

# THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL IN EXPLAINING STUDENT SATISFACTION: INTEGRATING LEARNING GOAL ORIENTATION, POSITIVE EMOTIONS, AND MENTAL HEALTH

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## ABSTRACT

*Student satisfaction is a critical indicator of higher education quality, particularly amid rising psychological demands on university students. This study examines the structural relationships among mental health, psychological capital, positive emotions, learning goal orientation, and student satisfaction. A quantitative design was employed, with data collected from 165 university students using a structured questionnaire. All constructs were measured using validated indicators and analyzed through Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to test the proposed model and hypotheses. The results indicate that learning goal orientation and positive emotions have significant positive effects on psychological capital. Psychological capital, in turn, exerts a strong positive influence on both mental health and student satisfaction. Mediation analysis further reveals that psychological capital significantly mediates the relationship between learning goal orientation and student satisfaction. These findings position psychological capital as a central mechanism linking motivational, emotional, and mental health factors to student satisfaction. The study contributes to the higher education and positive psychology literature by offering an integrative, empirically supported model. Practically, the results suggest that universities should foster learning-oriented environments, cultivate positive emotional experiences, and strengthen mental health support systems to enhance students' psychological capital and ultimately improve student satisfaction.*

**Keywords:** *student satisfaction; psychological capital; learning goal orientation; positive emotions; mental health.*

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, higher education institutions have increasingly recognized that student satisfaction is not solely determined by academic quality and institutional services, but also by students' psychological well-being. Student satisfaction has become a crucial indicator of educational quality, as it is closely associated with academic engagement, persistence, academic achievement, and future career readiness (Deng et al., 2025); (Wiers-Jenssen et al., 2020). Consequently, understanding the psychological factors that contribute to student satisfaction is essential for universities aiming to enhance both educational outcomes and student well-being.

One important psychological resource that has gained substantial attention in higher education research is psychological capital (PsyCap). PsyCap is defined as an individual's positive psychological state characterized by self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience (Luthans et al., 2015). Empirical studies indicate that students with higher levels of PsyCap are better equipped to cope with academic challenges, experience lower stress and burnout, and demonstrate greater academic engagement and satisfaction (Gupta & Shaheen, 2018); (Li et al., 2023). These findings suggest that

PsyCap plays a significant role in shaping students' perceptions of their academic experiences and their overall satisfaction with university life.

In addition to psychological resources, affective processes—particularly positive emotions—play a vital role in students' learning experiences. According to the broaden-and-build theory, positive emotions expand individuals' cognitive and behavioral repertoires and help build enduring personal resources (Fredrickson, 2013). In the academic context, students who frequently experience positive emotions such as enjoyment, enthusiasm, and interest tend to show higher levels of engagement and academic performance, which in turn enhance their satisfaction with learning (Rodríguez-Muñoz, 2021); (Ouweneel et al., 2018).

Learning goal orientation represents another important motivational factor affecting student satisfaction. This orientation emphasizes developing competence, mastering new skills, and improving personal abilities rather than solely demonstrating performance outcomes (Elliot et al., 2017). Students with strong learning goal orientation are more likely to view academic challenges as opportunities for growth, persist

through difficulties, and employ adaptive learning strategies. Empirical studies and meta-analyses have established positive associations between learning goal orientation, academic engagement, intrinsic motivation, and learning satisfaction (Beik et al., 2023); (Scherrer & Preckel, 2019).

Furthermore, mental health has emerged as a critical issue among university students worldwide. Recent evidence indicates an increasing prevalence of anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion among students, which negatively affects academic functioning and satisfaction (Auerbach et al., 2018); (Lipson & Eisenberg, 2023). Poor mental health can undermine motivation, concentration, and emotional regulation, leading to lower satisfaction with academic life. Conversely, good mental health enables students to fully utilize their psychological capital and experience positive emotions, thereby fostering higher levels of student satisfaction (Deng et al., 2025).

Despite the growing body of research on psychological capital, positive emotions, learning goal orientation, and mental health, several specific gaps remain. First, although learning goal orientation has been linked to academic engagement and satisfaction, little empirical research has examined whether its effect on student satisfaction operates indirectly through psychological capital. Second, prior studies have rarely tested an integrative structural model that simultaneously captures the pathways from learning goal orientation and positive emotions to psychological capital, and from psychological capital to mental health and student satisfaction. Third, the combined roles of psychological capital as both a psychological resource and a mediating mechanism linking motivational and emotional factors to student satisfaction remain underexplored.

