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# **PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL AND HAPPINESS AT WORK: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EMPLOYEE THRIVING IN MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS**

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## Abstract

Working in multicultural work environments of multinational corporations (MNCs) creates challenges whose expected impact on happiness is equivocal. In the following paper, we examine the relationship between psychological capital and happiness at work in the specific MNCs' context. We assume that thriving (eudemonic well-being) at work fosters individuals' development and enhances their happiness composed of both the affective (positivity) and cognitive (satisfaction with intercultural interactions) components. A sample of 137 individuals from subsidiaries of various MNCs and involved in intercultural interactions was included in the cross-sectional study. In order to test the mediating effect of vitality and learning, i.e., both components of thriving, on the psychological capital and happiness at work, as well as a moderating effect of psychological capital between thriving and happiness in a multicultural work setting, a bootstrapping analysis was conducted. Prior international experience and job tenure were control variables. The results show that psychological capital as resource caravans is positively associated with learning and further is related to more satisfaction with intercultural interactions. Moreover, psychological capital is associated with more vitality at work and further favorably relates to positivity. We also demonstrate that psychological capital does not moderate the relationship between thriving and happiness at work. The research broadens the understanding of positive aspects of well-being in the unique environment of MNCs. Our study suggests that managers should stimulate learning and vitality by managerial practices concerning improvement of employee psychological capital since then they may strengthen happiness at work.

**Keywords:** happiness at work; multinational corporations; psychological capital; Positive Organizational Scholarship; positivity; satisfaction with intercultural interactions; thriving

## Introduction

As globalization has spread in the world economy and multinational corporations (MNCs) have become one of its most important institutions (Delmestri & Brumana 2017), an increasing number of employees is working in a specific environment that differs from any other organization, with its own rules of conduct (Abdul et al. 2013; Nolan 2012; Rozkwitalska et al. 2017). MNCs run a multinational business, hire various nationalities with different and sometimes intertwining cultures. Thus they manage interdependencies among multicultural staff in their overseas subsidiaries and are considered as organizations with a unique multicultural work environment and specific, challenging job demands (Darawong & Igel 2012; Mäkelä et al. 2012; Rozkwitalska & Basinska, 2015a). As a result, the interactions among their employees are confronted with cultural differences and language diversity, frequently seen as barriers in previous research (Brett 2018; Darawong & Igel 2012; Luring & Klitmøller 2015; Mäkelä et al. 2012) and recently also as opportunities (Stahl & Tung 2014; Youssef-Morgan & Hardy 2014; Rozkwitalska et al. 2017). The job resources offered by MNCs, such as, for example, language and cross-cultural trainings, knowledge databases, communication technology for virtual teams, core values, special initiatives, relocation policy, etc. (Rozkwitalska & Basinska 2015b), facilitate employees' adjustment, carrying on tasks and intercultural contacts. Personal resources that build cross-cultural competence of an individual can also be helpful (Caligiuri & Tarique 2012; Johnson et al. 2006; Palthe 2004; Youssef & Luthans 2012a). Due to the unique and demanding work environment in MNCs psychological capital (PsyCap) may be perceived as such a resource. Youssef-Morgan and Hardy (2014) stress that PsyCap can help people "to view and cognitively appraise the presence of diversity in the workplace as an opportunity to be pursued, rather than a problem or a threat to be avoided" (p. 227), and more willingly interact with their diverse peers.

The extant literature emphasizes the relationship between PsyCap and happiness (Lorenz et al. 2016; Williamset al. 2016; Youssef-Morgan & Hardy 2014). There are also some and rather scarce studies that have analyzed well-being in multicultural workplaces with regard to immigrants or expatriates (e.g., Pasca & Wagner 2012; Fischlmayr & Kollinger 2010; Ballesteros-Leiva et al. 2017) as well as the role of their psychological capital (e.g., Davis et al. 2018; Park et al. 2014). Nevertheless, the relation between PsyCap and happiness in the unique MNC context has not been examined yet. Taking into account the challenges (e.g., cultural and language barriers, identity threat, conflict) and opportunities (e.g., learning, knowledge sharing, personal growth) that this context generates (Rozkwitalska et al. 2017), its impact on happiness might be equivocal.



Therefore, the aim of our study is to examine the relationship between psychological capital and happiness at work in the specific MNC context. In our paper, we implement happiness with the hedonic tone in the context of the multicultural environment and thriving, an indicator of eudaimonic well-being. Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll 2001; Hobfoll et al. 2018) is the theoretical framework for the study. First, we propose to define PsyCap as a caravan of resources (Hobfoll 2018). Subsequently, in view of COR theory, we assume that people are driven to protect their resources, gain additional resources or to compensate their loss of resources since the latter help individuals to develop and be happier. Finally, when demands are particularly high (e.g., in the MNC context), people need more resources (e.g., PsyCap) to prevent potential losses. In view of COR theory, individuals with adequate resources, e.g., it may be a sufficient level of PsyCap, are better equipped to gain additional resources, e.g., positive interpersonal relations, “which can, in turn, lead to resource gain spirals” (Davis et al. 2018, p. 44).

Our research broadens the understanding of workplace happiness in the unique environment of MNCs. Our paper contributes to the literature on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being at work and positive cross-cultural research with regard to the relationship between PsyCap, thriving and happiness of individuals working in the multicultural environment of MNCs. It also adds to the Positive Organizational Scholarship and Positive Organizational Behavior studies with that respect. The research emphasizes that the affective components of thriving (i.e., vitality) and happiness (i.e., positivity) cooperate together. Similarly, the cognitive components of thriving (i.e., learning) and happiness (i.e., satisfaction) support each other.

