



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***EXPLORING PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL AS ENHANCER OF  
INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES' COMPETENCIES***

**NUR AIMI NASUHA BURHANUDDIN**

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INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES' COMPETENCIES**

By

**NUR AIMI NASUHA BURHANUDDIN**

**Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies,  
Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**January 2021**

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## DEDICATION

Of knowledge, we have none, save what you have taught us.  
Verily, you are the all-knowing, truly wise  
(The Qur'an 2:32)

*This thesis is dedicated to*

*Both the noor of my eyes, Mak and Abah, my siblings and my husband for making everything possible and always believe I could.*



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

## **EXPLORING PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL AS ENHANCER OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES' COMPETENCIES**

By

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**January 2021**

**Chairman :Associate Professor Nor Aniza Ahmad, PhD**  
**Faculty :Educational Studies**

Research evidence suggested that psychological capital (PsyCap) has been increasingly recognized and positively linked with employee's productivity. It is a critical factor in motivation, effective cognitive processing and achievement, entailing the positive evaluation of a given situation and the drive to succeed (Peterson et al., 2011). The existing evidence however is mostly within industrial and business organisation employee and none, if not little, focus is given towards educational organisation. Thus, in order to explore PsyCap among educators, specifically instructional coaches (IC), and to understand how PsyCap is experienced by IC in their practice of instructional coaching, this study put forward three research questions. They include (1) How do instructional coaches experience PsyCap in their practice of coaching? (2) What are the factors that contribute to the development of instructional coaches' PsyCap? (3) How does PsyCap help instructional coaches to be competent in their profession? These questions aimed to determine ways, factors that influence, and how PsyCap is able to help instructional coaches enhance their coaching competencies.

Phenomenological approach was selected since it was deemed the most appropriate approach for the study of a phenomenon of this nature. Data were gathered from seven instructional coaches from six different District Education Offices (DEO) throughout Malaysia. The participants were selected among those who are KHAS C and DG54 grade instructional coaches through purposive sampling. The data collection method employed was mainly in-depth interview with the participants. Each interview was audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and analysed. In addition, informal observation was also carried out. The validity and reliability of the research was ensured by following Yardley's Principle of accessing quality for qualitative research: 1) sensitivity to context, 2) commitment and rigour, 3) transparency and coherence and 4) impact and importance.

This includes stating the researcher's position as well as maintaining audit trail. As additional measure, this study also took the approach of clarifying researcher's bias, member checking, peer debriefing and thick, rich description of the result.

Through the themes emerged, the finding showed ways PsyCap was experienced by the instructional coaches, factors that contributed to the development of their PsyCap and how PsyCap helped enhanced their coaching competencies. Extracted from participants' own words, PsyCap was experienced by the participants through the sense of responsibility, PsyCap as personal resources and PsyCap and work commitment. The exploration of factors that contributed to the development of participants' PsyCap has brought about supportive working environment, career background as well as spirituality. Being supplemented with inner psychological resources of PsyCap, the IC was able to enhance their coaching competencies through role modeling, encourage others to flourish and build emotional connection with teachers. The study concluded that PsyCap possessed by the study's participants were unique to them and have aided them in their practice of instructional coaching.

This study contributed to the body of knowledge by suggesting potential positive psychological resources to be included in PsyCap which are spirituality and emotional intelligence. Both of these resources were deemed to be highly significant to the context of Malaysian educators. In addition, this study also highlighted the implication for the instructional coaching practices and policies and future research recommendations towards understanding PsyCap in other groups within educational organisation.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PENEROKAAN MODAL PSIKOLOGI SEBAGAI PENINGKAT  
KOMPETENSI PEMBIMBING INSTRUKSIONAL**

Oleh

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Bukti penyelidikan menunjukkan bahawa modal psikologi (PsyCap) semakin dikenali dan dikaitkan secara positif dengan produktiviti pekerja. Ini adalah faktor kritikal dalam motivasi, pemprosesan dan pencapaian kognitif yang berkesan, mencakupi penilaian positif terhadap situasi tertentu dan dorongan untuk berjaya (Peterson et al., 2011). Walaubagaimanapun, bukti sedia ada berfokus kepada individu di dalam organisasi industri dan perniagaan, dan kurang tumpuan diberikan kepada individu di dalam organisasi pendidikan. Oleh itu, kajian ini meneroka PsyCap pendidik, khususnya pembimbing instruksional untuk memahami bagaimana PsyCap dialami oleh pembimbing instruksional dalam bimbingan mereka. Kajian ini mengemukakan tiga persoalan kajian. Persoalan kajian tersebut ialah (1) Bagaimana pembimbing instruksional mengalami PsyCap dalam bimbingan instruksional mereka? (2) Apakah faktor-faktor yang menyumbang pada pembangunan PsyCap pembimbing instruksional? (3) Bagaimana PsyCap membantu pembimbing instruksional untuk menjadi kompeten dalam profesion mereka? Soalan-soalan ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana PsyCap dialami, faktor yang mempengaruhi dan bagaimana PsyCap dapat membantu pembimbing instruksional meningkatkan kecekapan bimbingan mereka.

