

# PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL, SELF-COMPASSION, AND LIFE SATISFACTION OF UNEMPLOYED YOUTH

Eglė Sabaitytė<sup>1</sup>, Aistė Diržytė,  
Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania

---

**Abstract. Background.** Youth unemployment is currently one of the biggest problems in European society. It can reduce the economic prosperity and psychological well-being of unemployed youth. Positive psychological capital (PsyCap) and self-compassion are linked with a number of positive constructs. Those include satisfaction with life, positive affect and personal initiative to make needed changes in one's life. Thus, PsyCap and self-compassion could be promising resources enhancing the psychological well-being of unemployed youth. **The aims** of the study are: 1) to reveal relation between PsyCap and self-compassion with life satisfaction of unemployed youth; 2) to investigate the difference between PsyCap and self-compassion for higher and lower levels of life satisfaction among unemployed youth. **Methods.** The sample consisted of 80 unemployed Lithuanians aged 19-29 (38% male, 62% female). The Psychological capital questionnaire (Luthans et al., 2007), Satisfaction With Life scale (Diener et al., 1985), and Self-Compassion scale (Neff, 2003a) were used in the study. **Results.** Positive and significant correlations were found between PsyCap and life satisfaction. Moreover, we found positive and significant correlations between PsyCap components and all positive self-compassion components. Although life satisfaction positively correlates with total self-compassion, however, not all positive components of self-compassion correlate with the life satisfaction of unemployed youth. Furthermore, unemployed youth highly satisfied with life had higher levels of PsyCap and self-compassion compared to unemployed youth who were less satisfied with life. **Conclusions.** Our findings revealed positive correlations between PsyCap and self-compassion with life satisfaction of unemployed youth. Future research is needed in order to explore the causality between variables.

**Keywords:** psychological capital, self-compassion, life satisfaction, unemployed youth.

---

<sup>1</sup> Address for correspondence: Eglė Sabaitytė, Mykolas Romeris University, Faculty of Social Welfare, Institute of Psychology, Ateities st. 20, LT-08303 Vilnius, Phone: +370 5 271 4625, Fax: +370 5 267 6000. E-mail: [egle.sabaityte@gmail.com](mailto:egle.sabaityte@gmail.com)

## INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment is currently one of the biggest problems in European society. According to Eurostat, in February 2016, there were over 4.4 million (19.4%) unemployed young people in the European Union (EU). The highest youth unemployment rates were in Greece (48.9%) and Spain (45.3%). The lowest youth unemployment rates were in Germany (6.9%) and Czech Republic (10.2%). The youth unemployment rate in Lithuania was 14.5% (Eurostat, 2016). It is known that young people are more affected by economic recessions than adults (Tamesberger, 2015). Hence, unemployment may lead young people to long-term exclusion from the labour market (Lorenzini, 2015). This can reduce not only economic prosperity but also psychological health and life satisfaction of unemployed youth.

It was found that psychosomatic symptoms and reduced psychological well-being were more frequent among unemployed persons compared with persons who were employed (Åslund, Starrin, & Nilsson, 2014). Research has shown that unemployment reduces life satisfaction and that life dissatisfaction strengthens youth protest activities (Lorenzini, 2015). Nevertheless, participation in active labour market programmes was not related to mental health (Reine, Novo, & Hammarström, 2011).

In this paper, we focus on the life satisfaction of unemployed young people in Lithuania. We analyse the relationships between life satisfaction and psychological capital (PsyCap). PsyCap is defined as a positive construct which consists of four positive components: hope, efficacy, optimism, and resiliency (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007). A deeper explanation of the PsyCap construct will be written in the Background section. Although PsyCap emerged from the concept of positive organisational behaviour, a growing body of empirical evidence also showed positive impact of PsyCap on student-related outcomes (Riulli, Savicki, & Richards, 2012). Research shows that PsyCap is related to life satisfaction among employees (Luthans et al., 2007). However, little is known about how PsyCap and satisfaction with life is associated among unemployed young people. A previous study by Rani (2015) examining PsyCap and the psychological well-being of unemployed Indian youth revealed that PsyCap and its components showed significant positive correlations

with psychological well-being. Nonetheless, it is interesting to analyse PsyCap and life satisfaction among unemployed youth in Lithuania and examine similarities or differences between Lithuanian and Indian unemployed youth.

More specifically, we studied PsyCap together with self-compassion, paying attention to the life satisfaction of unemployed youth. Unemployed people experience adverse effects on health (Åslund et al., 2014) and learned helplessness (Bjornstad, 2006), while self-compassionate people are less anxious when considering their weaknesses, because they use fewer negative emotion words when describing personal weaknesses (Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007). Self-compassion is an ability to hold difficult negative emotions in non-judgmental awareness without denying or suppressing negative aspects of one's experience (Neff, 2009). Thus, self-compassionate people may understand their weaknesses, shortcomings and problems, and respond with kindness and compassion rather than with harshness and self-criticism (Leary, Tate, Adams, Allen, & Hancock, 2007) and it can protect them from adverse effects on health. In addition, we propose that self-compassion can be used as a coping strategy by unemployed youth facing difficulties related to their situation of unemployment. Furthermore, self-compassion can increase satisfaction with life (Neff et al., 2007), because there is growing evidence that self-compassion is an important source of psychological well-being (Barnard & Curry, 2012; Neff, 2009).

