



THE MODERATING ROLE OF EMPLOYEE TRAINING BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN THE EDUCATIONAL SECTOR OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between psychological capital (PsyCap) and employee engagement among staff working in Pakistan's educational sector and tests whether employee training moderates this relationship. Using a structured questionnaire adapted from established scales (Luthans et al., 2007a, 2007b; Schaufeli et al., 2006; Noe, 1986), data were collected from 440 respondents (teaching faculty, administrative staff, and department heads/principals) across public-sector, private-sector, and school-level institutions in Pakistan. After data cleaning, 430 valid responses were retained for analysis. Reliability analysis confirmed acceptable to good internal consistency for psychological capital ($\alpha = .835$) and employee engagement ($\alpha = .830$), while the employee-training scale showed borderline reliability ($\alpha = .630$). Hierarchical moderated regression showed that both psychological capital ($\beta = .332, p < .001$) and employee training ($\beta = .613, p < .001$) significantly and positively predicted employee engagement, jointly explaining 49.34% of its variance. However, the PsyCap $\times$ Training interaction term was not statistically significant ($\Delta R^2 = .001, F \text{ change} = 1.10, p = .294$), indicating that, in this sample, employee training did not significantly moderate the psychological-capital-to-engagement relationship. Instead, training emerged as an independent, strong predictor of engagement in its own right. Implications for HR practice in Pakistani educational institutions and directions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: Psychological Capital, Employee Engagement, Employee Training, Moderation Analysis, Educational Sector, Pakistan, Human Resource Development

1. Introduction

Employee engagement has become one of the most closely watched outcomes in human resource management research because engaged employees consistently show higher productivity, lower turnover intention, and stronger organizational citizenship behavior (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Nowhere is this more consequential than in the education sector, where the day-to-day energy, dedication, and focus of teachers and administrative staff directly shape student outcomes and institutional performance. Pakistan's education sector, spanning public universities, private colleges, and schools, faces persistent challenges around staff motivation, resource constraints, and professional development, making the psychological and organizational drivers of engagement especially important to understand.

Psychological capital (PsyCap), defined by Luthans et al. (2007a) as a positive psychological state comprising hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism, has repeatedly been linked to higher work engagement across sectors, including healthcare, banking, and higher education in Pakistan (see literature



review). At the same time, several Pakistani studies have suggested, largely as a practical recommendation rather than a tested statistical model, that employee training is the mechanism through which PsyCap is built and translated into sustained engagement (Mushtaq et al., 2026). What remains empirically untested is whether employee training changes the strength of the PsyCap-engagement relationship, that is, whether training acts as a moderator, specifically within Pakistan's educational sector. This study addresses that gap directly using primary survey data collected from teaching and administrative staff in Pakistani educational institutions.

1.1 Problem Statement

Despite growing interest in positive organizational behaviour, Pakistani educational institutions continue to report inconsistent levels of staff engagement, often attributed informally to inadequate training and professional development opportunities. However, there is limited empirical evidence clarifying whether training simply adds to engagement independently or whether it strengthens (moderates) the effect that employees' psychological capital has on their engagement. Without this clarity, institutions risk investing in training initiatives without understanding their true mechanism of impact on staff engagement (Ahmed & Asif, 2026a; Ahmed & Asif, 2026b).

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between psychological capital and employee engagement among staff in Pakistan's educational sector.
2. To examine the direct relationship between employee training and employee engagement.
3. To test whether employee training moderates the relationship between psychological capital and employee engagement.

1.3 Research Questions

RQ1: Does psychological capital significantly predict employee engagement among educational-sector staff in Pakistan?

RQ2: Does employee training significantly predict employee engagement?