### **Psychological Capital**

Psychological capital is seen as a positive state of an individual’s development of four personal resources, i.e., self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience (Luthans, Avolio et al. 2007; Youssef & Luthans 2012). Self-efficacy reflects an individual’s belief that s/he has sufficient abilities “to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources or courses of action needed to successfully execute a specific task within a given context” (Stajkovic & Luthans 1998, p. 66). People who are optimistic differ from pessimists in the manner they approach problems and challenges and cope with adversity (Luthans et al. 2010). Hope can be defined as “persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (...) in order to succeed” (Luthans, Youssef et al. 2007, p. 542). Resilience reflects a person’s ability to sustain, bounce back and, even beyond, to attain success in the face of problems and adversity. It helps to cope with uncertainty and conflicts at work and to adapt (Luthans, Avolio et al., 2007). Thus resilience is particularly helpful in a demanding or stressful environment (Luthans et al., 2010). According to the COR theory, these four personal resources that constitute PsyCap are like a caravan, they follow and support one another. A

caravan of resources is a specific profile or constellation of personal resources whereby an employee can improve their functioning in the workplace (Hobfoll et al. 2018). Therefore, they are more impactful as a set of personal resources than as separate resources. Youssef-Morgan and Luthans (2015), while describing PsyCap, use the acronym “HERO within” due to the fact that each of these resources has its exceptional capabilities and outcomes, yet their efficiency is observed only when they cooperate. In other words, a caravan of personal resources presented by the profile of their relationships can contribute to other and larger effects compared to a single resource. These outcomes are mainly positive attitudes towards work (Datu et al. 2018; Donaldson & Ko 2010; Lorenz et al. 2016). Therefore, PsyCap can be related with happiness at work (Avey et al. 2010). It also fosters eudaimonic well-being (Culbertson et al. 2010; Davis et al. 2018).

### **Happiness at work and Psychological Capital**

Happiness, here considered as hedonic well-being, reflects a person’s beliefs and feelings that s/he leads a desirable and rewarding life (Diener 2012), including its particular domains such as work (Strydom & van Eeden 2013). It can be conceptualized as a multifaceted construct with both the affective and cognitive components (Diener et al. 2003; Pavot & Diener 2008). Thus, happiness at work refer to pleasant judgments (positive attitudes) or pleasant experiences (positive moods, emotions, flow states) (Fisher 2010). Following the proposal of Fredrickson (2001), the affective component, positivity, is defined as a balance between positive and negative affects in the work context. Both, positive and negative affects, include a different level of arousal (mild affect, e.g., calm, bored, and intense affect, e.g., inspired, furious). When it comes to the cognitive component of happiness at work, it reflects a person’s appraisal of one’s job in general evaluative judgments and beliefs about various facets of his/her work (Nagy 2002; Weiss 2002). Sometimes employees are satisfied with their salary rates, whereas demanding interpersonal relations can induce mixed or negative reactions among them. The attitudinal nature of satisfaction implies that an individual tends to approach a satisfying job and quit a dissatisfying job (Spector 1997). In our study, we apply the cognitive component of happiness to the multicultural context of MNCs, which includes facet job satisfaction, i.e., satisfaction with intercultural interactions and reflects a positive attitude toward contacts with foreigners. We want to emphasize the social component of well-being related to the interactions among people from different countries and different cultures who work together to achieve organizational goals. Intercultural interactions are specific job demands in MNCs’ work environments. Since we intend to emphasize their role, we limit job satisfaction to this specific facet. As Rozkwitalska and Basinska (2015a) reveal in their previous research, the impact of intercultural interactions on job satisfaction is equivocal. Yet, if intercultural interactions are positive, they contribute to the job satisfaction of participants.

Generally, the relationship between PsyCap and happiness is relatively well recognized in prior studies. To date, it has been demonstrated that PsyCap influences desired outcomes in the workplace. PsyCap triggers employees' positive affect and facilitates combating their stress (Avey et al. 2009, Avey et al. 2010). It also supports an employee's desired attitudes (e.g., commitment), behaviors (e.g., citizenship behaviors) and performance (Avey et al. 2011; Datu et al. 2018; Lorenz et al. 2016). Additionally, it helps to build task mastery, improves leadership, lowers absenteeism and intention to leave, promoting creativity and innovation (Avey et al. 2010; Paek et al. 2015; Rego et al. 2012). In general, according to the hedonic approach, individuals strive to increase pleasure and they seek to avoid displeasure (Diener et al. 2003) and a further hedonic adaptation can be enhanced by PsyCap (Alessandri et al. 2018; Youssef-Morgan & Luthans 2015). However, to date, the relationship between PsyCap and happiness with regard to a specific facet of satisfaction, i.e., satisfaction with intercultural interactions in MNCs, has not been examined yet, nor have the previous studies included positivity as a whole spectrum of affective experiences.

### **Thriving at Work**

Apart from hedonic experiences, people look for more inspiration, a state that fosters their growth and development and gives meaning or values to the person's life. It shapes eudaimonic well-being (Deci & Ryan 2008; Huta & Waterman 2014). As a result, its outcome is optimal functioning of a person (Bujacz et al. 2014; Huta & Waterman 2014). In this paper, we propose thriving as a measure of eudaimonic well-being in the work context, which can be reflected through vitality and learning that allow individuals for achieving valuable work goals and self-development.

Thriving reflects two conscious psychological states, both a sense of vitality and a sense of learning at work (Spreitzer et al. 2005). Vitality refers to aliveness and positive feeling of having energy. Learning is described as people's growth through gaining new and applicable knowledge and skills (Porath et al. 2012; Spreitzer & Hwang 2019; Spreitzer & Sutcliffe 2007). Research on thriving can be particularly interesting in the specific context of MNCs since it includes intercultural interactions. Firstly, thriving is a socially embedded process (Spreitzer et al. 2005) which depends on social interactions. More specifically, thriving energizes daily interactions that can be endorsing, encountering and engaging (Garrett et al. 2017; Gerbasi et al. 2015). Secondly, Rozkwitalska and Basinska (2015b) posit that intercultural interactions may fuel thriving that "presents the mechanism of the relationship between intercultural interactions and subjective well-being" (p. 379). Moreover, the results of their qualitative study in the multicultural environment of MNCs indicate that the learning component of thriving appears to be more evident than vitality. This finding was also confirmed in the quantitative study by Basinska

(2017) (large effect size). Additionally, Carmeli and Russo (2015) demonstrate that positive social relations, where people mutually observe other behaviors while interacting with peers, help them “to determine what needs improving and how to do it” (p. 81), develop a sense of vitality as well as enhance capacity for learning. In the paper we do not scrutinize interactions at work, yet thriving is deeply embedded in social interactions.