Pendekatan fenomenologi dipilih kerana ia dianggap pendekatan yang paling tepat untuk mengkaji fenomena ini. Data dikumpulkan dari tujuh pembimbing instruksional dari enam Pejabat Pendidikan Daerah (PPD) yang berlainan di seluruh Malaysia. Para peserta dipilih melalui pensampelan bertujuan dan merupakan pembimbing instruksional gred Khas C dan DG54. Kaedah pengumpulan data yang digunakan adalah temu bual secara mendalam. Setiap temu bual dirakam, ditranskripsikan secara verbatim dan dianalisis. Selain itu, pemerhatian tidak rasmi juga dilakukan. Kesahan dan kebolehpercayaan bagi penyelidikan ini dilakukan mengikut Prinsip Yardley dalam mengakses kualiti

penyelidikan kualitatif: 1) kepekaan terhadap konteks, 2) komitmen dan ketelitian, 3) ketelusan dan koheren, dan 4) kesan dan kepentingan. Ini termasuk menyatakan kedudukan penyelidik serta mengekalkan jejak audit. Sebagai langkah tambahan, kajian ini juga mengambil pendekatan menjelaskan kecenderungan penyelidik, *member checking*, penerangan rakan sebaya dan penerangan hasil yang kaya dan mendalam.

Cara bagaimana PsyCap dialami oleh pembimbing instruksional, faktor-faktor yang menyumbang kepada pembangunan PsyCap mereka dan bagaimana PsyCap membantu meningkatkan kompetensi mereka dijelaskan melalui tema yang muncul. Diambil dari kata-kata peserta kajian sendiri, PsyCap dialami oleh para peserta melalui rasa tanggungjawab, PsyCap sebagai sumber peribadi yang menjadikan mereka positif dan PsyCap serta komitmen kerja. Penerokaan faktor-faktor yang menyumbang kepada pembangunan PsyCap peserta ialah persekitaran kerja, pendidikan dan latar belakang kerjaya serta spiritual. Dengan PsyCap, pembimbing instruksional dapat meningkatkan kecekapan bimbingan mereka melalui contoh tauladan, mendorong orang lain untuk berkembang dan membina hubungan emosi dengan guru. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa sumber psikologi dalaman PsyCap yang dimiliki oleh peserta kajian adalah unik bagi mereka dan membantu mereka dalam latihan bimbingan instruksional mereka.

Kajian ini menyumbang kepada pengetahuan dengan mencadangkan sumber psikologi positif yang berpotensi untuk dimasukkan dalam PsyCap iaitu spiritual dan kecerdasan emosi. Kedua-dua sumber tersebut dilihat sangat signifikan bagi konteks pendidik di Malaysia. Di samping itu, kajian ini juga mengutarakan implikasi kepada amalan latihan dan polisi instruksional dan cadangan penyelidikan masa hadapan terhadap pemahaman PsyCap bagi kumpulan lain dalam organisasi pendidikan.



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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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Date: 06 May 2021

## Declaration by graduate student

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PsyCap	Psychological Capital
SISC+	School Improvement Specialist Coaches Plus
IC	Instructional Coach
BPSH	Bahagian Pengurusan Sekolah Harian ( <i>School Management Division</i> )
EPRD	Educational Planning and Research Division ( <i>Bahagian Perancangan dan Penyelidikan Dasar Pendidikan KPM</i> )
JPN	Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri ( <i>State Education Department</i> )
PPD	Pejabat Pendidikan Daerah ( <i>District Education Office</i> )
JKEUPM	Jawatankuasa Etika Universiti Untuk Penyelidikan Melibatkan Manusia Universiti Putra Malaysia ( <i>University Ethics Committee for Research Involving Human Subject</i> )
IAB	Institut Aminuddin Baki ( <i>Aminuddin Baki Institute</i> )
IPG	Institut Pendidikan Guru ( <i>Teacher Training Institute</i> )
FasiLINUS	Fasilitator for Literacy, and Numeracy Screening
PPPM	Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia (PPPM 2013-2025) ( <i>Malaysia Education Blueprint</i> ) 2013-2025
PCQ-24	Psychological Capital Questionnaire-24
POB	Positive organizational behaviour

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide the motivation for the study. The chapter will focus on presenting a brief view of the challenges in organisation, instructional coach's responsibilities and challenges and how psychological capital (PsyCap) links to instructional coach's performance. Further sections of the chapter will present the research gap and the significance of the study, purpose, objectives, research questions and the forecasted limitations of this study. The chapter will conclude with a brief outline of the methodology undertaken in this study.

