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Exploring the Dimensionality of PsyCap in Indigenous School Contexts: A Measurement Validation Study

Aziah Ismail*[1], Aini Saadah Mohd Saod[2], Rahimi Che Aman*[1]
Nur Suhaila Ahmad[2], Halifah Harun[2]

[1]School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia, [2]Ministry of Education Malaysia

*Corresponding Authors Email: aziah@usm.my, rahimi@usm.my

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Abstract

Teachers in Indigenous schools face significant challenges, including cultural dissonance, resource constraints, and isolation, which threaten their well-being and effectiveness. Psychological Capital (PsyCap), comprising hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism, is a vital resource for mitigating these adversities. This study validates the dimensionality of the PsyCap instrument for teachers in Malaysian Indigenous schools, addressing a critical gap in its application to this unique context. A survey of 309 educators was analyzed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis in SmartPLS 4. Results demonstrated an excellent model fit (CFI = .943, RMSEA = .048, SRMR = .041), strong reliability, and robust validity, confirming the stability of the four-factor structure. This study provides the first validated evidence of PsyCap's structural validity within an Indigenous school context, a novel contribution to cross-cultural positive psychology. The findings confirm PsyCap as both a universal and contextually relevant construct. Practically, this instrument provides administrators with a reliable tool to diagnose and enhance teachers' psychological resources. It enables the development of targeted interventions to foster resilience and well-being, offering a strategic approach to improve teacher retention and effectiveness, ultimately supporting more equitable educational outcomes for Indigenous communities.

Keywords: Indigenous School, Psychological Capital, Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Teacher Well-Being, Measurement Validation

Introduction

Studies in recent years have shown great attention in understanding the psychological enablers of teachers to maintain effectiveness, motivation, and well-being in complex and high-demand educational settings. According to Tikhomirova et al. (2022) and Izquierdo et al. (2025), this is due to the significant impact of teachers' psychological well-being on their professional performance and self-efficacy. The demand for this understanding is crucial particularly in the context of teachers that encounter with persistent challenges at their workplace environment that significantly impact their ability to deliver effective education. For instance, teachers in Indigenous schools which located in remote area who are usually

face with challenges in managing limited educational resources that hinder the effective teaching and learning process and promoting culturally relevant curricula (Sinnappan et al., 2014; Idrus & Nan, 2023). Furthermore, they also face with difficulty in managing culturally diverse classrooms where students often struggle with social and academic adaptation, leading to low self-esteem and high dropout rates (Primus et al., 2017; Sipon et al., 2017).

Systemic challenges such as the persistent underrepresentation of Indigenous students in higher education and their continued academic underachievement contribute significantly to the complexity of teaching in Indigenous school contexts (Primus et al., 2017; Sipon et al., 2017). These conditions place considerable psychological and emotional demands on teachers, who are expected to fulfil instructional responsibilities while also addressing the broader educational and social disparities their students face. These encounters have demand for the development and strengthening of Psychological Capital (PsyCap) in the context of teachers in Indigenous school is essential. PsyCap is refers to a psychological construct developed by Luthans et al. (2007) that provides a set of internal psychological attributes that enable teachers to stay motivated, endure stress, and manage difficult circumstances in an effective way. Previous researchers such as claimed that teachers who equipped with PsyCap will indirectly promote their students' the academic progress and well-being. Thus, a valid instrument that can measure PsyCap among teachers in Indigenous school settings accurately and meaningfully is crucial.

PsyCap has emerged as a prominent framework within positive organizational behaviour, offering a promising lens through which to examine psychological functioning in the workplace. Previous studies have revealed that PsyCap encompassing hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism (also refers as HERO in acronym) plays a pivotal role in shaping various dimensions of teachers' professional lives and has a significant impact on various aspects of teachers' professional lives (Luthans et al, 2007). High levels of PsyCap are strongly linked to increased job satisfaction and overall well-being, as teachers with greater PsyCap report lower stress and burnout levels, contributing to improved mental health and job contentment (Taheri et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2024). It also serves as a buffer against negative outcomes such as stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion, enabling teachers to better manage the demands of their roles (Soykan et al., 2019). Furthermore, PsyCap enhances professional commitment and motivation by fostering stronger organizational loyalty and reducing turnover intentions, while also boosting engagement and performance in teaching tasks (Taheri et al., 2023; Karakus et al., 2019). In the classroom, teachers with higher PsyCap demonstrate more effective classroom management and teaching practices, particularly among novice educators (Soykan et al., 2019; Karakus et al., 2019). PsyCap also acts as a mediator in key professional relationships, such as between emotional labor and organizational commitment, and between subjective well-being and career dedication, highlighting its central role in sustaining long-term professional engagement (Taheri et al., 2023; Karakus et al., 2019). For school administrators, these findings underscore the importance of implementing development programs and creating supportive environments that nurture PsyCap, ultimately leading to more resilient, motivated, and effective teaching staff (Soykan et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2024).