### **Hypotheses Justification**

We formulate two hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: *Learning and vitality mediate the relationship between psychological capital and happiness in a multicultural work setting, i.e., both components of thriving mediate the relationship between psychological capital and satisfaction with intercultural interactions (hypothesis 1a) as well as the relationship between psychological capital and positivity (hypothesis 1b).*

Thriving can be strengthened by personal and organizational resources, e.g., decision making discretion, information sharing, trust and respect (Dutton et al. 2007; Niessen et al. 2017). With regard to personal resources, previous research shows that PsyCap is related to thriving (Boyd 2015; Nawaz et al. 2018; Paterson et al. 2014). What is more, PsyCap determines individual functioning in an organization and optimizes it (Avey et al. 2011; Fisher 2010). Thus, according to the COR theory, PsyCap can help employees thrive and develop. Moreover, thriving is related to happiness at work. Prior research on thriving demonstrates that it is positively associated with job satisfaction as well as a positive affect (Porath et al. 2012; Spreitzer & Hwang 2019) and it positively impacts individuals and organizations (Baruch et al. 2014; Paterson et al. 2014; Wallace et al. 2013; Walumbwa et al. 2018).

Hedonic well-being may occur when eudaimonic well-being criteria are not met. Eudaimonic well-being is sufficient, yet not necessary to feel hedonic happiness (Bujacz et al. 2014; Culbertson et al. 2010). Positive workplace interactions contribute to job satisfaction and a positive affect as well as decrease a negative affect (Dimotakis et al. 2011), thus we assume that thriving as a measure of eudaimonic well-being may foster happiness at work. The relationship between PsyCap and happiness is mediated by eudaimonic well-being (Culbertson et al. 2010). In our study, we follow this evidence, yet, due to the specific work context of our research, we propose to include a new measure of eudaimonic well-being (thriving) and holistic and more specified happiness (satisfaction with intercultural interactions and positivity at work). According to Youssef-Morgan and Luthans (2015), PsyCap is proposed to trigger cognitive, affective and social mechanism, leading to happiness and eudaimonic well-being. In our study, we intend to advance the research on thriving, therefore we examine the mediating role of thriving in the multicultural context of MNCs.

Hypothesis 2: *Psychological capital moderates the relationship between thriving and happiness in a multicultural work setting, i.e., psychological capital moderates the relationship between both components of thriving and satisfaction with intercultural interactions (hypothesis 2a) as well as the relationship between both components of thriving and positivity (hypothesis 2b).*

When an environment is challenging, people need additional resources (Hobfoll et al. 2018). MNCs create specific requirements (e.g., the necessity to speak a foreign language, intercultural interactions) and, as they are unique and different from other work contexts, they may be peculiarly demanding (Caligiuri & Tarique 2012; Youssef & Luthans 2012a). Such a demanding workplace may threaten resources, yet the richness of resources can protect from a loss (Avey et al. 2010; Bergom & Kinnunen 2014; Hobfoll et al. 2018). Another study of Rozkwitalska and Basinska (2015b) demonstrates that individuals evaluate job demands in MNCs more as challenges than hindrances. MNCs provide job resources that enable coping with these demands and enhance learning. Nevertheless, dealing with job demands triggers various affects (Prem et al. 2017). Except for organizational resources, individual resources (e.g., PsyCap) are necessary for achieving work goals, one's development (eudaimonic well-being) and happiness (Bakker 2015; Oerlemans & Bakker 2018; Salanova et al. 2011). Therefore, we intend to verify whether in the MNC context a high level of PsyCap resources moderates the relationship between thriving and happiness. It means that the impact of eudaimonic well-being on hedonic one at work can be stronger for those individuals with higher rather than lower PsyCap (Thompson et al. 2015; Yin et al. 2018).

Taking the above into account, we examine the relationship between PsyCap and happiness via thriving in the specific MNC context. We assume that thriving at work relates to individuals' development and is associated with their happiness composed of both the affective (positivity) and cognitive (satisfaction with intercultural interactions in MNCs) components. We also posit that PsyCap moderates the relationship between thriving and happiness at work.

## **Materials and Methods**

### **Participants and procedures**

We conducted a cross-sectional study. Our sample consisted of 171 individuals, Poles (purposive and snow-ball techniques were applied), who are employed in Polish subsidiaries of various MNCs and work as managers and specialists. Both sampling techniques and the construction of the questionnaire allowed us to control that only participants who had met the selection criteria were included in the sample. The initial pool of subjects was selected from the first, qualitative stage of the study conducted in five subsidiaries of various MNCs (in terms of capital





origin, the sector they belong to, the level of internationalization, the size and role of their subsidiaries in Poland, their worldwide employment, staffing policy, etc.), while additional respondents from other MNCs were also attracted to increase the sample size. The first stage of the research was “aimed at analyzing the perception of intercultural interactions in multinational subsidiaries” (Rozkwitalska et al. 2017, p. 220) and revealed that the positives prevailed barriers in the interviewees’ account. Moreover, the first stage exposed the salient role of learning over vitality in multicultural workplaces (Rozkwitalska & Basinska 2015a).

Our main criterion to include a participant to the second stage of study was the fact that s/he was involved in intercultural interactions at work in a subsidiary of a MNC. We controlled if a person met the criterion by two questions: “At work, I contact with foreigners (e.g., peers, contractors)”; “I work for a multinational corporation, i.e., the company with foreign affiliates” (the answer format was yes/no). With regard to this criterion, fully completed questionnaires were received from 137 participants aged 35 on average ( $SD = 8.6$ ; range: 21-60) and with an average tenure of 6.2 years ( $SD = 4.8$ ; range: 1 - 21 years). As far as the other demographics are concerned, there were 67 women (49%) in the sample and 59 respondents (43%) holding managerial positions. In line with job demands, a specialist or a managerial position required a higher level of education (Bachelor or Master degree). The participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous. According to the ethical principles included in the Declaration of Helsinki, the subjects, having been informed about the aim of the study and the rules for participation, provided their written consent to participate in the sample.