Moreover, empirical evidence on these interrelationships is still limited in higher education contexts in developing countries, where students often face different academic pressures and resource constraints. Addressing these gaps, the present study investigates the structural relationships among learning goal orientation, positive emotions, psychological capital, mental health, and student satisfaction, with particular attention to the mediating role of psychological capital. By specifying these mechanisms, this study aims to provide a more precise and theoretically grounded contribution to the literature on student satisfaction and positive psychology in higher education.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Psychological capital**

Psychological Capital (PsyCap) in the student context refers to a positive psychological state that enables students to effectively manage academic demands, challenges, and developmental tasks during their higher education experience. Rooted in positive psychology and positive organizational behavior, PsyCap consists of four core dimensions: self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Self-efficacy reflects students' confidence in their ability to successfully complete academic tasks; hope represents goal-directed motivation and the perceived capability to generate alternative pathways toward academic success; optimism refers to positive expectations regarding academic outcomes; while resilience captures students' capacity to recover from academic setbacks, stress, or failure. Prior Scopus-indexed studies emphasize that Psychological Capital is a malleable and developable psychological resource, making it highly relevant in higher education settings characterized by pressure, competition, and continuous evaluation (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017); (Datu et al., 2016).

Empirical evidence from both international and national research demonstrates that students with high levels of Psychological Capital tend to exhibit greater academic engagement, satisfaction, well-being, and mental health, while showing lower levels of academic stress and burnout. PsyCap has been found to positively influence important student outcomes such as academic performance, learning motivation, persistence, and satisfaction with university life (Carmona-Halty et al., 2019); (Wibowo & Indrawati, 2021). Moreover, several studies position Psychological Capital as a mediating variable that explains how positive psychological orientations and learning environments translate into favorable academic and psychological outcomes. Given its state-like nature, Psychological Capital is increasingly viewed as a strategic psychological asset that can be strengthened through educational interventions, counseling programs, and supportive learning environments to promote sustainable student success in higher education.

### **Mental health**

Mental health among university students refers to a state of psychological well-being that enables individuals to function effectively in academic, social, and personal domains. From a positive psychology perspective, mental health is not merely defined by the absence of psychological disorders but also by the presence of positive psychological functioning, including emotional regulation, life satisfaction, resilience, and a sense of purpose. In higher education contexts, students

frequently encounter academic pressure, performance expectations, developmental transitions, and future-related uncertainty, all of which may challenge their mental health. Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that good mental health is a critical predictor of academic engagement, learning persistence, and overall well-being among university students (Keyes, 2002); (Auerbach et al., 2016).

Furthermore, empirical evidence from Indonesian higher education research indicates that students' mental health is closely associated with positive psychological resources such as psychological capital, positive emotions, and subjective well-being. Students with higher levels of mental health tend to exhibit stronger emotional resilience, more effective coping strategies, and a more optimistic orientation toward academic challenges. Conversely, poor mental health is frequently linked to academic stress, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and decreased academic performance. Therefore, in student-centered research, mental health is commonly positioned as a crucial outcome variable that reflects students' overall psychological functioning and serves as an important indicator of the quality of the higher education experience (Putri & Ramdhani, 2019); (Wibowo et al., 2022).

### **Learning Goal Orientation**

Learning Goal Orientation (LGO) refers to a student's tendency to pursue the development of competence, deep understanding, and mastery of academic tasks rather than merely demonstrating ability or outperforming others. In higher education research, LGO is conceptualized as a motivational construct that drives students to approach learning challenges proactively, engage in self-regulated learning behaviors, and persist when facing academic difficulties. Recent empirical studies among university students show that higher levels of learning goal orientation are associated with increased academic engagement and adaptive academic behaviors, indicating that students with strong LGO are more likely to immerse themselves in their learning processes and set mastery-focused goals (Tendean et al., 2023). Furthermore, research on Indonesian university students confirms that learning goal orientation significantly influences various aspects of academic behavior, such as motivation and engagement patterns in academic settings (Rahman & Putri, 2021).