#### 1.2 Background of Study

Psychological capital (PsyCap) is defined as an individual's positive psychological 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 a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) 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, Yousseff & Avolio, 2015, p. 2). It is a concept that goes beyond human capital (what you know), social capital (who you know) and financial capital (what you have). PsyCap is viewed as "who you are" and "who you are becoming". It covers four malleable and manageable constructs: hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). When these four travel together and interact synergistically, they produce differentiated manifestations overtime and across context (Luthans & Youssef- Morgan, 2017). This mechanism is attributed to psychological resource theory (Hobfoll, 2002), whereby it is suggested that the resources (i.e. hope, self- efficacy, resilience, optimism) are indicators of broader, multidimensional 'core' factors. A distinct feature of PsyCap is that it is "state-like" and thus developable and measurable. It emerges from the positive psychology movement initiated by Seligman and colleagues (Seligman, 1998a, 1998b; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), and positive organisational behaviour (POB) by (Luthans, 2002a, 2002b; Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Youssef & Luthans, 2013) that examines positivity at the individual level (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007a). PsyCap has been linked with various positive outcomes including one's engagement, satisfaction, motivation, happiness and well-being (Luthans, 2002; Luthans et al., 2005; Luthans et al., 2006). Peterson and his colleagues further added that PsyCap is significant for cognitive functioning, motivation, striving for success and performance (Peterson et al., 2011).

Growing evidence shows that the provision of workplace support facilitates PsyCap development in employees, as it gives them greater hope to seek out new and different pathways to achieve their goals and serves as a resource that allows them to bounce back quickly after a setback (Luthans et al., 2008). Findings from Liu (2013) showed that employees who perceived higher levels of supervisor support had higher levels of PsyCap which consequently lead to higher level of performance. On the other hand, Luthans, Norman & Avey (2008) found that PsyCap fully mediated the relationship between a supportive organisational climate and their job performance. Nigah, Davis and Hurrell (2012) found that satisfaction with buddying, a socialization mechanism commonly utilized by organisations to support new recruits, led to higher levels of employees' PsyCap and in turn, predicted their work engagement. Recent work also demonstrates that individuals who face a stressful working environment and high levels of work–family conflict exhibit lower levels of PsyCap than those who face less stressful experiences.

### **1.2.1 Psychological Capital (PsyCap) in Educational Organisations**

While the outcomes of PsyCap is evident in the context of industrial organisation and increasingly recognised in the human resource literature (Luthans et al., 2007), it is believed that it is also highly relevant in educational organisation, and worth discussing. PsyCap has been upheld as an effective construct for defending against stress, negative emotions and burnout among educators (Liu et al., 2013). For instance, Shen et al. (2014) found that PsyCap was negatively associated with depressive symptoms among university teachers; while Cheung, Tang and Tang (2011) explored whether PsyCap moderated teachers' emotional labour, burnout and job satisfaction associations, and found that PsyCap was negatively related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation. Furthermore, Ganotice et al. (2015) reported that PsyCap of teachers was linked to adaptive outcomes such as well-being and job performance; and a number of additional studies emphasised the negative relationship of PsyCap to undesirable psychological symptoms in teachers (Fu, 2015; Hansen, Buitendach & Kanengoni, 2015; Mazzetti et al., 2016), as well as a positive relationship to favourable work attitudes and behaviours (Coleman, 2016; Wang, Chen & Hsu, 2014; Yalçın, 2016) and a positive mental state (Williams, Kern & Waters, 2015). In a study conducted with preschool teachers, it was suggested that the teachers were more committed to their professional job when they developed PsyCap (Hsing-Ming et al., 2017). Another study which was conducted with teachers found that as teachers developed PsyCap, it contributed to their teaching effectiveness. For instances, when teachers were more hopeful and optimist at work to teach students, they performed better in classroom. Not only that, teachers who had high resiliency were able to face difficulties and challenges better at school. All these corresponded to the Pygmalion effect in which higher expectation leads to higher performance and thus, suggests that teachers' teaching effectiveness are better as they develop higher PsyCap (Wang, Chen & Hsu, 2011).

Psychological resources are able to provide the inner energy necessary to meet the demands of a changing environment (Gorgievski & Hobfoll, 2008). PsyCap as the psychological resources that are build up by positive mental and emotional state suggests the need to be developed and invested, especially within the educational society

following the increasing job demand. Studies have shown the importance of educators to be well-equipped with a variety of hard skills and soft skills (Mitchell et al., 2010). Hard skills are the technical requirements of a job, such as communication skills, specialized knowledge of policies and procedures, and management expertise. Soft skills, on the other hand, include both self-empathy; an awareness of one's own feelings and needs, as well as empathy toward others' feelings and needs (Nicolaidis, 2002). Having soft skills allows educators to be tactful, compassionate, and sensitive to others' needs. However, hard skills and soft skills alone are not enough. With the substantial evidence showing numerous positive outcomes of having PsyCap, and in order for educators to be successful and effective in the job they are doing, developing and expanding one's PsyCap is considered equally important as it complement the hard and soft skills needed by educators. In addition, as PsyCap has established to be linked with several positive outcomes and able to defend against stress, negative emotions and burnout, it may suggest its significance to educator especially in ensuring national agenda of educational reform to be successful and worthwhile.