### Measures

#### *Personal resources*

Personal resources were represented by psychological capital. We measured PsyCap as a caravan of resources using the shortened version of the Psychological Capital Questionnaire - a copyrighted instrument by Fred L. Luthans, Bruce J. Avolio and James B. Avey (Luthans, Avolio et al. 2007) (the permission to use it was granted to the corresponding author and received from Mind Garden Inc. on December 18, 2014). This 12-item questionnaire assesses the four psychological resources such as efficacy (3 items, e.g., “I feel confident in representing my work area in meetings with management”), resilience (3 items, e.g., “I usually take stressful things at work in stride”), hope (4 items, e.g., “Right now I see myself as being pretty successful at work”) and optimism (2 items, e.g., “I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job”), and uses the six-point Likert scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree). To calculate the PsyCap index, we summarized the scores and divided them by the number of the items. The higher the scores, the higher level of psychological capital was indicated. The meta-analysis, including 51 independent samples, indicated the good external validity. There were relationships with

theoretically relevant variables, namely job satisfaction, organizational commitment, psychological well-being (positive relationships) as well as job stress, cynicism, turnover intentions (negative relationships) (Avey et al., 2011). Moreover, the PsyCap-12 showed the highest positive correlations with subjective well-being, proactive attitude and positive affect (Lorenz et al 2016). The results of prior studies confirmed the construct validity of the PsyCap as the second-order factorial structure including four highly correlated factors, and they showed an adequate reliability (above .70) (Lorenz et al. 2016; Luthans, Avolio, et al. 2007; Rus et al. 2012; Santana-Cardenas et al. 2018). In our study, Cronbach's alpha was .87.

### ***Happiness at work***

Happiness at work is a broader construct that is composed of positivity and satisfaction with intercultural interactions in MNCs.

*Positivity* was measured by means of the shortened Polish version (Basińska et al. 2014) of Job-related Affective Well-being Scale (the JAWS; van Katwyk et al. 2000). We used the 8-item scale which evaluates four groups of job-related affect as a combination of valence and arousal. There are high pleasure high arousal (e.g., excited), high pleasure low arousal (e.g., relaxed), low pleasure high arousal (e.g., angry) and low pleasure low arousal (e.g., fatigued). The answer format was from 1 (never) to 5 (extremely often). In prior studies, construct validity of the JAWS was tested. The results supported the four-factor structure, based on the dimensions of pleasure and arousal (Basinska et al. 2014; Schaufeli & Van Rhenen 2006). Job-related positive and negative affect was moderately correlated with positive and negative affect measured by the Positive Affect and Negative Affect Scale (Van Katwyk et al., 2000). Job-related positive affect showed significant relations with higher work engagement and perceived organizational support. In contrast, job-related negative affect was moderately associated with higher job stressors, impoverished organizational resources and reduced job satisfaction (Balducci et al. 2011; Van Katwyk et al. 2000).

Positivity was evaluated in two steps. First, we summarized the scores and divided them by the number of the items for positive and negative affect. Next, we calculated the ratio between positive and negative affect, including various levels of activation (range .20 - 5.0), which is an index of positivity at work. The scores above 1.0 indicate more positive than negative affect during their work in MNCs. The JAWS is characterized by good psychometric properties (e.g., Balducci et al. 2011; Basińska et al. 2014; Schaufeli & Van Rhenen, 2006). In this study Cronbach's alpha were .71 and .76 for negative and positive affect respectively.

*Job satisfaction* refers to satisfaction with intercultural interactions among personnel in MNCs, which was assessed by one statement: "Overall, I am interested in the work with foreigners". The answer format was from 1

(strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The higher scores indicated higher satisfaction with intercultural interactions at work. This statement reflects a positive attitude toward intercultural interactions. We decided to use a single-item measure of facet satisfaction because it is easier, takes less time and may contain more face validity (Nagy 2002). In our study, satisfaction with intercultural interactions was moderately correlated with overall job satisfaction ( $r = .44, p < .001$ ), which was also evaluated by single item measure, i.e., “Overall, I am satisfied with work in this organization”.

### ***Thriving at work***

Thriving at work served as a mediator. We separately evaluated the two components of thriving, i.e., vitality and learning. *Vitality* was measured with a 3-item subscale of vigor of Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli et al. 2006). For example, one of the statements was: “At my work, I feel that I am bursting with energy”. Each item was rated by a participant by means of a seven-point scale, ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always/every day). The average of the sum of the scores was divided by the number of the items, which indicated the level of vitality (the higher the scores, the higher the level of vitality). The UWES-9 is widely used across occupational groups, various countries and cultures (Fong & Ng 2012; Littman-Ovadia & Balducci 2013; Nerstad et al. 2010). The psychometric properties reported a transnational, translanguistic, and transcultural validity accompanied by a high reliability (Littman-Ovadia & Balducci 2013). For example, in terms of construct validity, the UWES-9 was stable in a sample of 10 occupational groups in a Norwegian context (e.g., medical personnel, social workers, teachers, police officers, air traffic controllers, and journalists) (Nerstad et al. 2010). The validity of the UWES-9 was confirmed by its correlations with job-intrinsic and job-extrinsic satisfaction (Littman-Ovadia & Balducci 2013). More specifically, vigor, that was indicator of vitality, was moderately related to high and low arousal positive affect and weakly to negative affect. Vigor was also associated with better work performance and less burnout (Balducci et al. 2010; Fong & Ng 2012). Cronbach’s alpha for vitality in the present group was .87.

We also assessed *learning* by using a 5-item scale adopted from Learning Goal Orientation Scale (Vandewalle 1997). For example, one of the statements was: “At work, I take challenging jobs in order to learn new things”. The respondents rated each item using a six-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). In the case of each participant, the average of the sum of the scores was then divided by the number of the items, which indicated his/her level of learning. The higher the scores, the higher the level of learning was presented. In prior, cross-sectional and diary studies, the results revealed that this scale is consistent and reliable (D’Amato & Herzfeldt 2008; Sonnentag 2003). External validity also was successful. Learning goal orientation was moderately related to mastery and feedback seeking as well as personal initiative and work engagement (Sonnentag 2003;

Vandewalle 1997). The results provided evidence of significant relations with theoretically relevant variables, namely mastery, feedback seeking, personal initiative, work engagement and organizational commitment (D'Amato & Herzfeldt 2008; Sonnentag 2003; VandeWalle 1997). Moreover, it was found a significant variation of learning orientation across generation. It means that the younger the generation, the higher their learning goal orientation (D'Amato & Herzfeldt 2008).