In the context of contemporary higher education, Learning Goal Orientation has been found to relate not only to engagement but also to broader academic outcomes and self-regulatory processes. Studies emphasize that students with

strong LGO tend to regulate their learning strategies more effectively, exhibit resilience in the face of academic pressure, and demonstrate higher commitment to long-term learning objectives (Liu & Wang, 2022). This is supported by recent research conducted in educational contexts showing that LGO contributes to positive academic behaviors and adjustment to academic environments, reinforcing the idea that learning-oriented students adopt adaptive and mastery-centered approaches to their studies. Such findings suggest that LGO is a critical psychological variable for understanding how students navigate academic demands and develop success-oriented learning habits in higher education (Tendean et al., 2023).

### **Positive Emotions**

Positive emotions are pleasurable affective states—such as joy, enthusiasm, hope, and gratitude—that support students' momentary cognitive and behavioral repertoires and, over time, help build enduring psychological resources. In higher-education contexts, study-related positive emotions have been shown to mediate the link between supportive learning environments (e.g., teacher–student relationships) and academic outcomes, because they broaden attention and thinking and facilitate the accumulation of academic psychological capital (hope, efficacy, resilience, optimism). Empirical longitudinal and large-sample studies report that study-related positive emotions predict greater engagement and, indirectly, better academic performance through psychological resources. (Carmona-Halty et al., 2024).

From an intervention perspective, positive-education courses and well-being programs that explicitly cultivate positive emotions (via practices such as gratitude, mindfulness, optimism training, and intentional positive activities) produce measurable improvements in students' subjective well-being, self-compassion, and optimism—factors that in turn support persistence and academic success (Pastore et al., 2023). Cross-national empirical work and recent applied studies also find that students' positive attitudes, time-management skills, and institutional supports correlate with heightened happiness and reduced academic stress, suggesting that positive emotions both reflect and amplify favourable academic conditions (Thongsri et al., 2024); (Firdaus et al., 2022).

### **Satisfaction**

Student satisfaction refers to students' overall evaluative judgment of their educational experience, reflecting the extent to which academic and non-academic expectations are fulfilled by

higher education institutions. In recent higher education research, student satisfaction is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing teaching quality, academic support services, administrative efficiency, learning facilities, and the effectiveness of digital learning systems (Vigaray et al., 2024). Empirical evidence indicates that student satisfaction is not merely an outcome variable but also a strategic indicator of institutional effectiveness, student retention, learning engagement, and institutional sustainability (Aman et al., 2023). Consequently, student satisfaction has become a critical variable in evaluating higher education quality and performance, particularly in increasingly competitive and student - centered academic environments.

From a measurement perspective, student satisfaction is commonly assessed using structured Likert-scale instruments that capture students' perceptions of instructional quality, academic services, facilities, and perceived learning outcomes. Recent studies emphasize the importance of adapting measurement instruments to contextual and cultural settings, especially in post-pandemic learning environments where digital learning experiences significantly shape satisfaction levels (Vigaray et al., 2024).

## **HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT**

### **Learning Goal Orientation and Psychological Capital**

Learning goal orientation (LGO) refers to an individual's tendency to focus on developing competence, mastering new skills, and improving personal understanding through learning experiences. Students with a strong learning goal orientation are more likely to perceive academic challenges as opportunities for growth rather than as threats to their self-worth, which fosters adaptive motivational and cognitive responses in academic settings (Huang, 2021); (Janke et al., 2022). This mastery-focused orientation encourages sustained effort, effective self-regulated learning strategies, and positive interpretations of academic feedback, all of which contribute to the development of personal psychological resources.

From a theoretical and empirical perspective, learning goal orientation is closely aligned with the core components of psychological capital—hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism. Mastery-oriented students tend to set clear and meaningful academic goals (hope), develop stronger beliefs in their academic capabilities through repeated mastery experiences (self-efficacy), demonstrate greater persistence in

the face of academic setbacks (resilience), and maintain positive expectations regarding future academic outcomes (optimism) (Luthans et al., 2021); (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Recent studies in higher education contexts provide empirical support for this relationship, showing that learning goal orientation is positively associated with students' psychological resources and adaptive functioning (Datu et al., 2023); (Li, Yu, et al., 2023)). As students consistently engage in learning for personal development rather than performance validation, they accumulate positive learning experiences that strengthen their psychological capital over time. Therefore, learning goal orientation can be considered an important antecedent of psychological capital among university students. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that :