The main contribution of this study is revealing new correlates of life satisfaction in young unemployed sample, taking into account empirical evidence of the proposed relationships between PsyCap and life satisfaction and especially the relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Psychological Capital of unemployed youth**

The theoretical framework of this study is rooted in Luthans' et al. (2007) multidimensional model named PsyCap, which is defined as an "individual's positive state of development and is characterized by: (1) having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary

effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making positive attributions (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (c) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to attain success" (Luthans et al., 2007, p. 3). PsyCap components are defined as personal resources that can be developed, and a hypothesis could be made that in this way these resources can increase the satisfaction of life of young unemployed people. We suggest that personal resources could help achieve goals because people with positive resources could better cope with challenges they face. In addition, it would be possible to assume that PsyCap might help with meeting difficulties and hindrances to job seeking. The following paragraphs briefly summarize the separate components of PsyCap and its relationships to satisfaction with life.

*Resilience* is a positive coping and adaptation in the face of significant adversity or risk (Masten and Reed, 2002). When resilient individuals face adversities, they focus on their psychological resources, persistence, motivation and behaviours to engage in important activities (Masten & Reed, 2002). Luthans (2002a, p. 702) defined resilience as the "positive psychological capacity to rebound, to "bounce back" from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure, or even positive change, progress and increased responsibility." Moreover, resilience can protect unemployed youth from learned helplessness. Therefore, resilience could enable unemployed youth to seek new experiences and take reasonable risks to achieve goals.

As mentioned above, resilience is a positive coping which enables the individual to rebound from difficult situations and seek new goals but does not condemn oneself for failures. Thus, it is expected that resilient individuals will be happier and will be more satisfied with life than individuals who are not resilient and are vulnerable.

*Hope*, as defined by Snyder and colleagues (1991, p. 287), is a "positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful a) agency (goal directed energy) and b) pathways (planning to meet goals)." Snyder (2000) argues that people who have high hope are more likely to have goals and sub-goals, and they also proactively

identify multiple pathways for reach these goals. Froman (2010) notes that hopeful people try to attain what they set out to accomplish even in difficult times and they try to find satisfaction in what they achieve. For instance, unemployed young people can set goals related with employment. These goals should be specific and challenging but not impossible in order to make the process challenging but doable. Therefore, hope could enable unemployed youth to take on efforts and to direct energy to heartily pursue goals. It is important that unemployed youth would try to be satisfied in what they achieve: if one is satisfied in one's achievements, one might be more satisfied with life as well.

*Efficacy* is defined as the individual's confidence about his or her abilities to mobilize the cognitive resources, motivation, and direction of action needed to successfully implement a specific task within a given context (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). A study by Zenger, Berth, Brähler, and Stöbel-Richter (2013) revealed that self-efficacy predicts health complaints and the duration of unemployment seven years later. It was found that people with lower levels of self-efficacy demonstrated higher levels of mental and physical health complaints and also experienced twice the length of unemployment compared to people with high or medium level of self-efficacy. Thus, self-efficacy predicts health complaints and the duration of unemployment of young adults (Zenger et al., 2013). Study by Holmstrom, Russell, and Clare (2015) revealed that job-search self-efficacy of new-entrant job seekers and unemployed people mediates the relationship between self-esteem and job-search behaviour, but the effects were more pronounced among new-entrant job seekers. They found that self-efficacy is reduced after several unsuccessful attempts to find a job. Therefore, it is very useful to develop self-efficacy in unemployed young people. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy may be developed through mastery experiences, vicarious learning (or modelling), social persuasion, and psychological and physiological arousal. We suggest that when unemployed youth successfully accomplish a challenging task, they are more confident and they believe they have abilities to accomplish a task (e.g. looking for a job) in the future. It should be noted that mastery experiences are built through constant effort and the ability to learn how to create a strong perception of

efficacy. However, if confidence is built from successes that came easily, in the situation where serious difficulties emerge, it will not be characterized by perseverance (Bandura, 1999). Therefore, it is worth integrating challenging but surmountable exercises for unemployed youth to experience success throughout a training course. It is possible that if they experience more success, they will be more satisfied with life as well.

