

## **TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS AS CATALYSTS FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL IN MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOMS**

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### **Abstract**

Hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism are the four positive psychological resources that make up Psychological Capital (PsyCap), which is defined within Fred Luthans' framework of Psychological Capital. PsyCap has been extensively studied in organizational contexts, but its relational foundations in educational contexts- particularly in multicultural classrooms in the Global South-have received little theoretical attention. This paper makes the theoretical claim that interactions between teachers and students serve as the primary sources of students' growth in psychological capital. The study presents the case that students' psychological resources in culturally diverse classrooms-which are marked by variations in caste, class, gender, language, and socioeconomic background-are co-constructed through pedagogical interactions, identity recognition, emotional support, and inclusive teaching methods rather than just being individual characteristics. Academic self-efficacy is improved by teacher affirmation; hope is fostered by culturally sensitive goal scaffolding; resilience is increased by relational trust; and contextual optimism is fostered by equitable classroom environments. On the other hand, interactions that are marginalizing or culturally insensitive could hinder the growth of these psychological abilities. This paper offers a conceptual framework that demonstrates how inclusive teacher-student relationships foster academic engagement, psychological safety, and a sense of belonging. The study's conclusion highlights the importance of developing relational pedagogies in order to support students' flourishing in diverse societies and offers implications for teacher education, institutional policy, and future qualitative research in multicultural higher education settings.

**Keywords:** Psychological Capital, teacher-student relationships, multicultural classrooms, positive psychology, resilience, hope, higher education

### **Introduction**

Teaching and learning in the Global South have changed as a result of the growing diversity of higher education classrooms. Universities in India and other multicultural societies unite students from diverse linguistic, socioeconomic, caste, gender, and geographic backgrounds. These multicultural environments offer chances for inclusive development as well as difficulties with identity negotiation, belonging, and academic adjustment.

Students' psychological resources are crucial in determining their engagement, perseverance, and success in this complicated setting. Psychological Capital, which was first created within Positive Organizational Behavior, is a significant concept that describes these beneficial resources. Hope, self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience are examples of psychological capital-state-like abilities that can be cultivated.

However, these elements are conceptualized as internal individual resources in most PsyCap research. This viewpoint carries the risk of ignoring the contextual and relational processes that give rise to psychological strengths, particularly in educational environments with various cultural backgrounds. The current study makes the case that, in multicultural classrooms, interactions between teachers and students act as vital catalysts for the growth of students' psychological capital.

PsyCap, a term coined by Luthans et al. (2007), is made up of four interrelated, state-like resources: optimism (positive expectations for the future), resilience (recovering from setbacks), efficacy (confidence in task mastery), and hope (goal-directed energy and pathways). PsyCap's lower stability ( $r=0.52-0.76$  over time), in contrast to stable traits like intelligence (heritability  $\sim 0.5-0.8$ ), allows for development through micro-interventions, resulting in 10-15% performance uplifts in meta-analyses.

PsyCap protects students from stressors in the classroom: optimistic students attribute success to themselves, resilient peers overcome setbacks, and hopeful students persevere academically. PsyCap helps multicultural youth conflict isolation and microaggressions, and research has shown that it improves GPA and reduces anxiety in immigrant cohorts.

### **Pivotal Role of Teacher-Student Relationships**

According to Pianta's (2001) TSR model, relationships are framed along three dimensions: closeness (affectionate bonds), conflict (antagonism), and dependency (clinging), with closeness driving positive outcomes. PsyCap various aspects are modeled by high-quality TSR, which is characterized by empathy, consistency, and cultural awareness. These facets include teachers serving as optimistic narrators, resilience coaches after failure, efficacy builders through feedback, and hopeful pathfinders.

Culturally sensitive TSR adjusts to differences in a variety of settings: individualistic students value autonomy and directness, while collectivistic students (like South Asian students) value authority and harmony in relationships. This is demonstrated by School Learning Communities (SLC) with PsyCap training, which improves teacher competencies and student cultural gains ( $\eta^2=0.72$ ).

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>in</b>	<b>PsyCap Opportunity</b>	<b>Evidence Example</b>
<b>Multicultural TSR</b>			
Cultural Misunderstandings		Builds Resilience via conflict navigation	Thai SLC study: post-training rebound skills
Belonging Gaps		Fosters Hope/Efficacy	Warmth correlates with agency in migrants
Bias Exposure		Cultivates Optimism	Fair TSR yield positive attributions

### Objective

1. To theorize how teacher-student relationships cultivate PsyCap facets (hope, efficacy, resilience, optimism) in multicultural classrooms.
2. To identify multicultural moderators (e.g., cultural orientation, teacher competencies) influencing TSR-PsyCap dynamics.
3. To propose interventions like SLC-PsyCap training for enhancing relational equity and student outcomes.