The PsyCap instrument, originally developed by Luthans and colleagues, has been extensively adapted and validated across various educational contexts and cultural settings,

demonstrating its psychometric robustness and conceptual relevance. Numerous studies have confirmed the scale's reliability and factorial validity among student populations in different countries, particularly in China, Brazil, Spain, Chile, Ecuador, and Malaysia. For instance, research in China has validated the PsyCap scale among both college students and adolescents, revealing strong predictive relationships with academic engagement and emotional well-being (Kang et al., 2021). Similarly, studies in Brazil and Latin American countries affirmed the four-factor structure i.e. hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism as consistent with Luthans' original HERO model (Matos & De Andread, 2021; Martinez et al., 2021). In Malaysia, the PsyCap construct has been tested among undergraduate students and demonstrated sound psychometric properties, suggesting its applicability within local educational contexts (Ooh et al., 2024).

Although PsyCap items by Luthans et al. (2007) has been extensively studied within the field of education, much of the existing research has focused on student populations, particularly in higher education and general school settings. These studies have consistently validated the PsyCap construct and confirmed its positive influence on academic engagement, motivation, and well-being. However, there remains a noticeable gap in research involving teachers, especially those working in Indigenous school environments. Given the distinct cultural, institutional, and community-based challenges that characterize Indigenous education, it is crucial to examine whether the established four-factor structure of PsyCap retains its validity among teachers in these settings (Kang et al., 2021). Instruments developed and validated in more mainstream educational contexts may not fully capture the psychological realities experienced by Indigenous educators (Ooh et al., 2024). In response to this gap, the present study undertakes expert content validation and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to evaluate the structural validity of the PsyCap scale among teachers in Malaysian Indigenous schools. The goal is to establish a reliable and contextually appropriate measurement model that can inform teacher development, leadership practices, and well-being interventions tailored to culturally diverse and underserved educational communities.

Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

This study adopts Luthans et al.'s (2007) conceptualization of PsyCAP as a higher-order construct composed of four interrelated yet distinguishable psychological capacities: self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism. These four components, often referred to collectively as the HERO dimensions, are theorized to work synergistically in contributing to positive attitudes, behaviours, and performance outcomes (Zhang et al., 2024; Gan & Cheng, 2021).

Self-efficacy, a core component of PsyCap, refers to an individual's belief in their capacity to execute tasks and achieve goals. As a state-like attribute, it can be developed through targeted interventions, contributing to improved motivation, job satisfaction, and resilience (Terry et al., 2020). Within PsyCap, self-efficacy empowers individuals to persist in the face of challenges, fosters psychological well-being, and enhances performance across educational and organizational contexts (Round et al., 2024). Meanwhile, hope, following Snyder's model, emphasizes goal-directed energy and the capacity to plan alternative pathways toward those goals. Hope is a positive emotional state characterized by the belief that one can achieve desired goals and the motivation to pursue those goals (Finch et al. 2020). It involves an

optimistic outlook on the future and the expectation that good things will happen. Hope is often seen as a crucial psychological resource that can enhance resilience, well-being, and overall life satisfaction (Rand & Fischer, 2020). The next dimension of PsyCap is resilience which defined as the ability to rebound from adversity, adapt to change, and persist in the face of setbacks. Resilience is a critical component of PsyCap that significantly contributes to mental health and well-being. It can be developed through targeted interventions, making it a valuable resource in various life domains, especially in high-stress environments (Round et al., 2024; Luthan et al., 2017). Enhancing resilience within PsyCap can lead to improved coping strategies, better mental health outcomes, and overall life satisfaction. The final dimension of HERO is Optimism that relates to maintaining a positive outlook and attributing positive causes to present and future success (Finch et al. 2020; Kang et al., 2021; Rand & Fischer, 2020). It is one of the key dimensions that contribute to the overall construct of PsyCap and has been shown to have significant implications for both individual and organizational outcomes. Together, these dimensions form a psychological resource that can be cultivated and applied to support teachers' professional roles (Round et al., 2024; Luthans et al., 2017). Following the theoretical proposition of Luthans et al. (2007), this study models PsyCap as a second-order latent variable, where the four HERO dimensions function as first-order factors, as shown in figure 1 below. This hierarchical structure reflects the integrated nature of the construct and has been supported in prior studies using Confirmatory Factor Analysis in both organizational and educational settings. The second-order approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of PsyCap, offering stronger predictive validity and a unified conceptualization.