*Optimism*, according to Seligman (1998), can be viewed as an attributional style that explains positive events through personal, permanent, and pervasive causes, and negative events through external, temporary, and situation-specific causes. In contrast, pessimism can be viewed as externalized positive events. They are attributed to temporary and situation-specific causes while negative events are internalized and are attributed to permanent and pervasive causes (Seligman, 1998). It was found that optimism was related to psychological and physical health (Thomson, Schonert-Reichl, & Oberle, 2015), well-being, and coping styles (Scheier & Carver, 1992). Therefore, optimism could be used as a strategy for facing difficulties related to unemployment situations. It could help unemployed youth to explain their situations related to the difficulties of finding a job through external, temporary, and situation-specific causes. Thus, optimism is very useful positive resource which could increase life satisfaction of unemployed young people.

### **Self-compassion of unemployed youth**

Neff (2003a, 2003b) has proposed that the concept of self-compassion consist of three components: self-kindness versus self-judgment; a sense of common humanity versus isolation, and mindfulness versus over-identification. These components combine and mutually interact to create a self-compassionate frame of mind (Neff, 2003a, 2003b). We suggest that positive self-compassion could help unemployed youth cope with challenges they face. Thus, it would be possible to assume that self-compassion might help in meeting difficulties and hindrances to job seeking. Furthermore, we propose that self-compassion is related to life satisfaction of unemployed youth taking into account the empirical evidence of the relationships between self-compassion and optimism (Neff, 2009; Neff et al., 2007), resilience (Leary et al., 2007; Neff, McGehee,

2010), and efficacy (Iskender, 2009). Moreover, self-compassion is positive resource of psychological well-being (Neff, 2009). The following paragraphs briefly summarize the separate components of self-compassion.

*Self-kindness versus self-judgment.* According to Neff (2003a, 2003b), self-kindness is a tendency to be caring and understanding oneself rather than being judgmental and harshly critical. When life circumstances are difficult and painful, self-compassionate people use a soft and supportive emotional tone of language towards the self, and offer themselves soothing and comfort rather than attacking and berating themselves for being inadequate (Neff, 2009). Thus, when self-compassionate unemployed youth are facing difficult life circumstances, they could use a supportive and soft tone of language instead of being harshly critical and judgmental.

*Common humanity versus isolation.* According to Neff (2009), common humanity involves understanding that all humans are imperfect, that all people make mistakes and fail. Self-compassion connects one's own difficult condition to all human shared condition, and in this perspective, features of the self are understood from a broad, inclusive perspective. In the same way, struggles and life difficulties are understood as part of being human, so people feel connected to others when experiencing pain (Neff, 2009). This capacity is very useful to unemployed young people since the unemployed young people tend to think that others live better and they feel isolated and separate themselves from others when they experience difficult life circumstances. The understanding that others experience the same could encourage unemployed youth looking for job and help them to be resilient when their efforts are unsuccessful.

*Mindfulness versus over-identification.* Mindfulness involves being aware of the present moment in a clear and balanced manner (Brown & Ryan, 2003, cited by Neff, 2009). It involves turning toward one's painful thoughts and emotions and seeing them as they are without suppression or avoidance (Neff, 2003b). Also, it is very useful to pay attention in an equilibrated way that prevents being carried away by a dramatic storyline, a process that Neff (2003b) has named "over-identification." Thus, one neither ignores nor ruminates on disliked aspects of oneself or one's life (Neff, 2009). Mindfulness is an important capacity for

unemployed young people when they experience painful emotions and thoughts related to their unemployment situation. It allows them to recognize the real situation of their lives, and protects them from increasing negative thoughts and feelings.

According to Neff (2009), it is necessary to understand that one is suffering in order to be able to feel compassion towards the self. We suggest that unemployed youth with higher self-compassion levels should care about and treat themselves with kindness and gentleness when they experience difficulties finding a job. Thus, self-compassion may buffer unemployed youth against negative events and provide a balanced view when life circumstances become difficult.

The aforementioned studies have revealed that self-compassion and PsyCap are linked with a number of positive constructs. However, previous research has not yet examined PsyCap, self-compassion and life satisfaction together among unemployed young people. Finding new correlates of life satisfaction in young unemployed sample, especially considering empirical evidence of the proposed relationships between PsyCap and life satisfaction, and especially the relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction, is an important first step. Thus, the aims of the study are: 1) to reveal links between PsyCap, self-compassion and life satisfaction of unemployed youth; 2) to investigate the difference between PsyCap and self-compassion for higher and lower levels of life satisfaction among unemployed youth.

## **METHODS**

### **Participants**

In this pilot study, we recruited 80 young unemployed people (38% male, 62% female) to participate in the research. Participants' ages ranged from 19 to 29 years ( $M = 24.35$ ,  $SD = 2.90$ ). All participants were enrolled in a vocational counselling project at Lithuanian Labour Exchange. The purpose of the project was to involve young unemployed people in volunteering so that they did not become a socially excluded group. Therefore, it was important to involve them in activities ensuring public order. Thus, they were trained to become police volunteers. One part of the training was vocational counselling, which was car-



ried out by one of the authors of this article. The vocational counselling sought to reveal their personal positive aspects and strengths. After vocational counselling, participants were asked to complete questionnaires. All participation was voluntary. The participants received no payment or gift vouchers for their participation.