### Literature Review

**1. B. Hazn- Liran et al., (2025)** explore PsyCap correlations with adjustment and emotion regulation in LD students. They took Students with learning disabilities (Israeli education context) as a sample. Using Correlational surveys; PsyCap scale, adjustment measures; regression analysis as methodology for their study. The result of the study is that PsyCap positively linked to adjustment ( $r > 0.40$ ), buffering emotional challenges in academic settings. The study is limited to Learning Disabilities subgroup; gaps in general multicultural classroom applications

**2. Narulmon Prayai et.al., (2025)** examine how integrating School as Learning Communities (SLC) and PsyCap enhances teacher competencies for multicultural student inclusion. They took 30 teachers from urban Bangkok multicultural schools as a sample. Quasi-experimental design with pre/post-tests; SLC-PsyCap training program (12 weeks), using MANOVA for competencies and student surveys.

the result for the study is that Teacher competencies improved significantly (Wilks'  $\Lambda = 0.28$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ); student cultural understanding rose ( $\eta^2 = 0.72$ ), linked to teacher PsyCap gains in

hope/resilience. The study is Limited to urban Thailand; needs rural/longitudinal extensions and student PsyCap direct measures.

**3. Ashley A Boat et al., (2024)** Synthesize culturally responsive TSR impacts on SEL and academic outcomes in diverse settings. They use Meta-analysis of 55 studies (N>10,000 students, multicultural U.S./global) by using Systematic review/meta-regression; effect sizes via Hedges'  $g$  on TSR-SEL links. The result shows that Strong TSR correlated with SEL/PsyCap-like outcomes ( $g=0.35$ ); cultural attunement moderated gains in minority groups. The study only had Aggregates data; requires causal RCTs in non-Western multicultural contexts.

**4. J. Hilden et al., (2024)** investigate how TSR quality builds student resilience in diverse primary classrooms. 450 students/teachers from multicultural European schools as a sample and use Longitudinal survey (2 years); Pianta TSR scale, resilience measures; multilevel modeling. The result for the study shows that the Closeness in TSR predicted resilience gains ( $\beta=0.42$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), buffering cultural stressors; low conflict amplified effects. The study focuses on primary levels; lacks secondary/multicultural PsyCap integration beyond resilience.

## **Theoretical Foundations**

### **Psychological Capital in Educational Contexts**

Fred Luthans conceptualized Psychological Capital as a higher-order construct consisting of:

- **Hope**- goal-directed determination and pathway generation
- **Self-efficacy**- belief in one's capability to perform tasks
- **Resilience**- capacity to recover from adversity
- **Optimism**- positive attribution regarding success

PsyCap is becoming more and more relevant in educational psychology, despite its initial application to organizational performance. Higher PsyCap students exhibit better wellbeing, perseverance, and academic engagement. However, the impact of classroom relationships on these capacities has received little consideration.

### **Positive Psychology and Relational Well-Being**

Positive psychology places a strong emphasis on flourishing and strength. Recent advances demonstrate that well-being is relationally anchored rather than solely intrapersonal. Social networks that provide support are conducive to flourishing.

One of the most significant relational systems influencing psychological development in

educational settings is the interactions between teachers and students. Students feel more capable, independent, and like they belong when they have supportive interactions.

### **Self-Determination Theory and Basic Psychological Needs**

According to self-determination theory, people need relatedness, competence, and autonomy in order to flourish. Intrinsic motivation and engagement are increased when teachers exhibit behaviors that meet these criteria.

When teachers provide:

- Autonomy support → Students develop hope and proactive goal pursuit
- Competence feedback → Students build self-efficacy
- Emotional warmth → Students cultivate resilience and optimism

Thus, teacher–student relationships are foundational to PsyCap development.

### **Social Identity and Multicultural Classrooms**

Social Identity Theory discusses how belongingness and self-concept are shaped by group membership. Validating one's identity becomes essential in intercultural education.

Students from underrepresented backgrounds may feel excluded or threatened by stereotypes. These impacts can be mitigated by teachers who support students' cultural identities, boosting their self-esteem and optimism.

### **Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

Identifying students' cultural assets in the classroom is a key component of culturally responsive pedagogy.

Such instruction:

- Boosts involvement
- Fosters a sense of belonging
- Lessens marginalization

In addition to being educators, culturally sensitive educators also serve as relational pillars that foster psychological development.