As it was the first usage of Learning Goal Orientation Scale in Polish sample, we performed the confirmatory factor analysis using the IBM SPSS Amos 25.0 software. To evaluate the model's goodness of fit several indices were used. According to Hu and Bentler (1999), the following cut-off values were applied: for the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), values of at least .95; and for standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), values up to .08. In addition, the result of the chi-square test should be insignificant ( $p > .05$ ) and the chi-square to df ratio ( $\chi^2/df$ ) should not exceed 3 (Kline, 2015). The result revealed that the one-factor model showed a good fit to the data,  $\chi^2(4) = 6.19$   $p = .186$   $\chi^2/df = 1.55$ , TLI = .986, CFI = .995, SRMR = .023, RMSEA = .063 including 90% confidence interval (CI) [.000; .155]. All the factor loadings were in range .68 - .86. In this study, Cronbach's alpha was .89.

### **Control variables**

In this study, *job tenure* and *prior international experience* were the control variables. First, prior research has shown that job tenure is not usually associated with PsyCap (Avey et al. 2008; Luthans, Youssef et al. 2007). The results of the previous studies that have focused on the relation between job tenure and thriving are also inconsistent. For example, Niessen et al. (2012) found out that job tenure is negatively correlated with vitality, yet it does not relate to learning, while Porath et al. (2012) did not observe a correlation between job tenure and thriving. Second, the prior international experience of the respondents can be important in the MNC context. Concerning prior international experience, the extant literature does not offer a consistent argument whether it facilitates adjustment to multicultural environments, at least as far as expatriates are considered (Takeuchi & Chen 2013). This type of episodes was assessed as an index composed of a set of different experiences in private and professional life, i.e., work for a MNC in the past, work abroad, life abroad, studies abroad, overseas private and business trips as well as having a close family member of another nationality. The respondents evaluated their experiences on the bimodal scale (0 = no, 1 = yes). The majority of the respondents worked in MNCs in the past (93%) and they had overseas business trips (70%). Above half of them lived abroad (56%). A quarter of the respondents studied abroad and 18% had a foreigner as a close family member. To calculate each participant's

index, we summarized *yes* answers and divided them by items (range .14 - 1.00). Thus the higher the scores, the higher international experience ( $M = .59$   $SD = .21$ ). In this study, Cronbach's alpha for this index was .75.

### **Analytical strategy**

Using the IBM SPSS Statistics 25.0 software, the descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated. For correlation, the  $r$ -value is a measure of the effect size with those under .10 being trivial, those within .10 and .30 being weak, those between .30 and .50 being moderate, and those larger than .50 being strong (Cohen, 1992). A mediation and moderation analyses were applied with the use of the PROCESS macro for SPSS 3.0 (Hayes 2018). According to Cohen et al. (2003), we calculated a priori the minimum required sample size given the desired probability level ( $p < .05$ ), the number of predictors in the model (5 for mediation and 7 for moderation analyses), the anticipated moderate effect size, and the desired statistical power level (greater than or equal .08). Using online calculator (Soper 2019), a minimum sample size for our study is 91 for mediation and 103 for moderation analyses, while the final group consisted of 137 respondents.

For mediation analysis, we set two mediators in the model - vitality and learning (Process model 4). After controlling two covariates, job tenure and prior international experience, a bootstrap resample procedure ( $n = 5000$ ) calculated an indirect effect for two mediators simultaneously. Mediation was observed when 95% confidence intervals (a bias-corrected and accelerator method) of indirect effects, the total and specific, excluded zero. Pairwise contrast was used to compare specific indirect effects if they were significant (Hayes 2018).

For the purpose of the moderation analysis, two interaction terms between psychological capital and learning and between psychological capital and vitality (Process model 2) were introduced into the model. After controlling job tenure and prior international experience, a bootstrap resample procedure ( $n = 5000$ ) calculated a moderated effect for the two components of thriving simultaneously. Moderation of the two-way interaction term was observed when 95% confidence intervals (a bias-corrected and accelerator method) excluded zero. At the same time, the moderated model was significant and  $R$ -square increased significantly due to interactions (Hayes 2018).

## **Results**

### **Preliminary analysis**

In the first step, we wanted to test if both components of thriving, vitality and learning, may be considered as distinct yet interrelated variables. For that purpose, we conducted the confirmatory factor analyses, again using the IBM SPSS Amos 25.0 software. The findings showed that the proposed two-factor model demonstrates a good fit to the data,  $\chi^2(18) = 27.66$   $p = .067$   $\chi^2/df = 1.54$ , TLI = .978, CFI = .986, SRMR = .050, RMSEA = .063 90%CI



[.000; .107], and fits the data better when compared to the one-factor model,  $\chi^2(19) = 124.31$   $p < .001$   $\chi^2/df = 6.54$ , TLI = .770, CFI = .884, SRMR = .136, RMSEA = .202 (90%CI [.169; .236]), which was unacceptable. Taken together, vitality and learning form separate but correlated components of thriving.

Table 1 displays means, standard deviations and the correlational coefficients among the study variables.

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Table 1

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Learning and vitality, both components of thriving, were related to psychological capital and subjective well-being moderately, excluding the relationship between learning and positivity, which was small. Among the individual factors, a higher job tenure was weakly related to psychological capital and vitality. We also found out that higher prior international experience was weakly related to psychological capital and learning.