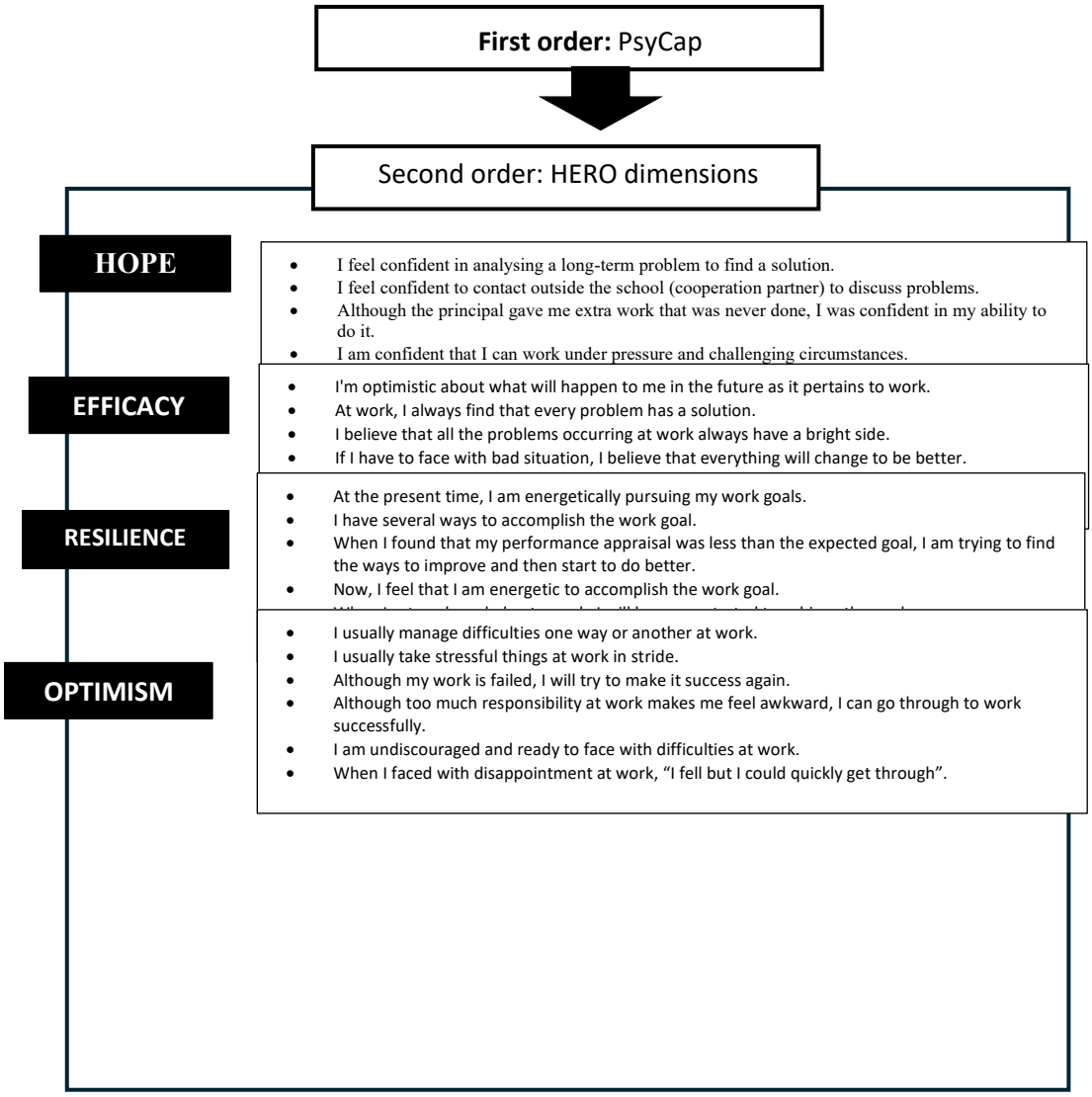

Figure 1: First and Second Model of PsyCap (adapted from Luthan et al, 2007)