### **Hypothesis 1 : Learning Goal Orientation has Positively Associated with Psychological Capital**

From a theoretical perspective, PsyCap functions as an important internal resource that shapes students' cognitive and affective evaluations of their academic environment. Hopeful students set meaningful academic goals and perceive multiple pathways to achieve them, self-efficacious students feel capable of meeting academic requirements, resilient students recover more quickly from academic setbacks, and optimistic students maintain positive expectations about their academic journey. Empirical studies in higher education consistently show that students' psychological capital is positively associated with academic engagement, well-being, and positive learning experiences, which in turn enhance student satisfaction (Siu et al., 2021); (Datu & Valdez, 2024). Recent research also suggests that PsyCap directly predicts student satisfaction by fostering positive emotional experiences and reducing academic stress and frustration (Li, Wu, et al., 2023); (Nguyen et al., 2022). Therefore, psychological capital can be considered a critical antecedent of student satisfaction in higher education settings. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that :

### **Hypothesis 2 : Psychological Capital has Positively Associated with Student Satisfaction**

From a theoretical perspective, PsyCap functions as a critical internal psychological resource within the conservation of resources framework, helping individuals protect and build mental well-being in demanding environments. Hopeful students are more likely to pursue meaningful academic goals, self-efficacious students believe in their ability to handle academic

challenges, resilient students recover more quickly from setbacks, and optimistic students maintain positive expectations about future outcomes. Empirical evidence from recent higher education studies consistently supports this relationship, demonstrating that psychological capital is positively associated with students' mental health, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction, while being negatively related to anxiety, stress, and depressive symptoms (Siu et al., 2021); (Datu & Valdez, 2024); (Xiong et al., 2022). Therefore, psychological capital can be considered a vital antecedent of mental health among university students. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that :

**Hypothesis 3 : Psychological Capital has Positively Associated with Mental Health Positive Emotions and Psychological Capital**

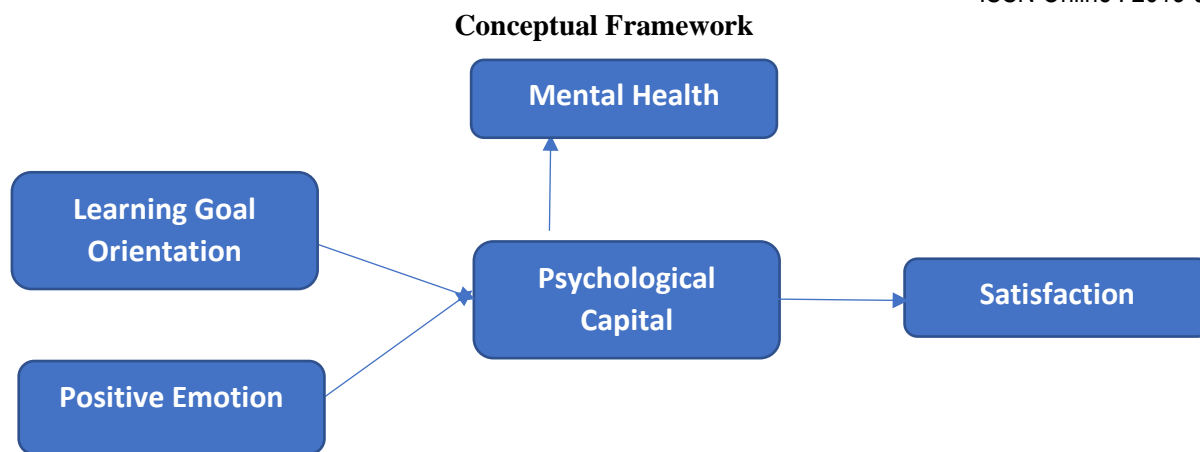
From a theoretical and empirical standpoint, positive emotions are closely associated with the core components of psychological capital—hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism. Positive emotional experiences encourage students to set meaningful goals and identify pathways to achieve them (hope), strengthen beliefs in their academic capabilities through successful engagement (self-efficacy), enhance their ability to recover from academic setbacks (resilience), and foster positive expectations about future academic outcomes (optimism) (Luthans et al., 2021); (King et al., 2020). Recent studies in higher education further demonstrate that positive emotions significantly predict students' psychological resources and well-being, indicating that sustained positive affect plays a crucial role in building psychological capital over time (Datu & Valdez, 2024). Therefore, positive emotions can be regarded as an important emotional antecedent of psychological capital among university students. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that :