### **1.2.2 National Agenda to Improve School Performance**

As instructional coaching has proved to be effective strategy in improving teacher's instructional skills in classroom (Knight, 2009), Malaysia has taken the same step by introducing instructional coaching under the District Transformation Programme (DTP) in its effort to reform the school to enhance students' learning (Ministry of Education, 2012). The programme involved the deployment of the instructional coaches called School Improvement Specialist Coaches (SISC+) to targeted schools in Malaysia. It is a school-based Training for Teachers that utilises coaching to encourage collaborative learning and partnership among teachers. This programme hopes to accelerate teachers' performance and further students' achievement.

The School Improvement Specialist Coaches (SISC+) was introduced to the schools in the year 2012 to support teachers in translating written curriculum into classroom teaching. As stated in the MOE Blueprint, SISC+ (i.e., instructional coaches) are appointed from various sources within the education system such as, Excellent Teachers (*Guru Cemerlang*), Excellent Principals (*Pengetua Cemerlang*), teacher training institute lecturers (i.e., Institut Aminuddin Baki (IAB) or Institut Pendidikan Guru (IPG)), existing FasiLINUS (Literacy, Numeracy, Screening) and the officers from the State Education Offices and District Education Office. SISC+ are frequently chosen on the basis of their experience as a successful teacher, their ability to work with adult learners, their strong interpersonal skills, and their expertise in literacy instruction (Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia (PPPM 2013-2025). The roles of SISC+ involve taking the new curricula and assessments to the classroom, coaching teachers on pedagogical skills, and monitoring the effectiveness of the implementation (Ministry of Education, 2012).

It is hoped that the introduction of the SISC+ would reduce the number of tiers involved in delivering curriculum and assessment, and also provide on-the-ground training for teachers. The SISC+ programme intensifies support for teachers whereby through

coaching, SISC+ observe teachers in the classroom, give feedback and suggest an improvisation in teaching. Having SISC+ as an experienced teacher to team-teach classes and conduct lesson-planning together with teachers would help to improve schools' performance rapidly. It is expected that SISC+ spend more than 60% their time on coaching activities (Ministry of Education, 2012) to support teachers in improving their teaching quality as teacher's quality is one of the most significant factors for students' learning (DuFour & Mattos, 2013). In addition, SISC+ are also expected to dedicate 20% of their work to provide training, (teacher professional development) and establishing professional learning community (PLC) networking in schools, 15% of their time to write a report on their coaching session with teachers and 5% to do administrative-related work directed by the head of department. SISC+ will coach teachers to deliver the existing syllabus in a manner that suits the 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom learning (Ministry of Education, 2012). The focus of SISC+'s coaching sessions are on the mastery of key pedagogical skills in developing higher-order thinking skills, teaching children of different abilities, and assessing students effectively. Pedagogical skills emphasises the practices that focus on student-centered learning. SISC+ are expected to lead teacher development so as to improve instructions, increase teachers' efficacy and collaboration, and ultimately increase students' achievement.

The allocation of percentages suggests that coaches hold several different roles that include data-based planner, pedagogy and curriculum specialist, teacher supporter, training provider, and catalyst of PLC networking. Apparently, the multiple roles that coaches has to enact are complex and multifaceted as they may have to bear more than one roles at a time. Coaches role may depend within the contextuality of the coaching environment as well as how the district offices envisioned using their position in meeting the demands of reform agenda and teacher's needs (Mudzimiri, Burroughs, Lueback, Sutton, & Yopp, 2014). This suggests that while instructional coaching offers promising outcomes in accelerating school performance, the task coaches have to carry is not without its challenges.

### **1.2.3 Challenges in Instructional Coaching**

The outlined role and responsibilities SISC+ had to bear in their task as instructional coaches (ICs) comes with the challenges they had to face. The complex nature of coaching challenges ICs professionally as it requires them to deal not only with teacher's resistance, acceptance and expectation but also to adhere to the complex and multifaceted roles that they are bearing. Studies revealed that IC are expected to adhere to three different roles that is implementer, advocate and educator (Heineke, 2013; Mudzimiri et al., 2014; Russell, 2017; Vanita, 2016; Wang, 2017; Kho, Saeed & Mohamed, 2019). This means that coaches have to engage to the roles depending on the context of the coaching situation and that, different strategies need to be employed based on the consideration of the role they chose. Role-shifting constantly occur depending on the situation (Kho et al., 2019). For instance, teacher's stage of learning are different from one individual to another, in terms of their ability to reflect and make improvement to their teaching, and because of this, coaches need to adhere to the multiple roles to make sure the teaching quality is enhanced (Kho et al., 2019).