This study tests this model using CFA among teachers in Indigenous schools, with the aim of confirming the construct's validity and reliability in a culturally distinct setting. This approach not only enhances the generalizability of the PsyCap model but also equips educational stakeholders with a validated instrument to assess and support psychological well-being among educators. In resource-constrained and culturally complex environments such as Indigenous schools, such tools are essential for improving teacher retention, engagement, and effectiveness.

Psychosocial Challenges Faced by Teachers in Indigenous Schools

Teachers working in Indigenous schools often face a complex interplay of psychological, professional, and contextual challenges that impact their well-being and instructional effectiveness. A primary concern is the cultural and knowledge gap, where many teachers lack sufficient understanding of Indigenous traditions, values, and worldviews, hindering culturally responsive teaching and contributing to feelings of frustration and demotivation—especially in rural or remote areas (Baeza, 2019). This challenge is further compounded by isolation and harsh living conditions, where teachers are required to adapt to difficult

environments with limited resources and minimal professional recognition, often resulting in emotional exhaustion and increased attrition. Additionally, studies indicate the presence of ethnic prejudices and stereotypes among some educators, which can manifest cognitively, affectively, and behaviourally, ultimately reinforcing negative psychosocial experiences among Indigenous students (Pena, 2011).

Despite these challenges, certain systemic supports have shown promise in strengthening teacher identity and efficacy. Professional development (PD) programs tailored to Indigenous education contexts can positively impact teachers' self-concept and teaching strategies, although the effectiveness of such initiatives depends greatly on teacher involvement and school-wide support (Craven et al, 2014). Moreover, the presence of external support structures, such as those emphasized in the FITIRIS (Factors Influencing Teachers' Identities in Rural Indigenous Settings) model, highlights the importance of community relationships, personal resilience, and institutional support in shaping teachers' identities and daily experiences in Indigenous settings (Baeza-Pena, 2024). Financial, emotional, and academic support is particularly crucial for Indigenous teachers themselves, enhancing their likelihood of professional success and retention (Reid et al., 2009).

Addressing the psychological well-being of teachers in these contexts is equally vital. Interventions aimed at promoting well-being have demonstrated meaningful outcomes, such as increased health motivation, stress reduction, and improved resilience especially for teachers from Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC) backgrounds (Stone et al., 2024). Resilience has been found to be higher among older teachers and those working in private education sectors, suggesting that experience and organizational support play key roles in emotional adjustment and stress management (Vera-Noriega et al., 2023). Furthermore, the development of relational capacities—including empathy, cultural awareness, and positive teacher-student interactions—is identified as a critical factor for effective teaching and student engagement in Indigenous contexts (Stelmach et al., 2017)
In sum, fostering psychological resilience and professional effectiveness among teachers in Indigenous schools requires a multifaceted approach. Key strategies include cultural sensitivity training, inclusive professional development programs, robust support systems, and context-specific well-being interventions. These elements not only mitigate the psychological and systemic stressors faced by teachers but also contribute to more equitable and responsive educational environments for Indigenous students.

Psychological Capital in Education

In the education sector, PsyCap has gained increasing attention as a factor that influences critical outcomes such as teacher engagement, instructional quality, and professional well-being (Zhang et al., 2024; Gan & Cheng, 2021). Teachers with high PsyCap demonstrate greater perseverance, are more adaptive to change, and exhibit enhanced emotional regulation, all essential qualities for sustaining effectiveness in classrooms (Hazan-Liran & Karni-Vizer, 2024; Gan & Cheng, 2021). Studies have shown that PsyCap correlates positively with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and reduced burnout (Avey et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2018). For instance, self-efficacy enables teachers to believe in their instructional capabilities, while hope provides the cognitive pathways and motivational drive to reach professional goals. Resilience helps them recover from setbacks, and optimism allows them

to maintain a positive perspective on student learning and school reform efforts (Demir, 2018).