RQ3: Does employee training moderate the relationship between psychological capital and employee engagement?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the limited body of Pakistani research that statistically tests, rather than merely recommends, training as a boundary condition in the PsyCap-engagement relationship and does so in an understudied population (educational-sector employees, including both teaching and non-teaching staff). The findings offer HR departments and institutional leadership evidence-based guidance on whether training investment should be framed as a direct engagement driver, a moderating condition, or both.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Psychological Capital

Psychological capital (PsyCap) is a higher-order construct composed of hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism (Luthans et al., 2007a). Luthans et al. (2007b) demonstrated that PsyCap, measured through the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ), is significantly related to employee performance and job satisfaction. Within Pakistan, PsyCap has been shown to predict work engagement among nurses in Lahore, where positive emotions partially mediated the relationship and emotional intelligence moderated it (Asif et al., 2019; Asif, 2021; Malik et al., n.d.). Similarly, PsyCap has been found to significantly mediate the relationship between engagement and employee retention among Pakistani employees across various companies, alongside job satisfaction and control at work (Batoool & Asif, 2026; Rehman & Asif, 2026). In educational contexts specifically, PsyCap has been linked to innovative work behaviour among teaching staff at Pakistani public-sector higher-education institutions (HEIs), with employee engagement mediating this relationship (JICRCR, n.d.), and to teachers' well-being and reduced burnout through coping mechanisms and the job-demands-resources (JD-R) framework among Pakistani university teachers.



2.2 Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is conceptualized by Schaufeli et al. (2006) as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption, measured via the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). In Pakistan, engagement has been examined as an outcome of leadership style (moderated by psychological empowerment among retail employees), as a mediator between psychological capital and both organizational citizenship behaviour (moderated by team cohesion in the IT sector) and innovative work behaviour (among HEI teaching staff), and as an outcome of HRM practices (moderated by entrepreneurial leadership and by training-related variables in the banking sector). A recent study of Karachi-based organizations similarly found that the nature of the organization moderates the relationship between psychological antecedents and engagement, reinforcing that contextual/organizational variables are plausible moderators of engagement-related pathways.

2.3 Employee Training

Employee training refers to planned organizational efforts to improve employees' job-relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Noe, 1986). Holton (1996) critiqued traditional training-evaluation models for failing to capture training's full organizational impact, prompting more nuanced tests of training as a contingency or boundary variable rather than a simple direct cause of performance. Raza and Mirza (2019), studying faculty engagement in Pakistani universities, argued that psychological capital and training jointly shape faculty engagement, providing direct conceptual grounding for the present study's model. More broadly, Pakistani studies in the banking sector have modelled training sessions and related HR variables as moderators of the relationship between HRM practices and work engagement, offering a statistical precedent for testing training as a moderator rather than only a direct predictor.

2.4 The Moderating Role of Training

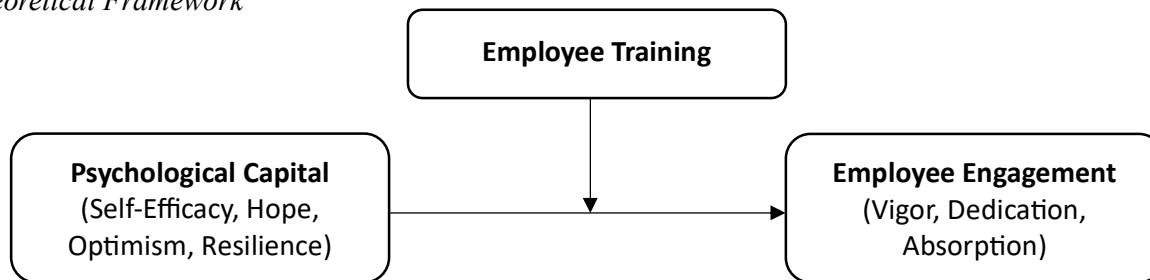
While multiple studies recommend training as the practical mechanism for building PsyCap and sustaining engagement (see companion literature review document), few have statistically tested training as a moderator of the PsyCap-engagement relationship, and none identified in the companion literature search have done so within Pakistan's educational sector specifically. Theoretically, drawing on Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and the Job Demands-Resources model, training can be understood as an organizational resource that may either amplify the benefit employees draw from their personal psychological resources (a moderating role) or act as an independent resource that separately boosts engagement (a direct, additive role). This study tests both possibilities empirically.