## Measures

*Psychological capital.* We evaluated PsyCap using the PCQ-24 (Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio, 2007) which is a higher order construct consisting of four subscales, each comprised of six items for a total of 24 items. The total scale consists of hope subscale (e.g. "There are lots of ways around any problem"), efficacy subscale (e.g. "I feel confident analysing a long-term problem to find a solution"), resilience subscale (e.g. "I feel I can handle many things"), and optimism subscale (e.g. "I always look on the bright side of things"). All items were measured using a 6-point Likert scale of agreement with response options ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for the total PsyCap scale was .85 and ranged for the subscales: (Hope subscale .78; Efficacy subscale .82; Resilience subscale .77; Optimism subscale .72).

*Life satisfaction.* We evaluated satisfaction with life using the satisfaction with life scale (SWLS, Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), a commonly used five-item measure of global life satisfaction. Scale consists of five items (e.g. "I am satisfied with my life"). All items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale of agreement with response options ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .82.

*Self-Compassion.* We evaluated self-compassion using the Self-Compassion scale (SCS; Neff, 2003a). This is a 26-item measure with responses ranging from 1 (*almost never*) to 5 (*almost always*). SCS assesses the positive and negative aspects of the three main components of self-compassion: Self-Kindness subscale consisting of 5 items (e.g. "When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need") versus Self-Judgment subscale consisting of 5 items (reverse scored) (e.g. "I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies"); Common Humanity subscale consisting of 4 items (e.g. "When

I'm down, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am") versus Isolation subscale consisting of 4 items (reverse scored) (e.g. "When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world"); and Mindfulness subscale consisting of 4 items (e.g. "When something upsets me, I try to keep my emotions in balance") versus Over-Identification subscale consisting of 5 items (reverse scored) (e.g. "When I'm feeling down, I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong"; Neff, 2003a). To compute the total score of self-compassion, we took the mean of each subscale, then computed a total mean. Thus, we used total self-compassion scale and its separate subscales as well. It should be noted that separate subscales of negative self-compassion components (Self-Judgment, Isolation and Over-identification) were computed without reversed coding. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for the total scale was .73 and ranged for the subscales: Self-Kindness .70; Self-Judgment .62; Common Humanity .70; Isolation .60; Mindfulness .71; Over-Identification .59.

It should be noted that Cronbach's alpha was  $< .70$  in subscales that assessed negative aspects of the three main components of self-compassion. Thus, we included means of Self-Judgment, Isolation and Over-Identification in different Life Satisfaction Clusters in the results section, but we did not analyse it. We showed relationships between Self-Judgment, Isolation and Over-Identification with PsyCap components and life satisfaction, but we did not analyse it as well.

Versions of all questionnaires were prepared in Lithuanian by both researchers of the article. The comparison of translated Lithuanian versions with back-translation to the original did not reveal any inconsistencies.

## Procedure

All questionnaires in this study were completed in a room at the Labour Exchange. Participants were divided into smaller groups consisting of 15 or 17 people in each group. Questionnaires were administered by a psychologist who provided vocational counselling. There was no time limit to complete the questionnaires. Participants completed questionnaires within 20-25 minutes. We distributed 100 questionnaires but received 80 fully completed questionnaires. All data were collected during a three-month period.

## Data Analysis

The statistical package SPSS 17.0 was used for data analysis. Pearson’s correlation coefficient was used to examine relationships between PsyCap, self-compassion and life satisfaction. Because some of the data was non-normally distributed (Table 1), both parametric and nonparametric statistics were used. The means of PsyCap, efficacy, hope, resilience, and self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-identification were compared with t-tests while the means of optimism, and self-compassion in two groups of participants were compared using Mann Whitney statistical criterion. K-means cluster analysis was used for grouping the participants into high and low satisfaction with life groups for variance analysis.

**Table 1.** *The data Distribution (Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality)*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p value*</i>
PsyCap	-.57	.30	-.89	.60	.354
Efficacy	-.30	.30	.05	.60	.329
Hope	.15	.30	-.84	.60	.112
Optimism	.23	.30	-1.0	.60	.022
Resilience	-.24	.30	-.85	.60	.116
Satisfaction with life	-.37	.30	-.65	.60	.046
Self-compassion	.65	.27	.09	.54	.004
Self-kindness	.42	.27	-.40	.54	.064
Self-judgment	.16	.27	-.26	.53	.560
Common humanity	.44	.27	-.48	.53	.052
Isolation	-.09	.27	-.34	.54	.416
Mindfulness	.04	.27	-.10	.54	.106
Over-identification	.23	.27	-.51	.53	.177

Note: SE – standard error, \*p value of Shapiro-Wilk test

## RESULTS

Table 2 presents descriptive analysis (means and standard deviations) of all study variables.