Besides the multiple roles IC need to adhere to, they also faced many challenges while working with adult learners to improve their performance. Knight (2011) stated that one remarkable challenge IC faced when working with teachers is to establish a partnership with those who are reluctant to change. Teachers are less likely to give cooperation and positive feedback when they view the new instructional practices as difficult to implement and no different than the previous effort to reform classroom instruction. In addition to teacher's resistance in receiving coaching, another challenge that ICs face is when teachers misunderstand their roles as supervisors or quasi-administrators (Borman & Feger, 2006; Fullan & Knight, 2011). Having known this, it is important for administrators as well as ICs to be clear of a coach's roles as they should not judge or evaluate teacher's classroom practices. These findings may suggest an explanation as to why coaches experience resistance from teachers (Richard, 2003). On top of that, there were cases that reported that coaches' role and responsibilities were poorly defined and this resulted in them having to do a quasi-administrative or clerical work rather than the actual job which is improving teachers' performance. They photocopied papers for teachers, filed documents, or ordered supplies, instead of helping teachers improve their instruction (Fullan & Knight, 2011, p. 52).

Confidentiality is another challenge for ICs. Teachers are more likely to work collaboratively if they believe that conversations with coaches are confidential. As a result, it is easier for teachers to openly express their views. Knight (2011) stated that teachers are more likely to implement new practices when coaches implement a partnership approach. Another factor that might be challenging for coaches is the geographical location of the schools. Rural and urban schools each has its own complexity and both requires different strategies as the setting might cause the coaching practice to work differently. ICs in rural schools experience different challenges than their counterparts in urban school districts. There are different factors that may impede the work of ICs as they work collaboratively with classroom teachers to improve their instructional practices and students' achievement. Students at rural schools have access to different facilities compared to those in urban schools. They are often isolated from libraries, museums, colleges and universities (Lindahl, 2011). These might suggest that teachers at rural schools require or implement different strategies in order to better fulfill the students' needs in terms of classroom instructions. For coaches, the challenge is to provide a coaching that is suitable with the setting of rural schools, knowing it is different from urban school. Due to the location of rural schools, they often experience difficulties recruiting and retaining high quality teachers (Beesley, 2011; Reeves, 2003). This requires coaches to plan not only for students' needs but also teachers' needs. Evidence from past research suggested that PsyCap is an important asset among leaders like IC in order to ensure a successful instructional coaching (Luthans et al., 2015).

#### **1.2.4 Psychological Capital (PsyCap) as Powerful Asset for Instructional Coaches**

Having known the complex nature of SISC+'s duty suggests the importance of PsyCap to them, which eventually could contribute to the success of instructional coaching. PsyCap that stems from the discipline of positive organisational behaviour (POB) is concerned with people's strengths rather than weaknesses and dysfunction, and how they

can grow and thrive rather than be fixed and maintained. This turns out to be a powerful asset in terms of facing notable challenges as instructional coaches (ICs). Having known that instructional coaching offers a worthwhile but challenging experience as there will be roadblocks, interruptions and detours, it is then crucial for the ICs to build and expand their positive psychological resources of PsyCap.

A bulk of PsyCap research has been done in industrial organisational contexts. However, there are strong theoretical reasons to propose that PsyCap could also play a key role in the educational context. The nature of academic tasks is comparable to work duties. Moreover, the characteristics that would enable academics to succeed in their organisations are not so different from the characteristics that employees need in order to succeed in their organisations (Datu & Valdez, 2016; Siu et al., 2014). For example, in both academic and industrial contexts, one needs to have a strong sense of efficacy in order to accomplish one's goals. A similar case could be made for the need to be resilient because setbacks are inevitable in both contexts, and the ability to bounce back is a good predictor of success.

Educational organisation, similar to other organisations, encounter hardship, reforms, increasing standards and accountability, and these put pressure on educators (Cefai & Cavioni, 2014). Coaching in educational organisation, is not without any challenges. Therefore, an important next step in researching PsyCap within educational organisations, specifically IC, is to understand IC's experience of PsyCap as it develops. Then, professionals may assist IC to further cultivate, to strengthen and to maintain PsyCap in any circumstances they encounter.

This perspective also suggests that PsyCap may offer a shift in educational psychology as it is resonate the mission of educational psychology that is focusing on; individual learning methods, instructional process and different learning outcomes (Reynolds, Miller & Weiner, 2003). It is believed that by developing PsyCap, people within the educational organisations may be able to develop their ability to brave hardship and crises that arise, further attain success. As Achor (2011) claims, we are successful when we are happy, not the other way around. So if we are more hopeful, efficacious, resilient and optimistic, we are more likely to "weather the storm" in a dynamic organisational or a challenging personal environment.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Research evidence suggested that psychological capital (PsyCap) has been increasingly recognised and positively linked with employee's productivity. It is a critical factor in motivation, effective cognitive processing and achievement, entailing the positive evaluation of a given situation and the drive to succeed (Peterson et al., 2011). Numerous works in the past has shown that these positive, theory-based constructs are state-like and developable, and they affect the attitudes, behaviours and performance of employees towards their work (Avey et al., 2011; Luthans, Avey & Patera, 2008).