### Mediational model

After controlling job tenure and prior international experience, the results of the mediation analysis reported as unstandardized coefficients indicate that the total effect of psychological capital on satisfaction with intercultural interactions in MNCs (total effect = .593, 95% CI [.360, .826]) was still significant when learning and vitality were introduced to the model (direct effect = .322, 95% CI [.028, .617]). Furthermore, the analysis revealed that the indirect effect of thriving was significant, with a point estimate of .271 and a 95% bootstrap confidence interval of .058 to .480. It shows that thriving partially mediated the relationship between psychological capital and satisfaction with intercultural interactions. The specific indirect effect of each mediator indicates that only learning was significant with a point estimate of .164 and a 95% bootstrap CI of .030 to .328. The Sobel test supported this result ( $Z = 2.20$ ,  $p = .028$ ). Overall, the model explained 25.1% ( $F(5, 131) = 8.77$   $p < .001$ ) of the variance of satisfaction with intercultural interactions. As a result, there was limited support for hypothesis 1a, because learning partially mediated the relationship between psychological capital and satisfaction with intercultural interactions. Figure 1 shows standardized coefficients in the mediation model.

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Fig. 1

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We also conducted the mediation analysis of thriving on the relationship between psychological capital and positivity. The total effect of psychological capital on positivity (total effect = .488, 95% CI [.349, .626]) was still significant when learning and vitality were included in the model (direct effect = .242, 95% CI [.092, .392]).

Additionally, the analysis showed that the indirect effect of thriving was significant, with a point estimate of .245 and a 95% bootstrap confidence interval of .121 to .401. It indicates that thriving partially mediated the relationship between psychological capital and positivity. The specific indirect effect of each component of thriving revealed that only vitality was significant with a point estimate of .291 and a 95% bootstrap CI of .183 to .431. The Sobel test confirmed this result ( $Z = 5.30$   $p < .001$ ). To sum up, the model explained 50.0% ( $F(5, 131) = 26.21$   $p < .001$ ) of the variance of the ratio of positivity. Thus, there was limited support for hypothesis 1b, because vitality partially mediated the relationship between psychological capital and positivity. Figure 2 shows standardized coefficients in the mediation model.

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Fig. 2

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### **Moderated model**

In the last set of the analyses, we tested hypothesis 2, assuming that the relationship between both components of thriving, learning and vitality, and happiness at work is moderated by psychological capital as a caravan of resources. Specifically, we assumed that psychological capital moderates the relationship between thriving and satisfaction with intercultural interactions in MNCs as well as the relationship between thriving and positivity. Table 2 presents more details in the moderated model.

The moderated model, including both the interactions between two components of thriving and psychological capital, demonstrated significant main effects of psychological capital and learning on satisfaction with intercultural interactions in MNCs (Table 2). More specifically, higher satisfaction with intercultural interactions in MNCs was related to higher psychological capital and higher learning. However, psychological capital moderated neither the relationship between learning and satisfaction with intercultural interactions nor the relationship between learning and satisfaction with intercultural interactions. Control variables were insignificant in this model. While the moderated model, including both the interaction between the two components of thriving and psychological capital, explained 26.7% ( $F(7, 129) = 6.71$   $p < .001$ ) of the variance of the satisfaction with intercultural interactions in MNCs, the increase due to interactions was insignificant ( $\Delta R^2 = .016$   $F(7, 129) = 1.41$   $p = .247$ ). Therefore, hypothesis 2a was not supported, i.e., psychological capital did not moderate the relationship between thriving and satisfaction with intercultural interactions in MNCs.

In addition, the same analysis of the moderated model was conducted for positivity. The moderated model, including the interactions between the two components of thriving and psychological capital, showed significant

main effects of psychological capital and vitality on positivity (Table 2). In particular, a higher balance between positive and negative affect was related to higher vitality and higher psychological capital. However, psychological capital did not moderate the relationship between learning and positivity or the relationship between vitality and positivity. Control variables were insignificant in this model. Although the moderated model, including both the interaction between the two components of thriving and psychological capital explained 50.0% ( $F(7, 129) = 18.49$   $p < .001$ ) of the variance of the ratio between positive and negative affect at work, the increase due to interactions was insignificant ( $\Delta R^2 = .001$   $F(7, 129) = 0.09$   $p = .916$ ). Therefore, hypothesis 2b was not confirmed, i.e., psychological capital did not moderate the relationship between thriving and positivity in the work context.

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Table 2

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## Discussion

### Study Contribution

Our empirical findings provide an answer to the research question of the study, namely “what is the relationship between PsyCap and happiness at work in the specific MNC context?”. Firstly, the research proved that PsyCap is related to happiness and that thriving partially mediated the relationship. Secondly, our findings reveal that PsyCap does not moderate the link between thriving and happiness in the analyzed work context.

Our study provides evidence that PsyCap is related to happiness at work in the specific MNC context. This relation is partially mediated by thriving. Specifically, it was learning that mediated the relationship between psychological capital and satisfaction with intercultural interactions while vitality mediated the relationship between PsyCap and positivity in multicultural work environments. Introducing thriving, as an indicator of eudaimonic well-being, we captured the richness of happiness at work. We identify two separate mechanisms, one through vitality and energizing relations, and the other one through learning and development. The observation that PsyCap is associated with happiness is in congruence with so called resource gain spirals in COR theory which posits that abundance of one type of resources may support the development of other ones. Additionally, we showed the mediating mechanism of thriving and its components in this relation in the unique MNC context adding to the state-of-the-art knowledge in that respect.

The empirical findings show that psychological capital did not moderate the relationship between thriving and satisfaction with intercultural interactions. Similarly, psychological capital did not moderate the relationship





between thriving and positivity in multicultural work environments. It means that in the MNCs context, the relationship between thriving and happiness works equally well with regard to employees with lower and higher levels of PsyCap. This result may be particularly important for the practical implications.

The results of our study show that learning, a component of thriving, mediates the relationship between personal resources such as PsyCap and satisfaction with intercultural interactions. These findings have supported the socially embedded model of thriving (Gerbasi et al. 2015; Spreitzer et al. 2005) and indicate that employees learn a lot when they participate in invigorating and inspiring interactions with others (Bergom & Kinnunen 2014; Garrett et al. 2017). In particular, they learn more in intercultural encounters, which was also highlighted by other authors (e.g., Colvin & Volet 2014; Gertsen & Söderberg 2010). In addition, individuals have a sense of developing and realizing their own potential (Spreitzer & Hwang 2019). Referring to the eudaimonic perspective (Huta & Waterman 2014), we have noticed that intercultural interactions can fuel learning and lead to employees' development, which in turn may create positive attitudes towards foreigners. In multicultural work environments positive attitudes exhibited in intercultural interactions are of vital importance. They are manifested in personalization of relations, refraining from stereotyping others and concentration on organizational objectives (Rozkwitalska & Basinska 2015b). PsyCap fosters learning in intercultural interactions - people from different cultures, while working together, learn from one another and achieve personal and professional development.