2.5 Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

Based on the reviewed literature, the following hypotheses were formulated and tested:

- H1:** Psychological capital has a significant positive relationship with employee engagement among educational-sector staff in Pakistan.
- H2:** Employee training has a significant positive relationship with employee engagement.
- H3:** Employee training significantly moderates the relationship between psychological capital and employee engagement, such that the relationship is stronger at higher levels of training.

The conceptual model of this study includes Psychological Capital (Self-Efficacy, Hope, Optimism, Resilience) which is independent variable and Employee Engagement (Vigor, Dedication, Absorption) is dependent variable, with Employee Training which is the moderating variable hypothesized to influence the strength of this relationship.

**Figure 1***Theoretical Framework*

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design, appropriate for testing predictive and moderating relationships among psychological and organizational variables at a single point in time.

3.2 Population and Sample

The target population comprised teaching faculty, administrative staff, and department heads/deans/principals working in public-sector universities/colleges, private-sector universities/colleges, and schools across Pakistan. A total of 440 responses were collected through a structured, self-administered questionnaire. After removing records with missing values on the core study variables, 430 valid responses were retained for the main statistical analysis (moderated regression), representing a listwise retention rate of 97.73%.

3.3 Sample Demographic Profile

Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1*Demographic Profile of Respondents*

Variable	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	100	23.3%
	Female	330	76.7%
Age Group	Under 30 years	310	72.1%
	30–40 years	60	14.0%
	41–50 years	30	7.0%
	Above 50 years	30	7.0%
Institution Type	Public sector university/college	100	23.8%
	Private sector university/college	290	69.0%
	School	30	7.1%
Job Position	Teaching faculty	250	61.0%
	Administrative staff	140	34.1%
	Department head/Dean/Principal	20	4.9%
Experience	Less than 5 years	250	61.0%
	5–10 years	70	17.1%
	More than 10 years	90	22.0%

Note. Percentages calculated on non-missing responses per demographic item (total $N = 440$, with 10–30 missing values per demographic item due to incomplete form submissions).

3.4 Instrumentation

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of four sections. Section A captured demographic information (gender, age group, institution type, job position, years of experience). Section B



measured psychological capital using six items adapted from Luthans et al. (2007a) and Luthans et al. (2007b), covering hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism. Section C measured employee engagement using seven items adapted from the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli et al., 2006; Schaufeli et al., 2002), covering vigor, dedication, and absorption. Section D measured employee training using six items adapted from Noe (1986), Holton (1996), and Raza and Mirza (2019), covering training availability, relevance, and effectiveness. All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*; Likert, 1932).

3.5 Data Analysis Technique

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis, Pearson correlation, and hierarchical moderated multiple regression. Following Aiken and West's (1991) recommended procedure, the predictor (PsyCap) and moderator (Training) were mean centred before computing their interaction term to reduce multicollinearity. Model 1 regressed employee engagement on the centered main effects of PsyCap and Training; Model 2 added the PsyCap $\times$ Training interaction term. A statistically significant R^2 change and interaction coefficient in Model 2 would support the moderation hypothesis (H3).