The existing evidence are mostly within industrial organisation employees and little focus is given towards educational organisations. The exploration of PsyCap within educational setting still is in its early stage and the research on PsyCap within the educational setting, specifically among ICs is still lags behinds in terms of the antecedents as well as establishing its nomological network (eg., outcomes). This calls for further exploration about the antecedents (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017) as the knowledge of the antecedents will be able to help organisations to bolster individual PsyCap (Newman, Ucbasaran, Zhu, & Hirst, 2014). Even with the existing findings of PsyCap outcomes for people in educational organisations, researchers have yet to map ICs' experiences of PsyCap. With the ever challenging task as coach and bearing their role to keep the coachee focused on the goals, helping to monitor and evaluate progress over time as well as providing intellectual foil for brainstorming and self-reflection, the value of PsyCap is important to coach's self. The understanding of PsyCap among ICs would provide a foundational information regarding one's means to flourish with regard to their work performance and to realize their own inner psychological strengths. Exploring ICs' experience of PsyCap has the potential of making their own well-informed and PsyCap-focused intervention within educational organisation possible.

To further illustrate the gap, much of the existing evidence is based largely on self-report measure. In most studies (Demerath, Lynch, & Davidson, 2018; Yan, 2016; Tüzün, Çetin, & Basim, 2018; Luthans, Luthans, & Palmer, 2016; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff, 2003), data on PsyCap at the individual level has been self-reported and collected from a single source at a single point in time and this could contribute to the increase in the social desirability response bias. PCQ-24 has been the leading PsyCap scale that was used to study the presence or level of PsyCap within an individual that is not informed by research on or with education society. Rather, the focus has been solely on industrial organisations. Even if it does exist for educational organisations (i.e., students, teachers), it is transposed from theoretical conceptualization of industrial-related PsyCap. The majority of research to date approaches the topic of PsyCap quantitatively (Luthans, 2002; Luthans et al., 2006; Luthans et al., 2005; Hodges, 2010; Burhanuddin, Ahmad, Said & Asimiran, 2018), rather than in qualitative manner. The qualitative studies done on PsyCap are somehow limited which subsequently overlook the crucial elements of educators' personal experiences of PsyCap. Due to this fact, many researchers (Morgan, 2014; Kutanis & Emre, 2015; Kalman & Summak, 2017; Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017; Burhanuddin et al., 2018) have suggested more qualitative research design on PsyCap should be done in order to get an in-depth understanding of this PsyCap construct. Due to the emergence and sustenance of positive emotions as an element and by-product of PsyCap, this construct is worthy of further empirical exploration and researchers agree that qualitative method research may be more conducive to a deeper understanding than typical quantitative studies, eventhough they are experimental and longitudinal (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Ideally, conducting qualitative research would potentially give insights and further exploration to the other potential positive psychological resources of PsyCap besides the existing four hope, efficacy, resilience and optimism, considering the context to which the study is conducted (i.e., Malaysian instructional coaches). Accordingly, the researcher premised this study on the belief that PsyCap may enhance positive attitudes and behaviours in educators, specifically instructional coaches, while also decreasing the intensity of stress in the workplace and its psychological symptoms. The researcher contends that developing the PsyCap of ICs will support them in meeting the demands of instructional



coaching. Considering the evidence-supported value of PsyCap, there are enormous gaps requiring attention in positive psychology as well as developmental research regarding this foundational human experience. You can use these galleries to insert tables, headers, footers, lists, cover pages, and other document building blocks.

### **Background of the inquiry**

Prior to conducting this study, the researcher was part of a team along with other researchers in a large-scale study conducted with SISC+ (or known as instructional coaches (IC)), researching the impact of coaching. The researcher had the opportunity to get an insight of what it is like to be an IC from them. From the observation made by the researcher, together with the conversations she had with the coaches, the researcher realised that these ICs clearly had ‘something’ that distinguished them from others; positive qualities that made them who they are, that special characteristics that qualify them to be chosen as IC. As someone who is interested in character strengths and value, the researcher was concerned about their PsyCap and how they make meaning of them. They appeared to have developed these resources over time while being in service within educational organisations. However, from the observation made by the researcher, not all of the ICs possessed these distinct features. These features were only captured among ICs who were much senior; those who have served long enough in educational organisations and have substantial amount of experiences that they could be considered as experts in the field.

The researcher observed that these ICs talked about how they can make a change rather than complained about problems they encountered, and said positive things rather than negative ones. Did they have some psychological resources that might have helped them go through the challenging role of an IC? What are the strategies they have been using? Does having these positive psychological resources enhance their competencies in coaching teachers? The researcher is immensely interested in knowing the psychological resources that might have helped them in their challenging role of IC. This occurrence sparked the idea to the researcher to unravel a single compelling question: How do IC experience PsyCap in their practice of instructional coaching?

#### **1.4 Research Purpose**

To begin addressing the current gaps in research on PsyCap of ICs, the researcher put forward the research question “how do ICs experience PsyCap?”. Subsequent questions are: “what factors contributed to the development of an IC’s PsyCap?” and “how does PsyCap help ICs to be competent in their profession?”. This study sought an inductive understanding of the experience of PsyCap for individuals who are practicing instructional coaching. An interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) study was implemented in order to answer the above research questions. This method of study was employed to “reduce individual experience with a phenomenon to a description of universal essence (a grasp of the very nature of the thing)” (van Manen, 1990). Therefore the findings of this study represent an exploration of participants’ PsyCap experience.