The results of our study have also demonstrated that PsyCap as a caravan of resources is positively associated with vitality, which further favorably relates to positivity. This fact may suggest that individuals can better exploit their resources and feel more positive than negative affect while working in multicultural environments. Consequently, intercultural interactions at work make the content of work more exciting, interesting and enthusiastic and, at the same time, less discouraging and threatening. Positivity is promoted due to the interplay among hope, optimism, resilience and self-efficacy that employees bring to the working team. Referring to the relationship between eudaimonic and hedonic well-being (Deci & Ryan 2008), we speculate that intercultural interactions can propel happiness and lead to employees' contentment. Via vitality, positive resources can consequently challenge people to seek the alternative ways of achieving organizational goals and create their success. It is consistent with the results by Baruch et al. (2014), who indicate that vitality is an important factor for a successful career. MNCs create a spectrum of particular demands in the workplace and although they provide access to a variety of organizational resources, vitality is less contingent on the organizational factors than on the personal resources of employees (Hildebrand et al. 2018; Paterson et al. 2014).

To sum up, thriving is deeply rooted in social interactions at work and depends on personal resources (Garrett et al. 2017; Niessen et al. 2012; Niessen et al. 2017; Paterson et al. 2014). In view of the eudaimonic perspective, thriving reveals why individuals are satisfied with their job as well as how they can experience the optimal level of affective functioning at work (Paterson et al. 2014; Porath et al. 2012; Walumbwa et al. 2018), including multicultural work environments. MNCs should create conducive circumstances for thriving, which in return may facilitate the realization of the full potential of employees, contribute to their happiness and growth as well as support the organizational development and success.

### **Practical Implications**

Although the results of our study indicate that PsyCap does not moderate the relationship between thriving and happiness in a multicultural work setting, they show some practical directions for managers in MNCs, namely suggest that each employee can strive for optimal functioning in a suitable work environment. As a result, managers in MNCs should stimulate learning and vitality by creating more opportunities for intercultural interactions (e.g., by increasing the share of expatriates or relocated employees in the subsidiary employment, creating virtual or collocated multicultural teams, overseas assignments of the local staff, etc.) because then they may strengthen happiness of their employees (Niessen et al., 2017). Since PsyCap is a personal resource of employees which can be improved, MNCs may strengthen an individual's PsyCap by providing more organizational resources enabling intercultural interactions (e.g., cross-cultural trainings, face-to-face meetings of teammates of virtual multicultural teams, video conferences instead of teleconferences, etc.), consequently enhancing thriving that relates to happiness of their personnel (Voung & Napier 2015). Furthermore, by applying training interventions, managers may stimulate each PsyCap resource separately, as in the view of COR theory, enhancing one resource makes an individual more likely to strengthen his/her other resources (Hobfoll et al. 2018). For instance, to develop one's hope in a multicultural workplace training interventions may include activities directed at overcoming obstacles in intercultural interactions, whereas to support one's optimism s/he must learn how to anticipate such barriers and develop pathways to benefit from intercultural contacts. As the research by Reichard et al. (2014) proved, psychological resource training directed at the PsyCap components improved cross-cultural PsyCap, cultural intelligence, positive emotions and helped to decrease ethnocentrism.

Our research stresses the mediating role of thriving in the link between PsyCap and happiness in MNCs. Thriving is multi-faceted and it reinforces the positive relationship between PsyCap and employees' growth and happiness. Therefore, by strengthening employees' thriving, i.e., providing more room for intercultural interactions,

managers in MNCs foster individual growth and pleasure, which also brings about their happy, meaningful and valuable lives (Nawaz et al. 2018; Prem et al. 2017).

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The limitations concerning our study design are as follows: the sample size was small yet acceptable, its composition included only Poles (on the other hand, it responds to the calls of Youssef and Luthans (2012b) to expand the boundaries of PsyCap to other cultures than the ones of the U.S.), the employees of various MNCs (the industry and company context could not be captured in our data), the non-probabilistic sampling techniques limit the generalizations of our results, the correlations in our analyses did not allow for scrutinizing the cause-and-effect relationships.

The most important limitation of our study is the fact that a cross-sectional design was applied. Mediation is a process which develops over time (Ployhart & Vandenberg 2010). However, in particular cases predictor is more stable over time such as PsyCap that is a caravan of personal resources which are relatively stable although they may undergo some changes under intervention. In contrast, happiness and eudemonic thriving are more dynamic states. Furthermore, the priority in defining the direction of the relationships between variables should be placed on the theoretical justification and results from previous studies. The above limitation could be addressed in future studies.

In the current research we limited our analysis to the unique environment of MNCs. With regard to further studies, we also recommend scrutinizing whether the relationship between PsyCap and thriving is stronger in multicultural environments of MNCs than in other organizational contexts by using a cross-lagged design. We did not exam the reciprocal relations between personal and organizational resources (e.g., style of leadership) or other personal resources (e.g., the sense of meaningfulness of work, autonomous motivation). These can also be a promising avenue for future research. Furthermore, we did not focus on organizational interventions that stimulate intercultural interactions and, as a result, thriving, which could be scrutinized in subsequent studies. Finally, we applied a COR lens to the investigation of relationship between PsyCap and happiness at work in MNCs. However, it might be useful to study each PsyCap resource separately to verify which of them is of vital significance in the relation with happiness.

### **Conclusions**

To sum up, the multicultural environment of MNCs that activates thriving may help people develop their PsyCap to attain higher happiness at work. Individuals can invest their PsyCap in intercultural interactions at work,

which are, mainly due to enhanced learning, a new source of fuel for their positivity and satisfaction with intercultural interactions, and consequently happiness at work.