### **Teacher-Student Relationships as Catalysts for PsyCap**

- **Relational Foundations of Self-Efficacy**

Academic self-efficacy is shaped through mastery experiences and social persuasion. Teacher feedback, encouragement, and structured scaffolding significantly influence students' confidence.

In multicultural settings, affirming diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds strengthens perceived competence. Conversely, dismissive attitudes can erode efficacy beliefs.

- **Hope Through Goal Scaffolding**

Hope involves pathways thinking and agency. Teachers who help students set realistic goals, provide academic guidance, and offer alternative strategies foster hopeful thinking.

In contexts where students face socio-economic barriers, structured mentorship becomes particularly critical in sustaining hope.

- **Resilience Through Psychological Safety**

Resilience is strengthened in environments characterized by trust and emotional safety. Teachers who normalize failure, encourage reflective learning, and provide empathetic support help students recover from setbacks. For first-generation learners navigating unfamiliar academic cultures, relational reassurance is vital.

- **Optimism and Fair Classroom Climate**

Optimism is influenced by attributional patterns. Teachers who emphasize growth mindset and equitable opportunities shape students' positive expectations about the future.

In multicultural classrooms, fairness and inclusive assessment practices signal that success is attainable regardless of background.

### **Policy Recommendations for Indian Higher Education (Linkage with NEP 2020)**

Aligned with the vision of National Education Policy 2020, the following policy recommendations emphasize the role of teacher–student relationships in fostering Psychological Capital within multicultural classrooms:

- **Institutionalization of Holistic and multidisciplinary education:** NEP 2020 advocates holistic development of learners. Universities should explicitly incorporate Psychological Capital (hope, efficacy, resilience, optimism) into curriculum design through life skills courses, value-based education, and experiential learning modules.
- **Integration of Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL):** Policies should mandate structured socio-emotional learning programs in higher education to strengthen students' psychological well-being and relational capacities, thereby enhancing PsyCap.
- **Strengthening Teacher–Student Mentoring Systems:** In line with NEP's emphasis on student support, institutions should implement formal mentoring frameworks where each student is guided by a faculty mentor to foster belongingness, motivation, and resilience.

- **Faculty Development under NEP Framework:** Teacher training programs such as Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs) should include modules on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, inclusive teaching, and relational pedagogy to enhance teacher effectiveness in diverse classrooms.
- **Promotion of Inclusive and Equitable Education:** NEP 2020 emphasizes equity and inclusion. Policies should address caste, gender, linguistic, and regional disparities through inclusive classroom practices, thereby supporting students' optimism and academic confidence.
- **Student Support and Counseling Systems:** Institutions should strengthen counseling centers and psychological support services to help students cope with stress and adversity, enhancing resilience as a component of PsyCap.
- **Use of Multilingual and Flexible Pedagogies:** Reflecting NEP's multilingual vision, teaching strategies should accommodate linguistic diversity, improving student engagement and self-efficacy.
- **Continuous Assessment and Feedback Mechanisms:** NEP promotes formative assessment. Teachers should provide constructive, strength-based feedback to build students' confidence and academic self-belief.
- **Research and Innovation in Student Well-being:** Policy should encourage research centers focusing on student mental health, positive psychology, and PsyCap development in Indian contexts.
- **Digital Inclusion and Support Systems:** To address disparities highlighted during online learning transitions, institutions must ensure equitable access to digital resources, supporting students' resilience and academic persistence.

### **Limitations**

The projected connections between teacher-student interactions and psychological capital are not supported by empirical data because the current study is conceptual in nature. The framework provides a theoretically grounded viewpoint, but qualitative or mixed-method research designs are still needed to test its applicability. Furthermore, the assumptions made in the model may not be as applicable to other institutional or cultural contexts because it is situated within the multicultural higher education contexts of the Global South. The study may understate the impact of other important elements like family history, peer relationships,

and larger institutional structures in favor of emphasizing teacher-student relationships as catalysts of psychological capital.

Additionally, even though the study includes a number of theoretical perspectives, such as Self-Determination Theory and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, there might be conceptual overlaps and additional theoretical development is required to guarantee coherence and clarity. Lastly, the framework offers a comparatively static view of psychological capital and fails to adequately convey its dynamic and evolving nature over time, especially across various phases of students' academic and personal trajectories.