The researcher is convinced that the exploration of IC's experience of PsyCap will allow us to understand the extent to which PsyCap is needed in order to contribute to their flourishing as well as optimal functioning as IC. In order to do so, those ICs were asked to share their experiences so that the researcher would be able to understand at a deeper level how their PsyCap was developed and the ways it may have helped enhance their competencies as an IC.

This study is amongst the first research to specifically focus on interviewing and understanding ICs' personal experience of PsyCap. The aim of this project is to make a novel contribution to the field of positive educational psychology and psychology with specific contribution to our understanding of IC's PsyCap. This study may also help inform the development of intervention specific to IC. Ultimately, with this study, the researcher seeks to contribute to a strong foundation in elucidating strength-based aspects, with regard to PsyCap in IC, and educators generally.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

Based on researcher's epistemological position and in order to understand the experience of PsyCap among instructional coaches, three research question were put forward in this study:

1. What are the ways in which PsyCap is experienced by ICs?
2. What are the factors that contributed to the development of ICs' PsyCap?
3. How does PsyCap help ICs to be competent in their profession?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The study will contribute to the educational institutions, more specifically schools, for the betterment of the education system. Researching the newly-appointed position of School Improvement Specialist (SISC+) or IC, that has span for 5 years since its first introduction in 2013, would potentially give an insight to how this position has influenced school transformation, specifically teachers' instructional practices and further accelerate national educational transformation. It is believed that a five-year time span is sufficient to review how ICs who had been selected from among individuals who are excellent in their performance and equipped with substantial amount of experience in educational organisations, have helped to reform schools in Malaysia.

The study will reveal the importance of PsyCap to ICs and how PsyCap has played a role in overcoming challenges during instructional coaching practice. Realising one's PsyCap can be a "leverage to tap into still largely uncharted territories of human strengths, thriving, and excellence" (Luthans & Youssef, 2017). To put it in a much simpler word, when ICs realise the presence of PsyCap within themselves, their individual's

motivational inclination to accomplish tasks and goals is increased and they will demonstrate better performance in coaching. This will enable the coaches to realize their full potential and consequently, contribute in accelerating school success by means of helping teachers' performance.

In addition, this study will contribute to the continuing discussion on PsyCap in educational organisations and provide a better understanding of the lived experiences of IC. This will provide a platform to expand the knowledge, as this has not been studied extensively in Malaysia, especially within the educational organisation context. It is also hoped that this study will shed light on how to develop positive psychological resources of PsyCap in an individual while providing insight for policy makers as they make decision on how to support and successfully implement PsyCap development training among ICs.

### **1.7 Scope of the Study**

The study takes on a phenomenological approach to describe accounts of ICs' experiences during their journey as a coach and how they may have developed PsyCap that further helped them to coach teachers. A phenomenological approach is effective in describing the stories of several individuals and giving meaning to these experiences. This study emphasises on the IC's experiences of PsyCap, how they developed and used it during their journey as an IC. Therefore, the study took into consideration ICs' experiences in instructional coaching, individual motivation and individual values that play important part in their lives.

To capture ICs' experiences of PsyCap in the practice of instructional coaching, the scope of the study was limited to high profile ICs; individuals in DG 54 and Khas C grades in their post. Individuals that matched the criteria sets were chosen as participants for this study. The researcher traveled to several District Education Offices (DEO/PPD) in the country to understand multiple perspectives of IC experiences, as the experiences of each individual would be different from one another.

### **1.8 Limitation of the study**

Despite the aforementioned significance of the study, it nonetheless has potential limitations. This study has a potential methodological limitation that needs to be addressed. Firstly, the study is limited in its generalisability and transferability beyond SISC+ participants due to the small sample size. There is a concrete reason to believe that generalisation could be made from the in-depth research. Merriam (2004) stated that through a rich and thick description gathered from the interviews done with the participants, it will provide enough description so that individuals or readers beyond the population in the study would be able to determine how closely their situations match the research situation and whether the findings can be transferred. Besides, through typicality or modal category, describing how typical the individual is compared with

others in the same class will enable them to make comparison with their own situations (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Secondly, this study required ICs (i.e., the SISC+) to give accounts of past events and situations as they carried out coaching session. Taking account of past events might give the possibility that it is shades by the current circumstances. This might be a bit of a challenge as they may not be able to recall all the experiences throughout the period of being a coach.

## **1.9 Definition of Terms**

The following definition are used to define the terms that are used in this study.

### **1.9.1 Psychological Capital (PsyCap)**

Psychological capital (PsyCap) is defined as “an individual’s positive psychological state of development that is characterized by having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; making a positive attribution (optimist) about succeeding now and in the future; persevering towards goals and when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to attain success” (Luthans, Youseff & Avolio, 2007). Operationally, PsyCap consists of psychological resources that predict one’s work performance, attitudes and behaviours towards their work. PsyCap encompasses the idea that individuals who interpret situations and events in a positive manner will be more effective individuals in their organisation (Wang, Chen, & Hsu, 2014).