Despite its growing body of evidence in mainstream educational settings, the application of PsyCap in Indigenous school environments remains limited. Teachers in these schools often experience unique professional stressors stemming from socio-economic disparities, cultural and linguistic diversity, and geographical isolation (Idrus & Nan, 2023). These challenges highlight the importance of developing and sustaining PsyCap among Indigenous educators, yet empirical studies validating PsyCap's structure in this population are scarce. This study responds to that gap by empirically testing whether the theoretical structure of PsyCap, developed in more general contexts, remains valid among teachers in Indigenous schools.
However, a critical review of the existing literature reveals that the majority of these validation studies have been conducted among students, with comparatively limited research focusing on teachers (Kang et al., 2021; Matos & De Andread, 2021; Ooh et al., 2024), especially those working in marginalized or culturally distinct settings. While many studies have adopted or adapted Luthans' items, the adaptations typically focus on aligning the instrument to the specific characteristics of the sample, such as school-aged learners, university students, or general teaching populations. Yet, the validation of the PsyCap scale specifically for teachers in Indigenous school contexts remains in its infancy. Given the distinct cultural, professional, and psychological challenges faced by educators in Indigenous communities, it is essential to establish whether the instrument maintains its conceptual clarity and psychometric soundness in such a setting. Accordingly, this study seeks to address this gap by validating the PsyCap instrument among teachers in Indigenous schools, thereby contributing to a more inclusive and context-sensitive understanding of psychological capital in education.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative survey design to examine the dimensionality and validity of the Psychological Capital (PsyCap) construct among teachers in Indigenous schools. This study was conducted across 27 Indigenous schools in Malaysia, selected to reflect diverse geographic and community settings. The respondents comprised 309 teachers who met the inclusion criterion of having at least two years of teaching experience in Indigenous school settings. This criterion ensured that participants were sufficiently familiar with the unique contextual challenges and dynamics of Indigenous education.

Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire adapted from the original Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) developed by Luthans et al. (2007). According to Prasetyo et al. (2022), a questionnaire is a tool used to systematically and structurally collect data from respondents. It is recognised as the instrument that easy to analyse and represent a cost-effective method for research involving large sample sizes, particularly as they require minimal time for respondents to complete (Clark et al., 2020). PCQ included 24 items organized into four sections, each representing one of the PsyCap dimensions: self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism. A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used to capture responses. To ensure content validity and contextual relevance, the adapted questionnaire was reviewed and validated by two experts in indigenous education, 2 experts in psychology and 3 experts in educational management.

Their input ensured that the items were clearly worded, culturally appropriate, and conceptually aligned with the Indigenous education context.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted as a crucial final step in questionnaire development to ensure the internal consistency and reliability of the instruments before the main study. This small-scale test, following Sundram et al. (2023), assesses the quality and suitability of measures, allowing researchers to refine questions and enhance the validity of data for the main investigation (Marcu et al., 2023). The pilot involved 100 teachers from indigenous schools who were excluded from the main study sample. Internal consistency was rigorously evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2023). All measured values for the constructs of psychological capital exceeded the accepted thresholds ($\alpha > 0.6$, $CR > 0.7$), confirming high reliability and the instruments' robustness for use with the indigenous schoolteacher population.

Table 1

Cronbach alpha and composite reliability test

Constructs of PsyCap	Cronbach alpha	Composite reliability
Self efficacy	0.892	0.918
Optimism	0.829	0.883
Hope	0.920	0.938
Resilience	0.899	0.923

Results

This study employed Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using SmartPLS 4 to rigorously assess the psychometric properties of the four-dimensional scale measuring efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism, comprising a total of 24 items. The results confirm that the theorized model is a robust and accurate representation of the underlying construct within the context of this study as shown in Figure 2, Table 2 and 3.