**Table 2.** Means and standard deviations of the PsyCap, self-compassion, and life satisfaction variables

<i>Variables</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
PsyCap	4.40	.65
Efficacy	4.46	.76
Hope	4.35	.83
Optimism	4.37	.76
Resilience	4.42	.75
Satisfaction with life	4.25	1.53
Self-compassion	1.58	.33
Self-kindness	2.98	.76
Self-judgment	3.10	.88
Common humanity	3.30	.84
Isolation	3.19	.91
Mindfulness	3.25	.84
Over-identification	2.33	.70

Note: M – mean, SD – standard deviation

We evaluated the relationship between life satisfaction, PsyCap and self-compassion using Pearson's correlation coefficient. Table 3 presents positive correlations between life satisfaction, PsyCap and all its components: efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism. All correlations are significant and strong, except for the correlation between life satisfaction and resilience. This correlation is significant but weak.

Next, we analysed the relationship between life satisfaction and self-compassion. Although life satisfaction was positively related to self-compassion, this relationship is weak. Moreover, positive aspects of self-compassion (self-kindness and mindfulness) were not related to life satisfaction. Only one component of positive self-compassion (common humanity) correlated significantly with life satisfaction. The results revealed that life satisfaction is positively linked with all negative self-compassion components. However, we did not analyse these results because of the low reliability of the negative self-compassion subscales. These results are shown in table 4.

**Table 3.** Correlations between PsyCap and life satisfaction of unemployed youth (Pearson's coefficient)

Variable	PsyCap	Efficacy	Hope	Optimism	Resilience
Life satisfaction	.59**	.53**	.50**	.59**	.36**

\* < .05

\*\* < .01

**Table 4.** Correlations between self-compassion and life satisfaction of unemployed youth (Pearson's coefficient)

Variable	Self-compassion	Self-kindness	Self-judgment	Common humanity	Isolation	Mindfulness	Over-identification
Life satisfaction	.26*	.16	.26*	.26*	.32**	.21	.30**

\* < .05

\*\* < .01

Another aim of this research was to investigate the difference between PsyCap (efficacy, hope, resilience, optimism), and self-compassion for higher and lower levels of life satisfaction among unemployed youth.

An independent-samples t-test indicated that participants with high level of satisfaction with life had higher levels of PsyCap, efficacy, hope and resilience. These results are shown in Tables 5 and 6.

**Table 5.** Means of Self-Compassion components in different Life Satisfaction Clusters

Variable	Level of life satisfaction							
	Low		High		T	df	P	D
	M	SD	M	SD				
Self-Kindness	2.78	.68	3.08	.80	-1.60	75	.11	-.41
Self-Judgment	2.87	.72	3.20	.83	-1.67	75	.10	-.42
Common humanity	3.03	.65	3.44	.90	-2.02	75	.05	-.53
Isolation	2.95	.86	3.30	.94	-1.57	75	.12	-.39
Mindfulness	2.93	.79	3.42	.83	-2.46	75	.02	-.61
Over-Identification	2.03	.60	2.47	.73	-2.56	75	.01	-.66

**Table 6.** Means of PsyCap, Efficacy, Hope and Resilience in different Life Satisfaction Clusters

Variable	Level of life satisfaction							
	Low		High		t	df	p	D
	M	SD	M	SD				
PsyCap	3.92	.06	4.64	.47	-5.18	73	.00	1.33
Efficacy	3.96	.64	4.72	.69	-4.65	76	.00	1.15
Hope	3.78	.75	4.64	.72	-4.85	77	.00	1.23
Resilience	4.04	.71	4.61	.70	-3.32	76	.00	.85

Mann-Whitney U test revealed statistically significant differences in optimism when comparing the groups that had higher and lower levels of satisfaction with life. Participants with a high level of satisfaction with life demonstrated greater optimism (the mean ranks of low and high satisfaction with life groups were 23.86 and 45.68 respectively;  $U = 271.50$ ,  $Z = -4.05$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In addition, Mann-Whitney U test indicated that participants with a high level of satisfaction with life demonstrated greater self-compassion (the mean ranks were 31.40 and 42.44 respectively;  $U = 453.50$ ,  $Z = -2.01$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Thus, highly satisfied with life unemployed

youth had higher levels of PsyCap, efficacy, hope, resilience, optimism, and self-compassion compared to those unemployed youth who were less satisfied with life.

