase of hope); and (3) build reliable relationships that increased positive expectations of future (increase of optimism). Training was made up by short tasks to be performed in group, focused on short-term planning and feedback from the group. Before-after measurements of the degrees of hope and optimism showed that goals were fulfilled.

The previous study resembles the proposal by Rodríguez-Muñoz and Bakker (2013) who consider efficacious interventions as those that promote the well-being of workers when tasks are structured and areas are defined. These authors also add that a participatory focus should be adopted to promote the cooperation between management and employees. During interventions, the employees' arguments are to be considered, as well as the organization's responsibility. Finally, the intervention should be evaluated. The comparison of these studies show that planning of goals, definition of pathways, delimitation of tasks, and, above all, feedback assist to expand optimism and work engagement.

The intervention program on work engagement, aimed to improve behaviors of civility and learning of new behaviors toward balanced and healthy everyday life of employees, presented positive results in up to six months after the intervention. The interventions aimed at the development of psychological capital (self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience) were recommended because these could affect work engagement, according to Bakker, Albrecht, and Michael (2011). The studies presented above and summarized in Table 3.1 show the relationships between optimism and hope and important aspects of the organizational life such as performance, behavior of organizational citizenship, employee's physical well-being, confidence, satisfaction, and quality of life in the workplace. These are specific studies that raise

criticism about their capacity of generalization. However, favorable indicators cannot be neglected.

Besides focusing on the development of the employee's psychological capital, the studies have also approached managers. In a meta-analytical study that comprised eight studies carried out in 2014 in education institutions in Egypt, which approached the impact of psychological capital on behaviors of organizational citizenship and reported quality of life, Nafei (2015) reports that all studies found positive relationships between the investigated variables. The author concludes the work listing the managerial actions required to develop psychological capital among employees: (1) identify situation that inhibit the flourishing of psychological capital through feedback suggesting likely pathways to reach success; (2) formulate strategies to reach the proposed goals; (3) identify the role of each subordinate in the organizational development; (4) clearly inform subordinates about what is expected from the performance of their roles; and (5) define a realistic career plan. These managerial actions and characteristics surely refer to people management and are in line with the vision of Snyder and Lopez (2009). These authors sustain that managers should provide a wide range of tasks and safe environments with fair earnings and friendship to ensure the effective participation of all in the decisions that affect them, creating an environment of cooperation and dialogue. The listed actions and concerns refer to policies and practices of human resources management.

Bozek (2015) focused on the role of managers to implement psychological capital in work organizations. According to the author, the main trait of effective managers in this task is the volunteer participation in programs designed for this purpose. According to Bozek (2015), effective participation is identified by longer time in contact with peers and subordinates in other environments than cabinets; simple and straightforward communication between senior members and subordinates; employees treated as partners that deserve individual respect; trust, rather than control and discipline, that shapes relationships; work that is developed in groups from different organizational segments; and managers who are continuously trained to perform their duties and listen to subordinates in decisions that affect them. In brief, the role of managers and management policies and practices should be the object of study when the aim is to develop optimism and hope in the organizational context. In broader terms, the same is true to the development of psychological capital as a whole.

3.6 Conclusions

In the current world of work configuration, in which organizations must fit into the new changes of environment, workers should not only have good knowledge and technical capacity but also psychological resources that help them to be optimally adjusted to the ever-changing work environment. Some psychological traits seem to facilitate better coping with negative and stressing situation by perceiving the life events in a more positive way (optimism) or acting on the environment to make it more attractive or pleasant (hope).

Optimistic and hopeful individuals are a new opportunity of positive, healthy, and productive labor force, which is also independent, open to new ideas, and capable of accepting changes and organizational developments. These workers' characteristics enable them to cope with changes in the world of work in a more effective way than the others. Therefore, collaborators with high level of optimism and hope seem to have a differential in the work environment (Luthans et al., 2007a).

Organizations have the possibility of working on their environment to emphasize its strengths and adjust its weaknesses, using a proactive and positive approach (Luthans & Crurch, 2002). They should recognize optimism and hope as important psychological capitals that have positive impact on the workers' well-being or the organizations' effectiveness (Luthans, 2002).

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