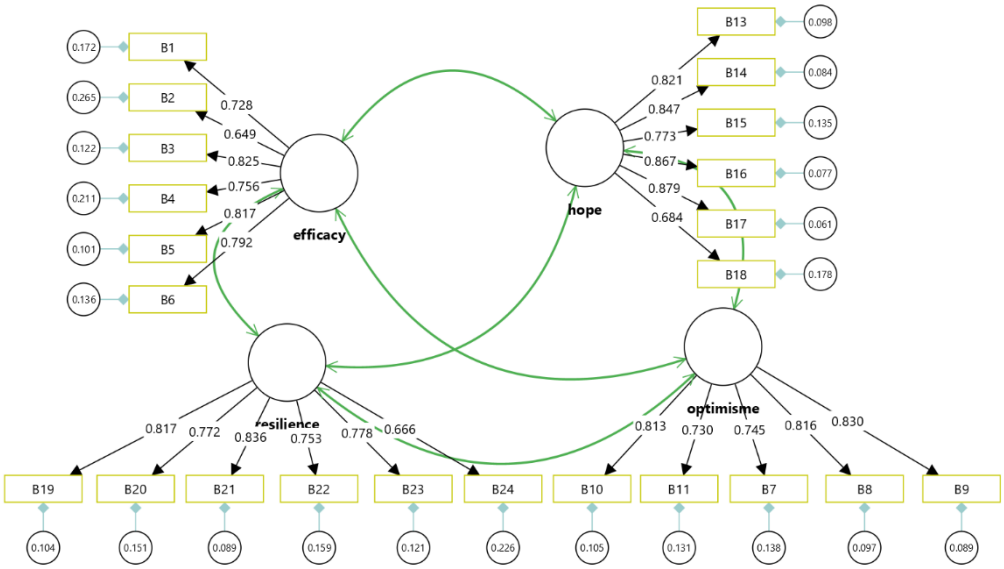

Figure 2 Model of confirmatory factor analysis

Table 2
Model indices

Construct	Factor loading	Model fit						
		χ^2	df	χ^2/df	RMSEA	SRMR	CFI	GFI
Hope	0.68-0.88	677.45	224	3.02	0.07	0.05	0.92	0.94
Efficacy	0.65-0.83							
Resilience	0.67-0.84							
Optimism	0.73-0.83							

Notes: χ^2 = Chi Square; df= degree of freedom; RMSEA= Root mean square error of approximation; Standardized Root Mean Square Residual; CFI = Comparative Fit Index
Threshold for model fit (Confirmatory factor analysis): χ^2/df = < 5 (Byrne, 2016); Hair et al., 2024); RMSEA= ≤0.08 (Hair et al., 2024); SRMR = <0.08 (Ringle et al., 2024); CFI: CFI value of 0.90 or above as good fit (Hair et al., 2024); Outer loading: should ideally be greater than 0.70 (Ringle et al., 2024); GFI=<0.90 (Ringle et al., 2024).

Table 3
Test of convergent and discriminant validity of constructs in 2nd order model

Constructs	AVE	α	CR	√AVE	Correlation				HTMT		
					Hp	Eff	Res	Opt	Hp	Eff	Res
Hope	0.58	0.89	0.89	0.76	1	0.71	0.72	0.70			
Efficacy	0.66	0.92	0.92	0.80		1	0.76	0.73	0.80		
Resilience	0.62	0.89	0.89	0.79			1	0.73	0.88	0.85	
Optimism	0.59	0.89	0.89	0.77				1	0.86	0.81	0.83

Note: Hp= hope; Eff= efficacy; Res= resilience; Opt= optimism; Threshold: AVE >0.50; α >0.70; composite reliability >0.70; HTMT >0.80

Model Fit and Validation
The overall goodness-of-fit indices provide the foundational evidence that the hypothesized model is consistent with the observed data (according to threshold stated at the below Table 2). The relative chi-square statistic (χ^2/df = 677.45/224 = 3.02) is well below the stringent threshold of 5.00, indicating an acceptable fit and that the model is not overly sensitive to sample size. More importantly, the approximate fit indices are highly satisfactory. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = 0.07) falls below the recommended ceiling of 0.08, signifying a close fit of the model to the population covariance matrix. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR = 0.05), which measures the average difference between the observed and model-predicted correlations, is well below the 0.08 benchmark, further confirming a good fit. Finally, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.92) exceeds the 0.90 standard for a good model, demonstrating a significant improvement over a null model. Collectively, these indices provide strong evidence for the validity of the proposed four-factor structure (Byrne, 2016; Hair et al., 2024; Ringle et al., 2024).

