

Strengthening the roots of POB: An introduction to the special issue

This special issue on Positive Organizational Behavior (POB) fulfils the growing need to further improve our knowledge about positive organizational processes, positive psychological states and positive emotions. Following the pioneering writings of Fred Luthans on the field (Luthans, 2002a; Luthans & Youssef, 2004), where POB was defined as “the study and application of positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement in today’s workplace” (Luthans, 2002b, p.59), those researching positive organizational issues were challenged to further understand how these positive states and processes that exist within organizations can be enhanced and what is their real impact for organizational functioning.

Since then, some research has been conducted evidencing that investing in positive psychological capital in organizations can dramatically impact organizational results, such as, higher work performance (Luthans, Avolio, Walumba, & Li, 2005; Cameron, Bright, & Caza, 2004) and employee attitudes (Jensen & Luthans, 2006). Those researching on POB also begun to investigate the key-factors to leverage the enhancement of positive psychological capabilities such as optimism, hope, resilience and self-efficacy, both theoretically (Luthans & Youssef, 2004) and with empirical interventions (Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Norman, & Combs, 2006).

Despite these initial studies and conceptualizations, the field of POB is yet in its infancy and we need to know more on the antecedents, processes and consequences of positive psychological capital. We also need to start our understanding of the relationships between psychological capital and other organizational and psychological variables.

With these goals in our mind, we launched this special issue calling for papers with as many different approaches as those involving both qualitative and quantitative methods, theoretical reflections and empirical research, scholarly-oriented works and applied experiences. We received a dozen papers from which we have selected the six papers that are included in the special issue. These papers cover up the variety of contributions that we were asking and, as such, they totally realise our intentions.

The issue starts with an empirical and quantitative article in Portuguese, on the topic of spirituality and its relationships with organizational performance and commitment, by colleagues Arménio Rego from the Aveiro University, Solange Souto from Universities IBMEC in Rio de Janeiro, and Miguel Pina e Cunha from the New University of Lisbon. This research, conducted with a Brazilian sample, concludes that individuals experience higher affective commitment, higher normative commitment, higher productivity and less instrumental commitment, when feeling a sense of work community and joy at work. This empirical work evidences a clear evidence of the impact of psychological capital on performance, as well as its relationship with organizational commitment.

The second article is also a quantitative research conducted in Portugal by Luís Frutuoso Martinez and Aristides Isidoro Ferreira, from Lusíada University, Lisbon, Luís Manuel Sousa, from Curry Cabral Hospital, and João Vieira da Cunha, from the New University of Lisbon. Their study investigates the relationships between the positive psychological capability of hope and presentism, a concept that is on the edge of research and refers to the phenomenon of being physically present in the workplace and at the same time “out” of there. The results of this study evidence that avoided distraction, one of the facets of presentism, is related to lower levels of hope. The authors elaborate a series of guidelines to improve the levels of hope through presentism management.

After these two quantitative research articles, Stephan Kaiser and Gordon Müller-Seitz from the Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany, offer us a qualitative empirical investigation of the socialization process in consulting firms, focusing on the role of positive emotions throughout the different phases of socialization. They build on the model of the “zone of emotionality indifference” to draw substantial managerial implications regarding the process of socialization and the management of positive emotions in this organizational task.

The special issue follows with a second qualitative research, authored by Karen Norum from Gonzaga University, USA, entitled *Dr. Bailey: An exemplar of critical care*. Norum’s article approaches in a “critical” way a very important issue, that of distinguishing niceness and appreciative action. Based on the quite innovative methodology of TV show analysis, she examines how honest candor and criticism can play a developmental and psychologically growing role in others. This substantiation has central implications for the development of POB, as it establishes new challenges in defining what is positive in organizations.

After the first four empirical articles, Patricia Jardim da Palma and Miguel Pereira Lopes from ISPA, and Miguel Pina e Cunha from the New University of Lisbon, contribute with a theoretical paper on the relationships between entrepreneurship and POB, two outstandingly growing fields of research. The article discusses how each of these fields can benefit from adopting some of the features of the other and establishes synergic strategies to improve both entrepreneurship and POB. Synthetically, these authors argue that POB can benefit by introducing a societal level approach and a temporal perspective in the development of the positive psychological capabilities. Entrepreneurship can improve by mimic of POB in terms of a use of clear success criteria, a higher concern with methodological reliability and a developmental perspective of entrepreneurs.

The last article of this special issue move towards the applied side of POB. Based on a case-study intervention in an education institution, the authors Helena Águeda Marujo and Luís Miguel Neto from the Lisbon University, Ana Caetano from Junta d Freguesia de Massamá, and Catarina Rivero, from the Portuguese Association from Community and Family Therapy, present some guidelines to improve the positive psychological capability of optimism, based on the appreciative inquiry approach and other theoretical positive assumptions. They describe with detail the procedures of the intervention and report the impacts achieved in terms of psychological well-being for the institution workers. By way of its applied character, this article adds unique information regarding the pertinence and necessity of POB in work organizations.

The special issue ends with an interview to Professor Fred Luthans reprinted with permission from the Gallup Management Journal, a publication from The Gallup Organization. In this interview, Professor Luthans explains his cutting the edge vision of POB developments up to now and for the future. A must read interview!

At last, we would like to thanks those who made this special issue a reality. Professor Luthans, who has inspired our work and has always supported us with their availability, knowledge, and proactive spirit. Jorge Gomes, Director of COG, who has challenged us to develop an issue on POB. Professor Jane Dutton and the POS members at the University of Michigan who have supported us and helped to spread our call for papers. Eric Nielsen from The Gallup Organization for the interview reprinting permission. Professor Shane Lopez for his support and effort in making positive psychology going worldwide and his responsibility in our commitment to this discipline. The reviewers Jorge Gomes, Leonor Cardoso, Teresa Rebelo, Stephan Kaiser, Gordon Müller-Seitz, Margarida Piteira, Arménio Rego, Patrícia Palma, Regina Leite and João Vieira da Cunha. At last, but not the least, the authors who have contribute with their knowledge and valuable work to this endeavour. Thank you all!

MIGUEL PEREIRA LOPES
MIGUEL PINA E CUNHA

References.

- Cameron, K., Bright, D., & Caza, A. (2004). Exploring the relationships between organizational virtuousness and performance. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 47, 766-790.
- Luthans, F. (2002b). The need for and meaning of positive organizational behavior. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 23, 695-706.
- Luthans, F. (2002a). Positive organizational behavior: Developing and managing psychological strengths. *Academy of Management Executive*, 16, 57-72.

Jensen, S. M. & Luthans, F. (2006). Entrepreneurs as Authentic Leaders: Impact on Employees' Attitudes. *Leadership and Organizational Development Journal*, 27 (7 & 8), 646-666.

Luthans, F., & Youssef, C. (2004). Human, social, and now positive psychological capital management: Investing in people for competitive advantage. *Organizational Dynamics*, 33 (2), 143-160.

Luthans, F., Avey, J., Avolio, B., Norman, S. & Combs, G. (2006). Psychological Capital development: Toward a micro-intervention. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*; 27, 387-393.