**Hypothesis 4 : Positive Emotions has Positively Associated with Psychological Capital Learning Goal Orientation – Psychological Capital – Satisfaction**

Learning goal orientation (LGO) reflects students' intrinsic motivation to develop competence, master new knowledge, and improve personal abilities through learning activities. Students with a strong learning goal orientation tend to perceive academic challenges as opportunities for growth, which fosters persistent effort, adaptive learning strategies, and positive cognitive appraisals of academic experiences (Huang, 2021; Janke et al., 2022). However, recent literature suggests that the influence of learning goal orientation on student satisfaction may not be purely direct but operates through internal psychological resources that shape students' emotional and evaluative responses to their academic environment.

Psychological capital (PsyCap), comprising hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism, serves as a key personal psychological resource that translates motivational orientations into positive academic experiences. Learning goal-oriented students are more likely to accumulate mastery experiences, develop confidence in their academic abilities, persist in the face of setbacks, and maintain positive expectations regarding their academic journey, thereby strengthening their psychological capital (Luthans et al., 2021); (Datu, Yuen, et al., 2023). In turn, students with higher levels of PsyCap tend to evaluate their learning experiences, academic challenges, and institutional support more positively, resulting in higher student satisfaction (Siu et al., 2021); (Nguyen et al., 2022). Drawing on positive organizational behavior and conservation of resources theory, PsyCap functions as a psychological mechanism through which learning goal orientation enhances students' satisfaction by fostering positive emotional experiences and reducing academic stress. Therefore, psychological capital is expected to mediate the relationship between learning goal orientation and student satisfaction. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that :

**Hypothesis 5 : Psychological Capital Mediate the Relationship Between Learning Goal Orientation and Satisfaction**



## METHODS

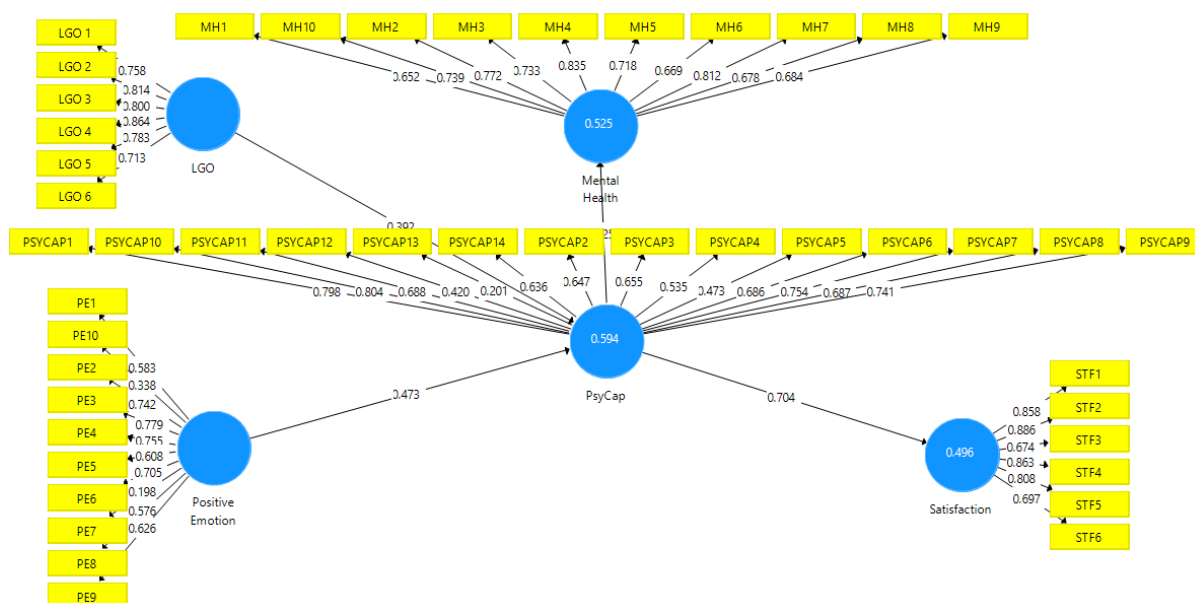
This study aims to investigate the influence of learning goal orientation, positive emotion on PsyCap and Satisfaction. The data was collected from 165 students of Universitas Bung Hatta. The research sample consisted of students who met two criteria students who are at least in their 5th semester and never applied for a leave of absence from university before. Respondents were asked to fill out a questionnaire via the Google Form platform to collect data. The research instrument consists of several variables: learning goal orientation, positive emotion, psychological capital, mental health and satisfaction. Each variable was measured using an instrument adopted from previous research, with a specific number of statement items for each variable.

Data analysis was carried out using the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) technique to

measure the construct validity of the variables used in the research. Next, the data analysis technique uses Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the help of the SmartPLS application. This process aims to identify relationships between variables and understand the impact of learning goal orientation, positive emotion, mental health on PSYCAP and satisfaction. With this approach, it is hoped that this research can make a significant contribution to understanding the factors that influence PSYCAP and satisfaction in the context of student higher education.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The measurement model for the validity and reliability tests includes the determination coefficient and the path coefficient, which are displayed in Figure 1 below



**Figure 1 : Output display of the measurement model:**  
Source: Data Processing Results SmartPLS 32.0 M3 (2025)

The survey method is a systematic and organized technique for gathering primary data

(Cooper & Schindler, 2011). The research population comprises all students registered in the

Faculty of Bung Hatta University. This study utilizes purposive sampling, a type of non-probability sampling. Participant selection is predicated on factors that correspond with the research aims (Cooper & Schindler, 2011). The study conditions encompass students in their fifth semester or higher who have finished their studies at Universitas Bung Hatta. The objective is to investigate the psychological effects that these students encounter after several semesters at the university. The study sample comprised 166 individuals, and the questionnaire collecting occurred in May 2025.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is a technique employed to evaluate the validity of a

measurement tool. The criteria for assessing the loading factor, as articulated by (Hair, 2015) are as follows: a loading of 0.30 is deemed the minimum threshold, a loading of 0.40 is viewed as superior, and a loading of 0.50 or above is regarded as practically important. According to (Hair, 2015), Cronbach's alpha coefficient value of  $\leq 0.60$  signifies inadequate dependability; yet, it may still be employed for following purposes. The analytical technique utilized is Moderating Regression Analysis (MRA) in conjunction with Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) employing Partial Least Squares (PLS).

**Table 1. Results of Convergent Validity Analysis**

KONSTRUK	ITEM	OUTER LOADING	CA	CR	AVE
Life Orientation	LGO 1	0.755	0.879	0.908	0.624
	LGO 2	0.818			
	LGO 3	0.799			
	LGO 4	0.865			
	LGO 5	0.781			
Positive Emotion	LGO 6	0.713	0.797	0.868	0.622
	PE 2	0.804			
	PE 3	0.816			
	PE 4	0.800			
	PE 6	0.734			
Psychological Capital	PSYCAP 1	0.828	0.832	0.888	0.664
	PSYCAP 7	0.782			
	PSYCAP 9	0.801			
	PSYCAP 10	0.847			
	MH 2	0.783			
Mental Health	MH 3	0.776	0.878	0.907	0.621
	MH 4	0.871			
	MH 5	0.774			
	MH 7	0.794			
	MH 10	0.724			
Satisfaction	STF 1	0.882	0.891	0.925	0.754
	STF 2	0.895			
	STF 4	0.868			
	STF 5	0.827			

*Results of Data Processing Smart PLS 32.0 M3 (2025)*

Discriminant validity is utilized to determine the uniqueness of a concept relative to other constructs. The Fornell-Larcker criterion and

cross-loading techniques are utilized in the assessment of discriminant validity.

**Table 2. Discriminant Validity**

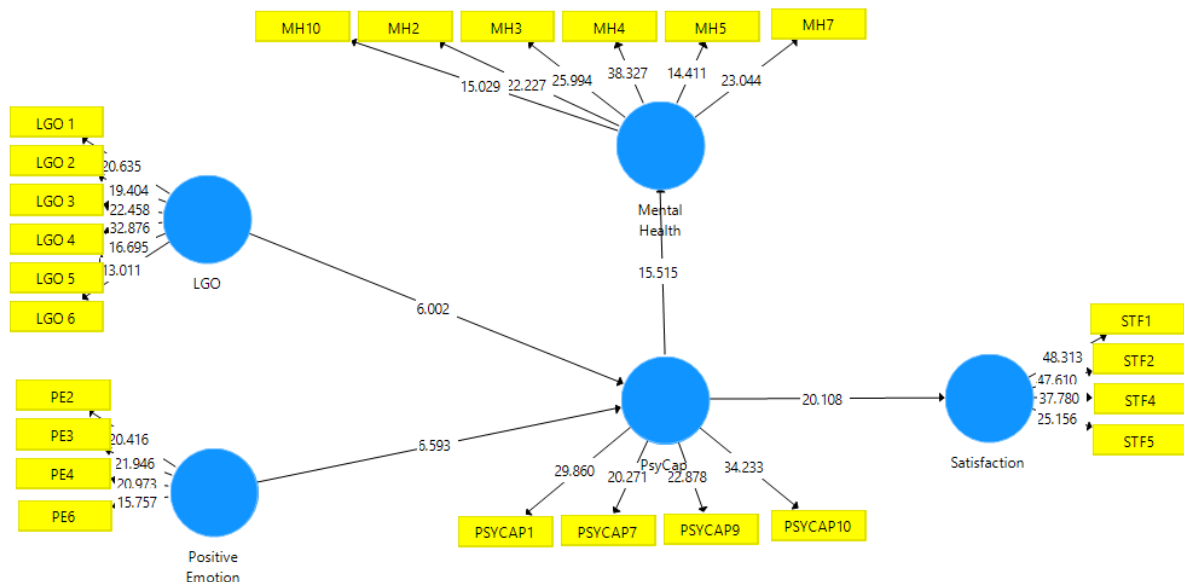
	Life Goal Orientation	Mental Health	Positive Emotion	Psychological Capital	Satisfaction
Life Goal Orientation	<b>0.790</b>				
Mental Health	0.652	<b>0.788</b>			
Positive Emotion	0.534	0.723	<b>0.789</b>		
Psychological Capital	0.647	0.699	0.661	<b>0.815</b>	
Satisfaction	0.705	0.685	0.609	0.715	<b>0.868</b>

*Results of Data Processing Smart PLS 32.0 M3 (2025)*

The correlations among the latent variables are higher than those among the other latent variables, as seen by the data processing results. The variable for life goal orientation is 0.790, mental health 0.788, positive emotion 0.789, psychological capital 0.815 but satisfaction is 0.868. All variables have met the Fornell Larcker Criteria's benchmark as mandated.

### Structural Model Testing (Inner Model) Structural Model Assessment

The Structural Model Assessment is required to see the relationship of the latent variable with other late variables, the results of the structural analysis of the model assessment can be seen in the following figure :



**Figure 2. Structural Model Assessment Smart PLS Data Process Results (2025)**

### Hypothesis Testing

The significance level in hypothesis testing is represented by the path coefficient or inner model value. The T-statistic value, representing the path coefficient or inner model score, must exceed 1.96

for a two-tailed hypothesis at  $\alpha = 0.05$  and also exceed 1.645 for a two-tailed hypothesis at  $\alpha = 0.10$ . The significant values for all hypotheses examined in this study are displayed in Table 3.



**Table 3. Hypothesis Test Results**

Hypothesis	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Value	Conclusion
LGO -> PSYCAP	0,412	6,002	0,000	Accepted
PSYCAP -> Satisfaction	0,715	20,108	0,000	Accepted
PSYCAP -> Mental Health	0,669	15,515	0,000	Accepted
Positive Emotion -> PSYCAP	0,412	6,593	0,000	Accepted
LGO -> PSYCAP -> Satisfaction	0,322	5,110	0,000	Accepted

*Results of Data Processing Smart PLS 32.0 M3 (2025)*

The significance of the inter-variable pathway in the structural model is evident from the t statistics among variables, as illustrated in Table 3. Each unique variable analyzed in this research structural model significantly influences its respective dependent variable. The T-statistics values, all exceeding 1.96, substantiate this for two-tailed tests at a significance threshold of  $\alpha=0.05$ . The inter-variable relations tests reveal a correlation of 0.412 between learning goal orientation and psychological capital. The correlation is statistically significant at  $\alpha=0.05$ , with a test statistic of 6.002, exceeding the crucial value of 1.96. The p-value of 0.000 is below the significance threshold of 0.05. Consequently, we can ascertain that the initial supposition is corroborated. This is consistent with prior studies (Luthans et al., 2013); (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020); (Datu & Valdez, 2024). This finding suggests that students who emphasize mastery, skill development, and continuous learning tend to possess higher levels of psychological resources, such as hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy. This result supports motivational theory especially achievement goal theory, which posits that mastery-oriented individuals are more likely to develop adaptive psychological capacities that help them cope with academic challenges.