**Table 7.** Correlations between PsyCap and self-compassion of unemployed youth (Pearson's coefficient)

Variable	Self-compassion	Self-kindness	Self-judgment	Common humanity	Isolation	Mindfulness	Over-identification
PsyCap	.40**	.25*	.23*	.31**	.26**	.28*	.33**
Efficacy	.33**	.27*	.22	.26*	.12	.28*	.20
Hope	.35**	.24*	.14	.31**	.35	.33**	.21
Optimism	.26*	.14	.30**	.33**	.38**	.14	.32**
Resilience	.19	.11	.16	.16	.23*	.19	.41**

\* < .05  
 \*\* < .01

Table 7 shows the correlations between PsyCap and self-compassion. As expected, PsyCap and self-compassion were positively related to each other. The results indicate that positive self-compassion components are significantly related to the following PsyCap components: self-kindness was associated with efficacy and hope; common humanity was associated with efficacy, hope and optimism; and mindfulness was associated with efficacy and hope. All correlations between PsyCap and self-compassion were significant but weak. Negative self-compassion components were also related to the PsyCap components. We did not analyse those results because, as mentioned above, of the low reliability of negative self-compassion subscales.

## DISCUSSION

This study showed that there were significant correlations between PsyCap and self-compassion with life satisfaction of unemployed youth. The strongest correlation was between PsyCap and life satisfaction. Thus, in addition we analysed the difference between PsyCap and

self-compassion for higher and lower levels of life satisfaction among unemployed youth. The results showed that there were significant differences in PsyCap and self-compassion between groups with high and low satisfaction with life. Before discussing the results, however, it is worth considering the low reliability in some subscales measuring negative self-compassion components. Thus, we analysed how overall self-compassion (but not the separate components/subscales) differ on higher and lower levels of life satisfaction.

First, we will discuss correlations between PsyCap and life satisfaction. Later, we will interpret correlations between life satisfaction and self-compassion. And finally, we will analyse correlations between PsyCap and self-compassion of unemployed youth.

The present research revealed that PsyCap (including all its components: efficacy, hope, resilience and optimism) is positively related to life satisfaction of unemployed youth. This suggests that those positive capacities could increase well-being not only among employees (Luthans et al., 2007) and students (Riulli et al., 2012) but also could increase the well-being of unemployed youth. Our findings are in line with the results found by Rani (2015) in Indian samples. Both studies have shown significant positive correlations between PsyCap and its components with psychological well-being of unemployed youth in India and Lithuania. Thus, this research highlights the importance of PsyCap reducing negative consequences of youth unemployment which is important for individuals and the whole of society (Rani, 2015).

In addition, our research revealed that unemployed youth with a higher level of satisfaction with life have greater levels of overall PsyCap and all its individual components (hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism) compared to unemployed youth who are less satisfied with life and are unemployed. People who have high level of PsyCap have been shown to possess many aspects of well-being such as greater happiness, daily positive functioning (Culbertson, Fullagar, Mills, 2010), life satisfaction (Riulli et al., 2012), satisfaction with relationships and psychological health (Luthans, Youssef, Sweetman, Harms, 2013). According to these findings, the results of our study showing that unemployed youth with higher level of satisfaction with life have greater level of PsyCap are logical and reasonable.



Our research revealed a weak but significant relationship between life satisfaction and self-compassion. Furthermore, we found that unemployed youth with a higher level of satisfaction with life are more self-compassionate compared to unemployed youth who are less satisfied with life and are unemployed. As the literature indicates, self-compassion is an important source of psychological well-being (Barnard & Curry, 2012; Neff, 2009). Self-compassion is strongly associated with positive affect, happiness and life satisfaction (Neff et al., 2007). According to these findings, the results of our study showing a positive relationship between life satisfaction and self-compassion of unemployed youth are expected.

Finally, our study showed a positive correlation between PsyCap and self-compassion for unemployed youth. This relationship was expected based on a review of the research literature. Previous studies revealed that self-compassion is strongly associated with positive affect, happiness, optimism and personal initiative to make needed changes in one's life (Neff et al., 2007), emotional coping skills, clarity of feelings and the capacity to repair negative emotional states (Neff, 2003a). It should be noted that personal initiative, emotional coping skills and positive affect are very useful capacities enhancing positive psychological capital. Furthermore, we found that self-kindness correlates with efficacy and hope; common humanity correlates with efficacy, hope and optimism; and mindfulness correlates with efficacy and hope. Our findings contribute to previous studies which found that self-compassion is positively related to optimism (Neff, 2009; Neff et al., 2007) and efficacy (Iskender, 2009). Thus, our findings that PsyCap positively correlates with self-compassion of unemployed youth can be supported by the aforementioned findings.

The present research revealed some useful correlations between PsyCap, self-compassion and satisfaction with life. However, without longitudinal or experimental studies, the causality between variables is unclear. We found that unemployed youth who are highly satisfied with life have higher levels of PsyCap and self-compassion compared to unemployed youth who are less satisfied with life. It is not clear whether life satisfaction is an outcome of possessing these resources or an antecedent to having those resources. Thus, it is important to investigate PsyCap, self-compassion and life satisfaction of unemployed youth in the future.