### **Compliance with Ethical Standards Conflict of Interest**

**Conflict of interest** The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Human Studies** All the procedures performed in the studies involving human participants were in accordance with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

**Informed Consent** Informed consent was obtained from all the individual participants included in the study.

**Animal Studies** This article does not contain any studies with animals performed by any of the authors.

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**Table 1.** The Descriptive Statistics, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients Between Study Variables ( $N = 137$ )

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]
[1] Psychological capital	4.63	0.62	1-6	(.87)					
[2] Satisfaction with international interaction	5.16	0.90	1-6	.41**	(-)				
[3] Positivity	1.26	0.56	0.2-5.0	.52**	.32**	(.76/.71)			
[4] Learning	4.73	0.79	1-6	.54**	.40**	.27**	(.89)		
[5] Vitality	3.75	1.18	1-6	.56**	.33**	.67**	.40**	(.87)	
[6] International experience	0.59	0.21	0-1	.22*	.22*	.11	.20*	.08	(.75)
[7] Job tenure	6.57	5.04	1-21	.21*	-.05	.01	.09	.20*	-.04

*Note.* Values in parentheses on the diagonal indicate Cronbach's alpha coefficients for scales' reliabilities.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients for job-related positivity ratio is given separately for positive and negative affect.

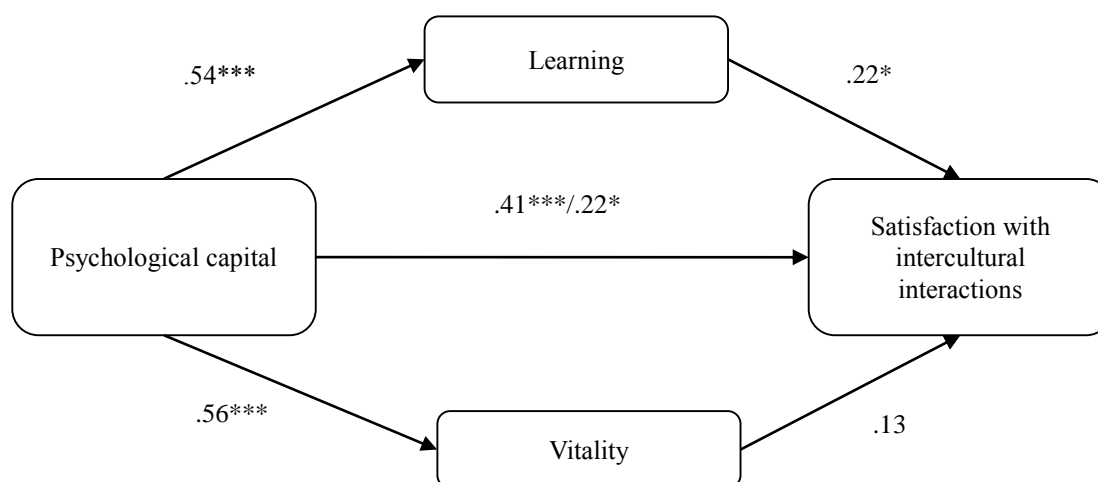
\* $p < .01$ . \*\* $p < .001$ .

**Table 2.** *Psychological Capital as the Moderator of the Relationship Between Thriving and Happiness at Work*  
(*N* = 137)

Variables	Satisfaction with international interaction			Positivity		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% <i>CI</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% <i>CI</i>
Constant	4.99***	.24	[4.514, 5.481]	1.35***	.12	[1.102, 1.600]
Job tenure	-0.03	.01	[-0.053, 0.002]	-0.02*	.01	[-0.031, -0.003]
International experience	0.50	.34	[-0.175, 1.168]	0.05	.18	[-0.297, 0.394]
Psychological capital	0.35*	.15	[0.049, 0.644]	0.24**	.08	[0.087, 0.394]
Learning	0.22*	.11	[0.006, 0.428]	-0.06	.06	[-0.171, 0.046]
Vitality	0.10	.07	[-0.037, 0.244]	0.28***	.04	[0.202, 0.347]
Psychological capital x Learning	-0.12	.17	[-0.457, 0.212]	0.03	.09	[-0.146, 0.198]
Psychological capital x Vitality	0.18	.11	[-0.032, 0.386]	-0.03	.05	[-0.129, 0.086]
R <sup>2</sup>	.27			.50		
F	6.71***			18.49***		
F for change in R <sup>2</sup>	1.41			0.09		

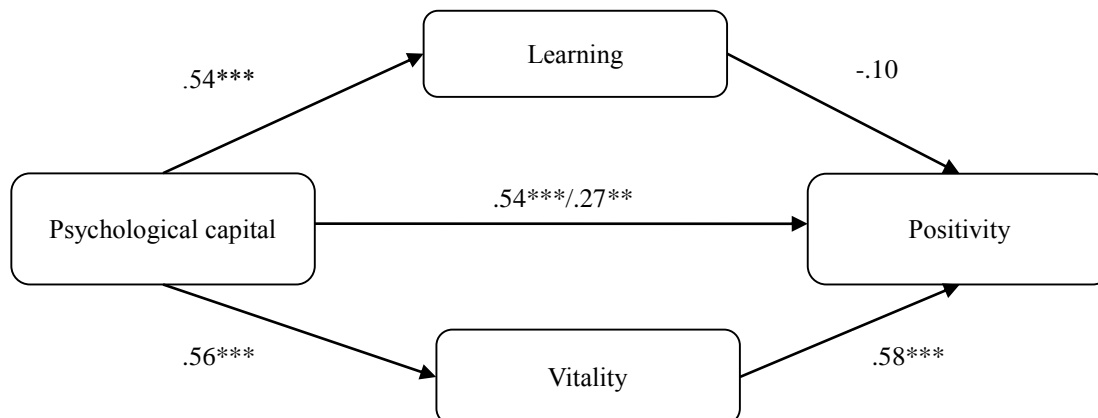
*Note.* *B* = unstandardized coefficient; *SE* = standard error; *CI* = confidence interval.

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001.



**Fig. 1.** Partially mediating effect of thriving on the relationship between psychological capital and satisfaction with intercultural interactions, controlling for job tenure and prior international experience. All coefficients are standardized.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



**Fig. 2.** Partially mediating effect of thriving on the relationship between psychological capital and positivity, controlling for job tenure and prior international experience. All coefficients are standardized.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .