



## Predicting quality of life based on psychological capital, emotional intelligence and participation in decision making in staff of National Iranian Oil Refining & Distribution Company

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### ABSTRACT

One of the objectives of positive psychology approach is identifying and defining concepts that help to provide individual's health, happiness and a healthy life. One of these concepts is quality of life which is predicted in this study based on three variable including psychological capital, emotional intelligence and participation in decision making. This research is correlational. The population of this study includes staff of National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company who worked in 2013. 440 individuals were selected based on simple random sampling and responded to research questionnaires. Results pointed to a positive and significant relationship between emotional intelligence, participation in decision making and psychological capital with quality of life and these three variables predicted quality of life. Enhancement of emotional intelligence, participation in decision making and psychological capital will lead to increase in employee's quality of life.

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### Introduction

The new branch of psychology and its innovative approach known as "positive psychology" seeks to investigate the psychological capacities and abilities rather than psychopathology. The basic idea of this approach is that positive measurable features can act as a shield to protect people against the risk of adverse events (Seligman, 2000). This approach aims to identify and define concepts that help the health and happiness of individuals and their enjoyment of a healthy lifestyle. One of such concepts is the quality of life. Though there is a consensus among researchers that the quality of life is a multidimensional and complex structure and it is determined based on individual assessment of his status in physical, psychological and social areas (McAlinden, 2006) and despite the fact that there had been a lot of effort to define and measure it objectively (Hagerty, Cummins & Ferriss, 2001), there is no single definition that all researchers agree upon it. Besides considering the fact that like other variables, the measurement of quality of life requires certain and comprehensive definition, researchers always have tried to provide an appropriate definition (Nejat, 2008).

There are different theories about the quality of life. Some researchers believe that only if multiple dimensions of health are measured simultaneously, it can be called quality of life. Some also believe that there is no single definition for this concept. Most experts agree that the quality of life takes into account both positive and negative realities of life and has multiple dimensions. Furthermore, it is considered as a dynamic and intrinsic concept. Intrinsic in the sense that it must be self-determined, according to individual's opinion, and not based on other's idea and dynamic in the sense that it change over time and therefore it is necessary to measure it during a course of time ((Hagerty, Cummins & Ferriss, 2001 & Cummings &

Worley, 2005). Researchers who consider quality of life as an objective approach, have considered obvious cases related to standards of living, including health, personal circumstances (wealth, living conditions, etc.), social relations, occupational matters, or other social and economic factors as equal to quality of life (Liu, 2006). Conversely, the subjective approach considers quality of life synonymous with joy or satisfaction and is focused on cognitive factors in assessing quality of life (Liu, 2006).

Because of several different definitions and classifications, researchers have agreed to abandon the idea of defining and to accept the definition of World Health Organization as a criterion and to consider 4 to 5 main areas for its implementation. Quality of life was defined as "individuals' perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the persons' physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships and their relationship to salient features of their environment" (The WHOQOL Group, 1995). Given the importance of the concept of quality of life, the World Health Organization considers enhancing the quality of life as one of its main objectives (The WHOQOL Group, 1995).

Another construct under the focus of positive psychology is emotional intelligence (Brackett et.al, 2006). Emotional intelligence is the latest developments in perceiving the relationship between cognition and emotion. This concept was first proposed by Mayer and Salovey in 1990. Salovey and Mayer defined emotional intelligence as "...the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions (Mayer, DiPaolo, & Salovey, 1990). According to Goleman's conceptualization of the notion of EI,

emotional intelligence is a combination of five characteristics: (1) knowing one's emotion, (2) managing one's emotion (i.e. handling fear, anxiety), (3) motivating oneself (emotional control, the ability to delay gratification), (4) recognizing emotions in others, and (5) handling relationships (Goleman, 1995).

Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002) believe that for the development of emotional intelligence individuals need time to think for themselves and others. Emotional intelligence is the management of relationships with others and it is for self-efficiency. Emotional intelligence leads to increased awareness and communication skills and its outcome is the efficiency of teamwork and effective communication with others.

Emotional intelligence does not have a cognitive aspect but it is the foundation of other intelligences. Studies have shown that emotional intelligence plays a greater role in one's success than IQ. Since unlike IQ, which is almost static, emotional intelligence can be improved and developed. Research has shown that the importance of emotional intelligence for the development of organizations is also increasing. With IQ, we can predict whether a person is suitable for the job or not. While emotional intelligence can predict employee's failure or success in the organization (Aghayar, Sharifi & Daramadi, 2007).

People with high emotional intelligence are happier and more successful in their relationships. Also, they have a balance between their intellect and emotions; they have awareness of their emotions, empathy and compassion towards others and have signs of higher self-esteem. Lower emotional intelligence might lead to public dissatisfaction which is realized by the feelings of loneliness, fear, frustration, emptiness, depression, instability, indifference, disappointment, anger, dependence and failing. Conversely higher emotional intelligence leads to public satisfaction which is realized in different forms such as motivation, kindness, sincerity, self-attention, fidelity, ease of imagination, awareness, balance, freedom, independence, satisfaction and success in maintaining relationships (Heyn, 2007).

Another variable that has been studied in positive psychology is psychological capital. In fact, the concept of psychological capital refers to "Who are you? (Real self) and" Who you want to be "their (Potential self) (Luthans et.al, 2006). Luthans, et al. (2006) define psychological capital as follows. It is 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". Though these two components might seem very similar and literally interchangeable, psychological capital and positive organizational behavior literature distinguish between these two concepts and empirical analysis also points to significant differences between these concepts (Luthans & Youssef, 2004; Bryant & Cvenegros, 2004).

Prior to this, some issues such as physical capital, including money, labor and machines were discussed in organizations. After physical capital, human capital consisting knowledge, skills and experiences of staff and ultimately social capital as a network of relationships with other people were proposed. The new concept proposed by Luthans known as psychological capital is introduced and derived from a positive organizational

behavior. Many researchers believe that psychological capital can provide a competitive advantage for their organizations. Psychological capital such as human capital and social capital can be invested and managed and unlike traditional capital and tangible assets can be realized with very little investment (Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007). Research shows that psychological capital has substantially higher value for optimal results for organization compared to demographic characteristics, self-assessment characteristics and trait dimensions (Luthans et.al, 2006). Leaders and coworkers should stop thinking to the weaknesses and poor performances of others to be able see their strengths and good qualities, increase employees' psychological capital and thereby improve individual and organizational performance (Luthans et.al, 2004).

Another variable examined in this study that could affect the quality of working life is participation in organizational decision making. Employee's participation is an inclusive term that covers several methods (Robbins, 2005) and is viewed in different perspectives. Likert (1961) regards participation in decision making as giving leadership power to collaborative group. Vroom (1960) considers participation as an interaction and cooperation between supervisors and subordinates. Some researchers also consider it as empowering employees who is gained by giving opportunities to have control over important decisions of business processes (Likert, 1961; Maslow, 1943; McGregor, 1960; Herzberg, 1966). In addition, partnership means accessing and participating in group decision-making process (Vendervelde, 1979).

Another definition of participation is a process in which employees have equal share in having impact on processes (Wagner, 1994). Generally, participation in decision making refers to a management system in which the members are influential in decisions (Rajayipour, Pourpirali & Salimi, 2007). The purpose of involving employees in decision making processes is having their active and constructive involvement in achieving organizational goals. Such strategies are based on the assumption that employees at all levels can and want to contribute to organizational effectiveness, beyond what is required of them in the job description. It is thought that the staff can help to increase the effectiveness of their work teams in problem solving and developing teamwork and cooperative group, which makes it easy to achieve common goals, is effective (Ashja, 2008). Followed research related to the topic of this study is discussed.

The results of previous studies show that involvement in decision making processes leads to a sense of ownership of the business processes and as it satisfies the requirements of independence and responsibility, it creates positive feelings about the workplace. In fact, increased participation in decision making results in increased sense of control that leads to higher levels of satisfaction (Vincze, 1997). Participation programs in addition to giving significance to employees' contributions in the organization, provides the skills and information necessary for the successful execution of roles to its employees (Kim & Wright, 2007). Some studies have shown that participation leads to increased employee's commitment and motivation (Likert, 1961; McGregor, 1966).

Other researchers have also showed that employees with job burnout have lower participation in decision making (Landsbergis, 1988; Lee & Ashforth, 1991; Moore, 2000). Participation can reduce job burnout because due to the feedback those employees receive on their performance, job

uncertainty decreases. Also, participation increases employment opportunities, which reduces the burnout (Kim & Wright, 2007).

Studies in the field of Emotional Intelligence have shown that emotional intelligence has a significant positive relationship with indicators of psychological well-being (Augusto et al., 2006, Shabani et al., 2010). Also, previous attempts showed that there is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction measures (Livingstone & Day, 2005; Gignac, 2006; Aryana-ki, 2009; Okulicz-Kozaryn, 2009; Brillhart, 2005), happiness (Bagheri, Akbarizade & Hatami, 2010) and quality of life (Yusefi & Safari, 2009; Kiamarsi & Abolghasemi, 2010).

Hosseinian, Ghasemzadeh and Niknam's (2011) study showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between quality of life in female teachers and emotional and spiritual intelligence variables. In addition, Venta, Nicholas and Ted (2005) showed that emotional intelligence is positively related to academic success, life satisfaction and problem solving strategies. The results of Augusto et al (2006) showed that there was a strong relationship between life satisfaction and emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. Also, today the concept of emotional intelligence is used in organizations and development of human resources to put emphasis on important skills required in the workplace, except for the specialized capabilities needed for the job (Salovey, Mayer & Caruso, 2002; Chan, 2007).

Dulewicz, Higgs and Slaski (2003) investigated the role of self-management of emotions such as stress, grief, and poor quality of work life. Their results showed that emotional intelligence was widely associated with psychological and physical well-being. Rajabi, Ghorbani and Khojastemehr (2011) in another study entitled "The examination of relationship between gender ideology, marital role, emotional intelligence and quality of life" demonstrated that emotional intelligence predicted quality of life. Karimi et al. (2013) in an investigative attempt entitled "Predicting resiliency based on the rate of emotional intelligence in public organizations in Yasuj" showed that there was a significant positive relationship between resiliency and emotional intelligence.

Thomase et al. (2006) in another article entitled "Relation of employee and manager emotional intelligence to job satisfaction and performance" showed that there was a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction and job performance variables. Haghghatjo et al. (2008) in their investigative attempt entitled "The relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction" showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between these two variables. Also, studies have shown that the four components of psychological capital (self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resiliency) have a positive relationship with performance, happiness, well-being, and employee satisfaction. For example, self-efficacy has a positive impact on performance (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Employee's optimism is linked to their performance, satisfaction and happiness (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). Hope is linked to performance, satisfaction and happiness (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). Resiliency has a positive relationship with performance (Luthans, et al, 2005), happiness and satisfaction (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). Avolio and Luthans (2006) showed that psychological capital is a better predictor of individual's performance than other characteristics. For this reason, in this study the focus is on the predictive power of psychological capitals rather than other characteristics of individuals and it is hypothesized that psychological capital is

expected to affect both the quality of working life and employee's performance.

Nguyen and Nguyen (2011) found that psychological capital has a positive impact on job performance and quality of working life of marketers. Also, the quality of work life paves the ground for job performance and quality of life of marketers. Bahadori Khosroshahi et al (2013) showed that there is a significant positive relationship between psychological capital and personality characteristics with job satisfaction among bookers in Tabriz (Iran). Alipour et al. (2013) found that capital psychological intervention is effective in reducing burnout. Panahi (2013) showed that there is a positive relationship between quality of work life and psychological capital. In addition, a positive relationship was found between quality of work life and four components of psychological capital. Given the importance of quality of life, this research aims to provide evidence for the relationship between Emotional Intelligence, participation in decision-making and psychological capital. The research hypotheses are as follows:

- 1- There is a relation between emotional intelligence and quality of life.
- 2- There is a relation between participation in decision making and quality of life.
- 3- There is a relation between psychological capital and quality of life.

#### **Methodology**

This research is descriptive and correlational. The population of the study consisted of all employees in Oil Refinery Company who worked in 2013. Based on simple random sampling, 440 individuals were selected from Oil Refinery Company of Isfahan, Oil Products Distribution Company of Tehran and Tehran pipeline and they were asked to fill out the questionnaires.

#### **Instruments**

1- Psychological Capital Questionnaire: this questionnaire has been constructed combining four questionnaires. In this questionnaire, 4 items were adapted from Snyder, Rand and Sigmon (2002) for the assessment of hope, three items were adapted from Carver and Scheier (2002) to measure optimism, to measure flexibility (Resiliency) 4 items were adapted from Black and Krymn (1996) and to assess self-efficacy 4 items were adapted from Parker (1998). Respondents answer to items on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 completely agree. The validity of the questionnaire was checked by consulting a number of colleagues expert in the field and its reliability was 0.86 applying Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

2- Emotional intelligence questionnaire: To measure emotional intelligence, emotional intelligence scale devised by Institute for Health and Human Capabilities (2006) was used in this research. This instrument consists of 12 questions and each individual has to answer on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 completely agree. It should be noted that there is no reverse scoring. The validity of the questionnaire was checked by consulting a number of colleagues expert in the field and its reliability was 0.82 applying Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

3- Participation in decision making inventory: in order to measure participation in decision making, Parnell and Bell's (2001) questionnaire was used which consisted of 5 items. Items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale from very low to very high. The validity of the questionnaire was checked by consulting a number of colleagues expert in the field and its reliability was 0.83 applying Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

4-Quality of life questionnaire: quality of life was assessed by three items adopted from Peterson, Akise and Hunt (2010) which is scored on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 completely agree. This questionnaire was translated into Persian and its validity was checked by consulting a number of colleagues expert in the field and its reliability was 0.82 applying Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

The collected data were descriptively and inferentially analyzed applying SPSS 21. Indicators of central tendency and dispersion, including mean and standard deviation, were used to provide descriptive information. Correlation coefficient and multiple regression were used to provide inferential information.

**Findings**

Findings of this study will be presented in two descriptive (related to the demographic variables and study variables such as mean, standard deviation, maximum and minimum), and inferential sections. Results of demographic variables are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics for demographic variables of the sample**

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
	Primary/ Secondary	11	2.5
	Diploma	79	18
Level of Education	Technician	71	16.1
	BA/BS	208	47.3
	MA/MS	63	15.5
	PhD	3	0.7
Gender	Male	337	76.6
	Female	103	23.4
Marital status	Single	77	17.5
	Married	363	82.5

As can be seen in Table 1, the highest frequency of level of education of our sample goes for BA/BS with the frequency of 47.3% and the lowest goes for PhD with the frequency of 0.7%. With regard to gender, it can be seen that 76.6% were male and the rest (23.4%) were female. In addition, 17.5% of the sample were single and 82.5% were married.

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the variables**

Variables	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Psychological Capital	1	6	4.54	0.62
Emotional intelligence	1	4.84	3.62	0.47
Participation in decision making	1	4.80	2.90	0.71
Life quality	1	5	3.33	0.90

As can be seen in the table above, among the studied variables, psychological capital with the mean of 4.54 and SD of 0.62 has the highest mean and participation in decision making with the mean of 2.90 and SD of 0.71 has the lowest mean. The inferential findings are presented in Tables 3, 4 and 5. Table 3 shows the results of the inter-correlations between variables and Tables 4 and 5 show the results of multiple regression analysis.

**Table 3. Correlation coefficients between criterion and predictor variables**

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Psychological Capital	-			
2. Emotional intelligence	0.5*	-		
3. Participation in decision making	0.36*	0.39*	-	
4. Life quality	0.33*	0.33*	0.33*	-

P<0/01

As the above table shows, there is a significant and positive relationship between psychological capital (p < 0.01, r = .33), emotional intelligence (p < 0.01, r = .33) and participation in decision making (p < 0.01, r = .33) with quality of life.

**Table 4. Summary of results of step-wise regression to predict quality of life**

Stage	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. error of the estimate	F	Sig.
1	0.33	0.11	0.11	0.85	53.17	.000
2	0.40	0.16	0.16	0.82	39.78	.000
3	0.42	0.18	0.17	0.82	30.83	.000

1. Predictors: Emotional intelligence
2. Predictors: Emotional intelligence and participation in decision making
3. Predictors: Emotional intelligence, participation in decision making and psychological capital

As the results of step-wise regression analysis in the above table shows, all three variables of emotional Intelligence, participation in decision-making and psychological capital explain a portion of the variance in quality of life. Emotional intelligence has been entered in the first stage, participation in decision-making was entered in the second stage and in the third stage, psychological capital was entered. F value is significant for all three variables (p<0.01). In the proposed sample, multiple correlation coefficient of these three variables with quality of life was 0.42 (p<0.01) and coefficient of determination was 0.18; in the sense that 0.18 of the variance in quality of life is affected by three variables. The adjusted coefficient of determination for the impact of these three variables on quality of life was 0.17 which shows that in the sample, this coefficient is 0.17.

**Table 5. Standard and nonstandard regression coefficients in the linear regression analysis of the independent variables**

Stage		Nonstandard coefficients		Standard coefficient s			Linear coefficients	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	tolerance	VIF
1	Constant	1.03	0.32	0.33	3.26	0.001	1	1
	Emotional intelligence	0.63	0.08		7.30	0.000		
2	Constant	0.80	0.31	0.24	2.55	0.01	0.85	1.18
	Emotional intelligence	0.46	0.09		5.00	0.000		
	Participation in decision making	0.27	0.05	0.23	4.90	0.000	0.85	1.18
	3	Constant	0.32	0.34	0.17	0.92	0.35	0.70
Emotional intelligence	0.32	0.10	3.18	0.002				
	Participation in decision making	0.23	0.05	0.20	4.11	0.000	0.81	1.23
	Psychological Capital	0.25	0.07	0.17	3.33	0.001	0.71	

As the above table shows, Beta coefficients for emotional intelligence, participation in decision making and psychological capital are 0.17, 0.20 and 0.17 respectively which show that all three variables are significant (p < 0.01). In the above table, the hypothesis of the linearity of predictive variables was also examined. This assumption is necessary in multiple regression and considering the fact that for all three variables, tolerance index is above 0.4 and VIF index is lower than 2.5, the linearity is not serious i.e. the linear correlation between each independent variable with the other independent variables is not high.

**Discussion**

This study aimed to predict quality of life based on psychological capital, emotional intelligence and participation in

decision making in staff of National Iranian Oil Refining & Distribution Company. Results of our study showed that these three variables can predict quality of life to some extent. In addition, emotional intelligence has a positive significant relationship with quality of life. In the sense that with the increase in emotional intelligence, employees' quality of life increases and with the decrease in emotional intelligence their quality of life decreases. This finding was in line with previous attempts like Yusefi and Safari (2009), Kiamarsi and Abolghasemi (2010), Hosseinian, Ghasemzadeh and Niknam (2011), Venta, Nicholas and Ted (2005), Augusto et al. (2006), Rajabi, Ghorbani and Khojastemehr (2011). This finding can be explained by the fact that individuals with high emotional intelligence can better control, diagnose and use emotional capabilities; such individuals are more capable of managing and controlling their emotions and consequently have better feelings in their lives. In addition, such people have the skills to apply appropriate strategies to confront difficulties in life and in this way their mental and physical health will be satisfied and ultimately the quality of their lives increases. In addition, such people consider stressful situations as a challenge and opportunity to learn rather than as a stressful factor. Thus, they experience less emotional disorders and are mentally and physically healthier which leads to the increase in the quality of their lives.

In addition, the results of this study showed that participation in decision making had a significant and positive relationship with quality of life. This finding was in line with Vincze (1997), Kim and Wright (2007), Landsbergis (1988), Lee and Ashforth (1991) and Moore (2000). Findings obtained by Landsbergis (1988), Lee and Ashforth (1991) and Moore (2000) showed that with the increase in participation in decision making, job burnout decreases. Decrease in job burnout will result in improvement of individual's health. It can be said that with the increase in employee's participation in organization's decision making, sense of control and efficiency in employees increases and their satisfaction level increases and ultimately the quality of their life increases. In addition, with the increase in participation in decision making, individuals achieve skills and information required for the successful implementation of their roles and their satisfaction increases and ultimately the quality of their life enhances.

In addition, the results of this study pointed to a positive significant relationship between psychological capital and quality of life. This finding was in line with Luthans and Youssef (2004), Stajkovic and Luthans (1998), Luthans et al. (2005), Avolio and Luthans (2006), Nguyen and Nguyen (2011), Khosroshahi et al. (2013) and Alipour et al. (2013). The results of Luthans and Youssef (2004), Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) and Luthans et al. (2005) showed that the four components of psychological capital (self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resiliency) had a positive relationship with happiness, well-being, and employee's satisfaction and the increase in these components increase quality of life. The results of Nguyen and Nguyen (2011) also showed that psychological capital had a positive impact on quality of employee's working life and quality of working life paved the ground for quality of life. Findings of Khosroshahi et al. (2013) and Alipour et al. (2013) showed that psychological capital had a positive and significant relationship with job satisfaction, reducing job burnout and quality of working life and these factors are the grounds for increasing individual's quality of life. In fact, the increase in the four components of psychological capital (self-efficacy,

optimism, hope and resiliency) can have a positive impact on happiness and employee's satisfaction and consequently increases quality of life.

### Conclusion

In general, the results of this study showed that enhancement of emotional intelligence, participation in decision making and psychological capital will lead to increase in employee's quality of life. Thus, it is suggested that organization leaders increase the participation of employees in making organizational decisions that are somehow related to them in order to have a healthy and productive workforce. In addition, training programs can be conducted regarding the enhancement of emotional intelligence and psychological capital to improve physical and mental health and ultimately increasing the quality of human life so that they can move towards organization's favor because the success of any organization depends on the healthy and efficient workforce.

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