*Limitations and Future Directions.* There are several limitations to this study which should be noted. First, Cronbach's alpha was  $< .70$  for subscales which assess negative aspects of the three main components of self-compassion. Thus, the reliability of the scale should be tested in the future. Although the comparison of translated Lithuanian versions with back-translation to the original did not reveal any inconsistencies, it would be worthwhile checking those items of the subscales measuring negative components of self-compassion. Second, our analysis was focused on one limited-size group of individuals only, namely, on unemployed Lithuanians aged 19-29. The generalizability of the findings is, therefore, limited. Whether our results can be extended to other age groups in other countries remains to be tested in future research. Third, the absence of key information about participants' educational level and social class is a limitation of the research as well. Fourth, we did not use a control or comparison group of employed Lithuanians of the same age. This should be done in future research as well. Finally, a structural equation model could be built using the variables examined in this study.

Nevertheless, the results obtained in this study have important practical implications: psychological capital and self-compassion may have an important place in positive psychological interventions for the enhancement of satisfaction with life of unemployed youth.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This study makes several contributions. The results of our study revealed that life satisfaction positively correlates with psychological capital and all its components: efficacy, hope, optimism and resilience of unemployed youth. Although life satisfaction positively correlates with total self-compassion and common humanity, however, self-kindness and mindfulness do not correlate with the life satisfaction of unemployed youth. Nevertheless, unemployed youth with high satisfaction with life have higher levels of total self-compassion and PsyCap (efficacy, hope, optimism, resilience) compared to less satisfied with life unemployed youth. Finally, positive links between total self-compassion and positive psychological capital were found. Furthermore, positive self-compassion components correlated with efficacy, hope and optimism as well.

## References

- Åslund, C., Starrin, B., Nilsson, K. W. (2014). Psychosomatic symptoms and low psychological well-being in relation to employment status: The influence of social capital in a large cross-sectional study in Sweden. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 13(1), 1-19.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: Freeman.
- Bandura, A. (1999). Social cognitive theory of personality. In L. Pervin & O. John (Ed.), *Handbook of personality* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford Press. pp. 154-225.
- Barnard, L. K. & Curry, J. F. (2012). The relationship of clergy burnout to self-compassion and other personality dimensions. *Pastoral Psychology*, 61(2), 149-163.
- Bjornstad, R. (2006). Learned helplessness, discouraged workers, and multiple unemployment equilibria. *The Journal of Socio-Economics*, 35, 458-475.
- Culbertson, S. S., Fullagar, C. J., Mills, M. J. (2010). Feeling good and doing great: The relationship between psychological capital and well-being. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 15, 421-433.
- Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with life scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 49(1), 71-75.
- Eurostat (2016, August 23). Retrieved from [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php/](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/).
- Froman, L. (2010). Positive psychology in the workplace. *Journal of Adult Development*, 17(2), 59-69.
- Holmstrom, A. J., Russell, J. C., Clare, D. D. (2015). Assessing the role of job-search self-efficacy in the relationship between esteem support and job-search behavior among two populations of job seekers. *Communication Studies*, 66(3), 277-300.
- Iskender, M. (2009). The relationship between self-compassion, self-efficacy, and control belief about learning in Turkish university students. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 37(5), 711-720. DOI: 10.2224/sbp.2009.37.5.711.
- Leary, M. R., Tate, E. B., Adams, C. E., Allen, A. B., & Hancock, J. (2007). Selfcompassion and reactions to unpleasant self-relevant events: The implications of treating oneself kindly. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(5), 887-904.
- Lorenzini, J. (2015). Subjective well-being and political participation: A comparison of unemployed and employed youth. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 16(2), 381-404.
- Luthans, F. (2002). The Need for and meaning of positive organizational behavior. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 23(6), 695-706. DOI: 10.1002/job.165.
- Luthans, F., Avolio B., Avey, J., & Norman, S. (2007). Positive psychological capital: Measurement and relationship with performance and satisfaction. *Personnel Psychology*, 60(3), 541-572. DOI: 10.1111/j.1744-6570.2007.00083.x.
- Luthans, F., Youssef, C. M., Sweetman, D. S., Harms, P. D. (2013). Meeting the leadership challenge of employee well-being through relationship PsyCap and health PsyCap. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies* 20(1), 118-133. DOI: 10.1177/1548051812465893.