The second hypothesis examined the impact of the variable PsyCap on Satisfaction, yielding a positive result (0.715) that is statistically significant at  $\alpha=0.05$ , with a statistic value of 20.108, above 1.96, and a p-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, it can be stated that the second hypothesis is corroborated. This is consistent with prior studies (Datu & Valdez, 2024; Huang, 2021; Siu et al., 2021). This finding aligns with the broaden-and-build theory, which argues that positive emotional experiences broaden individuals' thought-action repertoires and build enduring personal resources. In the academic context, students who frequently experience positive emotions are more capable of strengthening their psychological capital, enabling

them to persist and thrive in demanding learning environments.

The third hypothesis on the influence of psychological capital on mental health yielded a positive result (0.669) and was significant at  $\alpha=0.05$ , with a statistical value of 15.515, exceeding the critical value of 1.96. The p-value of 0.00 is below the significance threshold of 0.05. Consequently, we can ascertain that the third hypothesis is corroborated. This aligns with prior study conducted by (Siu et al., 2021; Xiong et al., 2022). This result indicates that PsyCap plays a crucial role in shaping students' evaluative judgments regarding their academic experiences. Students with high PsyCap are more likely to perceive learning processes positively, feel confident in overcoming difficulties, and ultimately experience higher satisfaction with their academic journey.

The fourth hypothesis positive emotions has positively associated with psychological capital health yielded a positive result (0.412) and was significant at  $\alpha=0.05$ , with a statistical value of 6.593, exceeding the critical value of 1.96. The p-value of 0.00 is below the significance threshold of 0.05. Consequently, we can ascertain that the fourth hypothesis is corroborated. This aligns with prior study conducted by (Datu & Valdez, 2024; King et al., 2020; Liu & Wang, 2022; Luthans et al., 2013). This finding underscores the protective function of PsyCap in maintaining students' psychological well-being. High levels of hope, resilience, and optimism enable students to manage academic stress effectively, reduce psychological distress, and maintain better mental health.

The fifth hypothesis posits that psychological capital mediates the relation ship between learning goal orientation and satisfaction, yielding a positive outcome of 0.322. This result is statistically significant at  $\alpha=0.05$ , with a statistical value of 5.110, which exceeds 1.96, and a p-value of 0.00, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the fifth hypothesis is supported. This aligns with prior study conducted by (Datu &

Valdez, 2024; King et al., 2020; Liu & Wang, 2022; Luthans et al., 2013). This result indicates that LGO enhances student satisfaction primarily through the development of psychological capital. In other words, goal-oriented learning attitudes alone are insufficient to increase satisfaction unless they are accompanied by strong psychological resources. This mediation highlights PsyCap as a key psychological mechanism that translates motivational orientations into positive academic outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

This study makes several important theoretical contributions to the literature on higher education, motivation, and positive psychology. First, it extends goal orientation theory by demonstrating that Learning Goal Orientation influences student outcomes indirectly through the development of Psychological Capital. While prior studies have predominantly linked learning goal orientation to academic performance or engagement, this study advances theoretical understanding by positioning Psychological Capital as a core psychological mechanism that translates motivational orientations into both cognitive–evaluative outcomes (student satisfaction) and well-being outcomes (mental health).

Second, this study contributes to the positive psychology literature by empirically validating Psychological Capital as a multidimensional personal resource within the higher education context. Unlike existing studies that examine PsyCap primarily in organizational or employee settings, this research confirms its applicability and explanatory power among university students, thereby broadening the domain of psychological capital theory beyond the workplace.

Third, by integrating Positive Emotions and Learning Goal Orientation within a single structural model, this study offers a more comprehensive explanation of how affective and motivational factors jointly shape students' psychological resources. This integrated perspective moves beyond fragmented approaches that treat motivation and emotion as isolated predictors, providing a theoretically coherent framework that captures their dynamic interplay in shaping student satisfaction and mental health.

Finally, the study contributes to student satisfaction and mental health research by reconceptualizing these outcomes as psychologically embedded constructs rather than purely institutional or contextual evaluations. By empirically demonstrating the central role of Psychological Capital, this research offers a

theoretically grounded explanation for individual differences in satisfaction and mental health among students exposed to similar academic environments.

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