Indicator Reliability and Convergent Validity
At the item level, all factor loadings were statistically significant and ranged from 0.65 to 0.88. While a value of 0.70 is ideal, loadings above 0.60 are considered acceptable in exploratory research, especially when other reliability measures are strong. These substantial loadings confirm that each item is a reliable indicator of its intended latent construct, with the higher

values (e.g., up to 0.88 for Hope) indicating exceptionally strong relationships (Hair et al., 2024; Ringle et al., 2024).

Convergent validity, which assesses the degree to which multiple items measuring the same concept agree, was established through two measures. First, the Composite Reliability (CR) for each construct, which is a more robust measure than Cronbach's Alpha as it considers actual loadings rather than assuming equal weighting, ranged from 0.89 to 0.92. These values, significantly above the 0.70 threshold, demonstrate excellent internal consistency and reliability. Second, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each dimension, Hope (0.58), Efficacy (0.66), Resilience (0.62), and Optimism (0.59), all surpassed the critical value of 0.50. This confirms that more than half of the variance in the observed items is accounted for by their respective latent constructs, providing strong evidence of convergent validity (Hair et al., 2024; Ringle et al., 2024).

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity ensures that each construct is distinct from the others in the model. This was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations, a modern and superior criterion. The HTMT values between all construct pairs ranged from a maximum of 0.88 (between Hope and Resilience) to a minimum of 0.80 (between Hope and Efficacy). Crucially, all values are below the conservative threshold of 0.90 (Henseler et al., 2015), providing clear evidence that each dimension, despite being correlated as expected for components of a broader psychological capacity, is empirically distinct and captures a unique facet of the phenomenon. This justifies modelling them as separate but related factors within the higher-order structure (Hair et al., 2024; Ringle et al., 2024; Henseler et al., 2015).

In summary, the CFA results provide comprehensive evidence for the validity and reliability of the measurement instrument. The model demonstrates an excellent fit to the data, while the constructs exhibit strong indicator reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. This confirms that the four dimensions of efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism are well-defined, distinct, and measurable constructs within this study. The robust psychometric properties of this model provide a solid foundation for proceeding with the evaluation of the structural model and hypothesis testing (Hair et al., 2024; Ringle et al., 2024).

Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to empirically validate the higher-order structure of Psychological Capital (PsyCap) for use with teachers in Malaysian Indigenous schools. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis provide robust evidence that the four-factor model, (comprising efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism) is a psychometrically sound and valid framework within this unique, high-demand context. Utilizing Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), the research confirmed the robust validity of Luthans et al.'s (2007) four-factor HERO model. The excellent model fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 3.02$, CFI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.07, SRMR = 0.05) provide strong evidence that the hypothesized structure is consistent with the observed data from this specific population (Hair et al., 2024; Ringle et al., 2024). This finding invites a nuanced discussion that situates our results within the broader scholarly discourse, highlighting points of convergence and the novel contributions of this work. First and foremost, our results reinforce the cross-cultural applicability of Luthans et al.'s (2007) PsyCap construct. The strong factor loadings, high composite reliability scores, and satisfactory

convergent validity align consistently with validation studies conducted in diverse global contexts, such as China (Kang et al., 2021), Brazil (Matos & De Andread, 2021), and among Malaysian students (Ooh et al., 2024). This suggests the core psychological resources of the HERO model are fundamental across cultures. However, our study moves beyond these works by demonstrating this validity not in homogeneous populations but among teachers operating on the cultural and geographical peripheries, directly addressing a significant gap noted in the literature.

Furthermore, this study offers a quantitative, positive psychological counterpoint to the largely qualitative literature on teacher stress in these settings. While previous work has effectively outlined the problems (Primus et al., 2017), our research identifies and measures the key positive psychological resources that can be leveraged as solutions. This aligns with the call from positive organizational psychology to focus on strengths and assets rather than solely on deficits (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017; Terry et al., 2020). The high levels of PsyCap inferred from the strong psychometrics suggest many teachers in these challenging contexts are not merely surviving but are actively employing profound psychological strength, a narrative that is often overlooked (Zhang et al., 2024; Gan & Cheng, 2021; Hazan-Liran & Karni-Vizer, 2024; Terry et al., 2020). The successful validation of the second-order model underscores that PsyCap operates as a synergistic, core construct for these teachers, where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. This supports the theoretical proposition that developing one capacity can positively influence the others. This finding also adds a critical layer to models like FITIRIS (Baeza-Pena, 2024), which emphasizes external support structures. Our study posits that internal, psychological resources (PsyCap) are a crucial mechanism through which teachers translate external support into personal resilience and professional effectiveness (Taheri et al., 2023).