- Masten, A. S., & Reed, M. G. J. (2002). Resilience in development. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds), *Handbook of positive psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 74-88.
- Neff, K. (2003a). The development and validation of a scale to measure self-compassion. *Self and Identity, 2*, 223-250. DOI: 10.1080/15298860390209035.
- Neff, K. D. (2003b). Self-compassion: An alternative conceptualization of a healthy attitude toward oneself. *Self and Identity, 2*, 85-102. DOI: 10.1080/15298860390129863.
- Neff, K. D. (2009). Self-compassion. In M. R. Leary & R. H. Hoyle (Ed.), *Handbook of Individual Differences in Social Behavior*. New York: Guilford Press. pp. 561-573.
- Neff, K. D., & McGehee, P. (2010). Self-compassion and psychological resilience among adolescents and young adults. *Self and Identity, 9*, 225-240. DOI: 10.1080/15298860902979307
- Neff, K. D., Rude, S. S., & Kirkpatrick, K. (2007). An examination of self-compassion in relation to positive psychological functioning and personality traits. *Journal of Research in Personality, 41*(4), 908-916.
- Rani, K. E. (2015). The role of psychological capital (PsyCap) in psychological well being of unemployed Indian youth. *Journal of Psychosocial Research, 10*(1), 149-157.
- Reine, I., Novo, M., Hammarström, A. (2011). Is participation in labour market programmes related to mental health? Results from a 14-year follow-up of the Northern Swedish Cohort. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health, 39*(1), 26-34.
- Riolli, L., Savicki, V., & Richards, J. (2012). Psychological capital as a buffer to student stress. *Psychology, 3*(12A), 1202-1207.
- Seligman, M. E. P. (1998). *Learned Optimism*. New York: Pocket Books.
- Scheier, M., & Carver, C. (1992). Effects of optimism on psychological and physical well-being: Theoretical overview and empirical update. *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 16*(2), 201-228.
- Snyder, C. R. (2000). *Handbook of hope*. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Snyder, C. R., Irving, L., Anderson, J. (1991). Hope and health: Measuring the will and the ways. In C. R. Snyder & D. R. Forsyth (Ed.), *Handbook of social and clinical psychology*. Elmsford, NY: Pergamon. pp. 285-305.
- Stajkovic, A., & Luthans, F. (1998). Social cognitive theory and self-efficacy: Going beyond traditional motivational and behavioral approaches. *Organizational Dynamics, 26* (4), 62-74.
- Tamesberger, D. (2015). A multifactorial explanation of youth unemployment and the special case of Austria. *International Social Security Review, 68*(1), 23-45.
- Thomson, K., Schonert-Reichl, K., Oberle, I. (2015). Optimism in early adolescence: relations to individual characteristics and ecological assets in families, schools, and neighborhoods. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 16*(4), 889-913.
- Zenger, M., Berth, H., Brähler, E., Stöbel-Richter, Y. (2013). Health complaints and unemployment: The role of self-efficacy in a prospective cohort study. *Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology, 32*(1), 97-115.

## JAUNŲ BEDARBIŲ PSICHOLOGINIO KAPITALO, ATJAUTOS SAU IR PASITENKINIMO GYVENIMU RYŠYS

Eglė Sabaitytė, Aistė Diržytė  
Mykolo Romerio universitetas, Lietuva

**Santrauka. Darbo problema.** Jaunimo nedarbas – aktuali Europos Sąjungos problema. Bedarbystė gali sumažinti nedirbančių jaunų žmonių ne tik ekonominę, bet ir psichologinę gerovę. Pozityvus psichologinis kapitalas ir atjauta sau yra susiję su tokiomis pozityviais konstruktais kaip pasitenkinimas gyvenimu, pozityvios emocijos ir iniciatyva, keičiant savo gyvenimą. Tyrime keliami prielaidai, kad pozityvus psichologinis kapitalas ir atjauta sau gali stiprinti jaunų bedarbių psichologinę gerovę. **Tikslas** – atskleisti pozityvaus psichologinio kapitalo, atjautos sau ir pasitenkinimo gyvenimu ryšius jaunų bedarbių imtyje. **Tiriamieji ir metodai.** Tyrime dalyvavo 80 jaunų Lietuvos bedarbių (38 % vaikinių ir 62 % merginų, kurių amžius 19–29 m.). Tyrime naudoti instrumentai: *Psichologinio kapitalo klausimynas* (Luthans et al., 2007), *Pasitenkinimo gyvenimu skalė* (Diener et al., 1985) ir *Atjautos sau skalė* (Neff, 2003a). **Rezultatai.** Jaunų bedarbių pasitenkinimas gyvenimu buvo teigiamai susijęs su psichologiniu kapitalu ir atjauta sau; psichologinio kapitalo komponentai buvo teigiamai susiję su visais atjautos sau komponentais. Jauni bedarbiai, kurie buvo labiau patenkinti gyvenimu, pasižymėjo didesniu psichologiniu kapitalu ir atjauta sau, lyginant su jaunais bedarbiais, kurie buvo mažiau patenkinti gyvenimu. **Išvados.** Atlikto tyrimo rezultatai atskleidžia, kad psichologinis kapitalas ir atjauta sau gali būti reikšmingi resursai stiprinant jaunų bedarbių psichologinę gerovę.

**Pagrindiniai žodžiai:** psichologinis kapitalas, atjauta sau, pasitenkinimas gyvenimu, jauni bedarbiai.

Received: 2016-07-07

Accepted: 2017-01-18