### **1.9.2 Instructional Coach (IC)**

Instructional coach (IC) is a non-supervisory role—that is, instructional coaches do not typically have positional authority to evaluate other adults; thus, they do not work from a position of supervisory power and must use expertise and relationships to exert influence (Taylor, 2008). ICs are individuals who are assigned to help teachers incorporate newly learned instructional strategies into classroom routines (Westmoreland, 2015). Operationally, for the purpose of this study, ICs are identified as School Improvement Specialist Coaches (SISC+). They are individuals who have had more than 10 years of experience in educational organisations. In addition, they are high profile SISC+ with grades DG 54 and Khas C.

### **1.9.3 Coaching**

Coaching in education is defined as a partnership to support individuals in meeting their goals. Coaching is a highly personalised form of professional learning that enhances learning within classrooms, teams, leadership, and even towards career progression

(Munro, 2016). Operationally, for the purpose of this study, coaching refers to instructional coaching, the practice within educational organisations, between instructional coach and teachers.

### **Overview of Thesis**

An outline of the thesis is as follows: Chapter 1 provides an introduction on the topic under investigation and the research questions. Chapter 2 presents a literature review covering these key areas: (1) perspective to which PsyCap is viewed (2) a review of psychological capital (PsyCap) literature, specifically addressing what is currently known about PsyCap in relation to the relevant theories underlying each construct of PsyCap that is hope, efficacy, resilience and optimism, and the importance of gaining knowledge regarding PsyCap for use beyond work organisation. Chapter 3 addresses the research methodology undertaken in the study (i.e., interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)), the methods (i.e., description of the participants, data collection, analysis procedure and validity and reliability). In addition, the methodological challenges and the ethical consideration while conducting the study were also discussed. Chapter 4 discusses the key findings of the present study, and offers rich descriptions of the participants' experience of PsyCap through the use of direct quotations. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses findings in relation to previous literature within the area of educators and PsyCap, potential implication of the findings and future research direction.

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## BIODATA OF STUDENT

Nur Aimi Nasuha started her academic journey at the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), enrolling in Applied Science program specialised in Biotechnology. She had an early exposure to the research culture during her undergraduate year where she was involved in many lab works with professors at the Faculty of Biological Sciences and Institute for Research in Molecular Medicine (INFORMM). Her final year thesis was 'Investigating the difference in growth and invasion behaviour of HPV 18 and HPV 16 cervical cancer cell lines in the 3D culture system'. She was not only passionate in biological sciences, she also has her interest in social sciences subject specifically in psychology. Together with biological sciences subject, she registered for psychology subject during her undergraduate studies.

Her interest in psychology grew and extend when she made a commitment to pursue to a higher degree studies in the University of Sheffield, United Kingdom. Using photo elicitation method in her research, she carried out an empirical study on young people's attitudes to the prescription of medicines to children. In 2016, she graduated with master's degree in Psychology and Education with distinction. While studying for master's degree in Sheffield, she actively attended optional guest seminar events, volunteered to help local children within a 'Storytelling' project and been active in the University of Sheffield's Islamic Circle and Malaysian Society.

Her passion in psychology and education grew stronger that she later on continued her studies to a doctoral degree. She regularly attended public lectures and seminars outside of her course, and took part in a number of other activities, such as volunteering to teach underprivileged children and volunteering for homeless people. At faculty, she was involved in several research grant, appointed several times as chairman for the Educational and Human Resource Development seminar, led several discussions with undergraduates and masters' students and tutoring undergraduate students. She expands her scholarly activities by attending international academic discussion and conferences as such at University of Oxford, University College London and Tilburg University, Netherlands. In January 2020, she was invited as visiting academic at the University of Alberta, Canada. While at University of Alberta, she attended Hope Studies Central research lab, working with Strengths, Hope and Resources for School Mental Health (SHARP-SMH) team. Working with this team, she was exposed to how psychological construct is being implemented in a large-scale mix-methods participatory action research.

Her current research interest centres around the development of positive psychological resources among individual within the educational institutions, specifically instructional coaches and how they use those resources to make a change in teachers' instructional skills in classroom. This research adopts a phenomenological approach to capture the essence of the experience of the people involved in the phenomenon being studied.

## LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

### Journals

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### Conferences and Proceedings

1. International Conference on Special Education 2017 (ICSE 2017) Borneo Convention Centre Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia
2. International Conference on Social Science, Arts, Business and Education - Venice, Italy. (2018)
3. International Conference on Education 2018, Bangkok, Thailand
4. International Conference on Psychology, Counselling and Education (ICPCE 2019), Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Kota Kinabalu
5. Seminar and Academic Discourse at Tilburg University, Netherlands (2019)
6. Seminar and Academic Discourse at Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, University of Oxford (2019)
7. GETCA (Greater Edmonton Teacher's Convention) workshop, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, Canada (2020)