4. Results

4.1 Reliability Analysis

Table 2

Reliability Statistics

Construct	No. of Items	N	Cronbach's α	Interpretation
Psychological Capital (PC)	6	400	.835	Good
Employee Engagement (ENG)	7	410	.830	Good
Employee Training (TR)	6	420	.630	Acceptable/borderline

Values above .70 are conventionally considered "good"; values between .60 and .70 are considered acceptable but borderline for confirmatory research (Nunnally, 1978). The Employee Training scale's slightly lower alpha suggests the three training sub-dimensions (availability, relevance, effectiveness) may not form a fully unidimensional construct in this sample and should be interpreted with some caution.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

Variable	N	M	SD	Min	Max	Skewness
Psychological Capital	430	3.79	0.82	1.00	5.00	-1.13
Employee Engagement	430	3.82	0.73	1.57	4.86	-0.62
Employee Training	440	3.36	0.59	2.17	4.17	-0.26

On average, respondents reported moderately high psychological capital ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 0.82$) and employee engagement ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.73$) on the 1–5 scale, with a somewhat lower mean for perceived employee training ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.59$), suggesting training availability/relevance is rated less favourably than staff's own psychological resources or engagement.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

Table 4

Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3
1. Psychological Capital	1		
2. Employee Engagement	.527**	1	
3. Employee Training	.317**	.607**	1

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the $p < .001$ level (two-tailed).



All three variables were significantly and positively intercorrelated. Psychological capital showed a moderate-to-strong positive correlation with employee engagement ($r = .527, p < .001$), employee training showed an even stronger positive correlation with engagement ($r = .607, p < .001$), and PsyCap correlated moderately with training ($r = .317, p < .001$), providing initial support for H1 and H2 and confirming the variables are related but distinct enough to proceed with regression analysis.

4.4 Hierarchical Moderated Regression

Table 5

Hierarchical Moderated Regression Results (DV = Employee Engagement)

Predictor	Model 1 β	Model 1 * p^*	Model 2 β	Model 2 SE	Model 2 * t^*	Model 2 * p^*
Constant		< .001	3.834	0.027	142.68	< .001
Psychological Capital (centered)	.332	< .001	.326	0.033	9.92	< .001
Employee Training (centered)	.613	< .001	.617	0.046	13.51	< .001
PsyCap $\times$ Training (interaction)	—	—	-.065	0.062	-1.05	.294

Table 6

Model Fit Summary and R^2 Change

Model	R^2	Adj. R^2	F	p	ΔR^2	F change	p (ΔF)
1: PC + Training (main effects)	.493	.491	207.90	< .001	—	—	—
2: + PsyCap $\times$ Training	.495	.491	139.00	< .001	.001	1.10	.294

Model 1, containing the mean-centred main effects of psychological capital and employee training, was statistically significant, $F(2, 427) = 207.90, *p^* < .001$, and explained 49.34% of the variance in employee engagement (Adj. $R^2 = 49.10\%$). Both predictors were significant: psychological capital ($\beta = .332, *p^* < .001$) and employee training ($\beta = .613, *p^* < .001$), with training showing a notably stronger effect size than psychological capital in this sample. This provides strong support for H1 and H2.

Model 2 added the mean-centred PsyCap $\times$ Training interaction term. The overall model remained significant, $F(3, 428) = 139.00, *p^* < .001, R^2 = 49.47\%$, but the R^2 change from Model 1 to Model 2 was negligible and non-significant ($\Delta R^2 = .001, F \text{ change } [1, 426] = 1.10, *p^* = .294$). The interaction coefficient itself was also non-significant ($\beta = -.065, *t^* = -1.05, *p^* = .294$). H3 was therefore not supported: employee training did not significantly moderate the relationship between psychological capital and employee engagement in this sample.

4.5 Simple Slopes (Supplementary, Non-Significant Interaction)

Although the interaction term did not reach significance, simple slopes were computed at ± 1 SD of employee training for descriptive completeness. The slope of psychological capital on engagement was .364 at low training (-1 SD), .326 at mean training, and .288 at high training ($+1$ SD)—a pattern that is directionally weaker (not stronger) at higher training levels, but this pattern should not be over-interpreted given the non-significant interaction term and should be treated as exploratory only.