The study's findings underscore the importance of positive psychological resources in contexts marked by professional and socio-cultural challenges, such as Indigenous schools (Idrus & Nan, 2023; Sipon et al, 2017). These validated measures provide educators and school leaders with a reliable instrument for assessing and nurturing psychological well-being among teachers. Enhancing PsyCap can potentially mitigate the effects of stressors related to cultural mismatch, resource constraints, and professional isolation, thus improving teacher retention, performance, and overall job satisfaction (Tikhomirova et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2024; Izquierdo et al., 2025).

Implications

The implications of this study are threefold: theoretical, practical, and methodological. Theoretically, this research extends the nomological network of PsyCap by firmly establishing its relevance and structural validity within a previously unexplored cultural and professional context. It strengthens the claim that PsyCap is a universal core construct while also highlighting that its manifestation and application are deeply contextual, shaped by the specific challenges Indigenous school teachers encounter. For practice, the implications are direct and actionable. School administrators and policymakers now have a validated, reliable instrument to diagnose and assess the psychological resources of their teaching staff. This moves the conversation from anecdotal accounts of struggle to a data-driven understanding of psychological strengths and vulnerabilities. With this tool, leaders can move beyond generic professional development to implement targeted interventions designed to build

specific PsyCap capacities. For instance, training workshops can be designed around goal-setting (hope), mastery experiences (efficacy), and cognitive restructuring (optimism) that are framed within the authentic, daily challenges of teaching in an Indigenous school, thereby making the training immediately relevant and applicable.

Future Research Directions

This study provides a robust foundation for several promising avenues of future research. First, longitudinal studies are essential to examine the causal relationships and fluctuations of PsyCap over time. Such research could investigate how PsyCap influences critical long-term outcomes like teacher retention, burnout rates, student engagement, and academic achievement within Indigenous communities. Second, and most importantly, this validation provides the necessary psychometric justification for intervention studies. Researchers can now confidently design, implement, and test the efficacy of PsyCap development programs, perhaps adapting the micro-interventions suggested by Luthans et al. (2007) to be culturally relevant. Third, future research could explore the antecedents of PsyCap in this specific context. What role do school leadership, community engagement, and specific policy supports play in fostering or diminishing these psychological resources? Finally, employing mixed-methods approaches would be highly beneficial; qualitative inquiries could provide rich, nuanced stories that illuminate the quantitative scores, exploring *how* hope is maintained or *what* efficacy looks like in the daily life of an Indigenous school teacher, thereby adding depth and context to the statistical findings.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study successfully achieved its aim of validating the Psychological Capital (PsyCap) construct for teachers in Malaysian Indigenous schools. The confirmatory factor analysis confirmed that the four-dimensional higher-order model (efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism) demonstrates excellent model fit, strong reliability, and robust convergent and discriminant validity within this unique population. This finding is significant as it moves beyond the existing literature, which has primarily focused on student populations and mainstream educational settings, to address a critical research gap concerning the psychological resources of educators in culturally distinct and high-demand environments.

The broader significance of this research lies in its powerful re-framing of the narrative surrounding teachers in Indigenous schools. While the challenges they face are well-documented, this study shifts the focus from a deficit-based perspective to a strength-based one. It empirically demonstrates that these educators possess and utilize a profound set of positive psychological capacities to navigate their complex professional landscape. By providing a validated instrument, this study equips researchers and practitioners with a crucial tool to accurately measure these capacities.

Ultimately, this research serves as a foundational step toward fostering sustainable educational development in Indigenous communities. The validated PsyCap model provides a scientifically-grounded framework for understanding the inner resources that drive teacher effectiveness and well-being. It underscores that supporting these teachers requires more than just logistical or policy solutions; it necessitates a dedicated focus on nurturing their psychological core. Therefore, this study contributes not only to the academic discourse on positive organizational psychology in education but also offers a clear pathway for practical intervention. By investing in the development of Psychological Capital, stakeholders can

actively contribute to building a more resilient, motivated, and effective teaching force, which is an indispensable prerequisite for achieving equitable educational outcomes for Indigenous students. The future of education in these communities depends not just on resources, but on the fortified hearts and minds of those who teach within them.

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