### **Discussion**

In this paper, it is argued that in multicultural classrooms, relationships between teachers and students serve as key catalysts for the development of psychological capital. Although this relational framing expands on prevailing viewpoints, a critical analysis highlights significant theoretical conflicts, contextual difficulties, and opportunities for improvement. This study's main contribution is to question Psychological Capital's individualistic orientation, which was first proposed in Positive Organizational Behavior (Luthans et al., 2007). Internal psychological resources-hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism-have been primarily highlighted in traditional PsyCap research as qualities that people possess. However, in educational settings where learning and development are intrinsically social and relational processes, this kind of viewpoint might not be adequate. This paper is in line with new research that sees human flourishing and well-being as embedded within interpersonal and institutional ecosystems, drawing on ideas from Positive Psychology (Seligman, 2011). According to this perspective, relationships between teachers and students are constitutive components of the development of psychological resources rather than just supportive circumstances.

However, there are conceptual overlaps that should be carefully considered when integrating relational and motivational frameworks. For example, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) highlights that optimal functioning requires the fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Although these constructs map onto PsyCap components-autonomy with hope, relatedness with resilience, and competence with self-efficacy-the theoretical distinctions between them are still hazy. Future empirical research must therefore clarify the discriminant validity of PsyCap when applied in multicultural classrooms.

The sociocultural embeddedness of psychological constructs is another crucial factor. A change from universalist presumptions to culturally grounded interpretations is necessary

for the application of PsyCap in Global South contexts, especially in multicultural societies like India. In non-Western contexts, collective goals, familial expectations, and structural limitations may influence constructs like optimism and self-efficacy, which are frequently presented as individual agency in Western literature. By highlighting the significance of cultural recognition and inclusivity in forming student engagement and identity, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Gay, 2010) offers a useful lens in this regard. By proposing that teacher-student relationships mediate both academic outcomes and the sociocultural construction of psychological resources, the current study expands on this viewpoint. However, this paper's general discussion of multiculturalism may obscure crucial intersectional dynamics that have a big impact on students' educational experiences, such as caste, gender, and linguistic hierarchies.

By emphasizing teacher-student connections as the main causes of PsyCap while undervaluing more extensive contextual impacts, the conceptual model presented out in this study also runs the risk of being oversimplified. Several systems, such as peer networks, family support, community settings, and institutional frameworks, influence students' psychological resources. From an ecological standpoint, interactions between teachers and students should not be seen as the only factor influencing PsyCap growth, but rather as one of several interrelated factors. Future studies that use ecological frameworks could offer a more thorough explanation of these patterns.

### **Implications for Teacher Education**

Teacher preparation programs should:

- Integrate training in culturally responsive pedagogy
- Develop relational competence and emotional intelligence
- Emphasize strength-based feedback practices
- Encourage reflective awareness of bias

Educators must recognize their influence in shaping students' psychological resources.

### **Institutional Implications**

Universities should:

- Foster inclusive campus climates
- Support mentoring initiatives
- Encourage small-group interactions
- Implement policies addressing discrimination

Systemic commitment enhances relational quality across classrooms.

### **Research Implications**

Future research should:

- Conduct qualitative phenomenological studies exploring student narratives
- Employ longitudinal designs to examine relational impact over time
- Develop culturally adapted PsyCap assessment tools
- Compare multicultural contexts across Global South nations

Such investigations will deepen understanding of relational PsyCap development.

### **Conclusion**

Understanding how students gain the psychological resources required for academic achievement has become crucial in an era of growing diversity in higher education. This paper explores psychological capital as a relationally embedded construct formed by significant teacher-student interactions in multicultural classrooms, rather than just as an individual trait. Based on Positive Psychology, Self-Determination Theory, and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, the study emphasizes how inclusive and encouraging teaching methods help students develop optimism, resilience, self-efficacy, and hope.

The analysis emphasizes how teacher-student connections have a significant role in influencing students' psychological growth, especially in culturally different environments where concerns of equity, identity, and belonging are crucial. The co-construction of psychological capital is greatly aided by educators who exhibit empathy, offer helpful criticism, acknowledge cultural identities, and establish psychologically secure learning settings. In addition to improving academic engagement and perseverance, these social dynamics also support students' overall wellbeing. The study also highlights the need for a more contextually grounded and socially responsive view of psychological strengths, rather than individualistic interpretations. Fostering psychological capital in multicultural higher education institutions, particularly in the Global South, necessitates deliberate efforts at the institutional, pedagogical, and policy levels. In conclusion, developing resilient, self-assured, and optimistic students requires improving teacher-student connections. Higher education institutions may play an important role in fostering equitable and sustainable student development in a variety of academic environments by integrating relational and culturally sensitive techniques.

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