4.6 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Table 7

Hypothesis Testing Summary

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H1	PsyCap positively predicts employee engagement	Supported
H2	Employee training positively predicts employee engagement	Supported
H3	Employee training moderates the PsyCap-engagement relationship	Not Supported



5. Discussion

The results provide clear support for the direct effects of both psychological capital and employee training on employee engagement among Pakistani educational-sector staff, consistent with the broader Pakistani literature reviewed in Section 2 (e.g., PsyCap-engagement links among nurses, IT-sector employees, and HEI teaching staff; training as a driver of engagement in banking-sector HRM studies). Notably, in this sample, employee training ($\beta = .613$) had a numerically stronger direct relationship with engagement than psychological capital ($\beta = .332$), suggesting that for Pakistani educational staff, tangible access to relevant, effective training may be an even more immediate lever for engagement than internal psychological resources alone.

The non-significant interaction term is itself a meaningful finding. It suggests that, rather than training amplifying or dampening the effect of psychological capital on engagement (a moderating role), training and psychological capital appear to operate as two largely independent, additive predictors of engagement in this sample. This is theoretically plausible: employees may draw on their personal psychological resources (hope, efficacy, resilience, optimism) to stay engaged regardless of how much formal training they receive, while training separately contributes to engagement through skill-building, confidence, and perceived organizational investment, without one resource depending on the level of the other. This pattern nuances the recommendation, common across the studies reviewed in Section 2, that training is simply "the mechanism" for converting PsyCap into engagement; the present data suggest the two operate in parallel rather than in a conditional (moderated) fashion (Asif, 2021).

It is also possible that the modest reliability of the employee-training scale ($\alpha = .630$) attenuated the interaction effect, since measurement unreliability in either predictor systematically reduces statistical power to detect interaction effects (McClelland & Judd, 1993). Future studies using a more refined training scale, or a larger and more balanced sample across institution types and job positions, may be better positioned to detect a moderation effect if one genuinely exists.

6. Practical Implications

For HR and leadership in Pakistani educational institutions, the findings suggest two independent, actionable levers for improving staff engagement rather than one contingent on the other. First, institutions should continue investing in staff psychological capital, through mentoring, positive leadership, and resilience-building initiatives, as this reliably predicts higher engagement. Second, and separately, institutions should expand the availability, relevance, and effectiveness of training programs, since training showed the strongest direct association with engagement in this sample. Because no significant interaction was found, institutions should not assume that improving training will only pay off for employees who already have high psychological capital (or vice versa); both investments appear to yield engagement benefits on their own.

7. Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, its cross-sectional design precludes causal inference; longitudinal or experimental designs (e.g., pre-post training interventions) would better establish causality. Second, self-report measures introduce potential common-method bias, though this is standard practice for measuring psychological constructs such as PsyCap and engagement. Third, the employee-training scale's borderline reliability ($\alpha = .630$) may have limited the study's power to detect a true interaction effect, and future research should consider refining or extending this scale. Fourth, the sample was imbalanced across institution type and job position (with private-sector staff, staff under 30, and teaching faculty over-represented), which may limit generalizability; future studies should aim for more proportionate stratified sampling across public, private, and school-level institutions, and across job roles and experience levels. Finally, future research could test alternative moderators (e.g., organizational support, leadership style, job characteristics) or examine training not as a general perception but as a measured dosage (e.g., number of training hours completed) to better capture its potential moderating role.



8. Conclusion

This study examined psychological capital, employee training, and employee engagement among 430 teaching and administrative staff across Pakistani educational institutions. Both psychological capital and employee training were confirmed as significant, independent, positive predictors of employee engagement, jointly explaining approximately 49.34% of its variance. However, employee training did not significantly moderate the relationship between psychological capital and employee engagement in this sample. These findings refine the existing Pakistani literature, which has largely assumed, without direct testing, that training strengthens the PsyCap-engagement link, and instead point to training and psychological capital as parallel, additive drivers of engagement. Educational institutions in Pakistan are encouraged to invest in both levers independently to maximize staff engagement.

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