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Unveiling Psychological Capital, Learner Empowerment, and Academic Achievement among Secondary School Students

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to 1) To determine the degree of empowerment of the learners in the secondary school. 2) To explain the degree of psychological capital (self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience) among high school students. 3) To investigate the degree of academic performance of secondary school students as per their self-reported perceptions. A quantitative, cross-sectional descriptive survey design was employed. The sample comprised 440 Grade 9 and Grade 10 students from public and private secondary schools in District Chakwal, Punjab, Pakistan. Psychological capital, learner empowerment, and self-reported academic performance were measured using structured questionnaires. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The study provides a baseline snapshot of psychological capital and learner empowerment in the Pakistani secondary school context. However, its descriptive design limits theoretical interpretation and prevents causal inferences.

Keywords: *Learner Empowerment; Psychological Capital; Academic Achievement*

INTRODUCTION

The secondary school environment is characterized by the development of academic requirements, emotional growth, and the growing necessity to gain independence which is the key period of life in the lives of the kids (Ryan and Deci, 2020). The personal psychological resources and motivation also impact significantly on the academic engagement and well-being of students (Wang and Eccles, 2021). Learning empowerment and psychological capital (PsyCap) play an important role in influencing such aspects among them as motivation, engagement, and academic achievement (Luthans et al., 2020). Empowerment in learning fosters self-direction and persistence in the face of hardships since it reflects the feeling of autonomy, competence, and control over education in the minds of the students (Ryan and Deci, 2020; Wang and Eccles, 2021).

Nevertheless, empowerment alone is not the answer to success, inner psychological resources are needed (Datu and King, 2020). Psychological capital consists of hope, self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience (PsyCap), which facilitate the experience of motivation, stress reduction, and goal achievement (Luthans et al., 2020). Although optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy help in setting goals, overcoming failures, and

academic ability, students with a higher PsyCap have a more advantage in dealing with academic stress and persistence (Datu & King, 2020).Secondary school academic success is influenced by both internal psychological processes and external elements, including parental support and the caliber of instruction (Fan & Williams, 2018). Students who combine high PsyCap with learning empowerment show improved performance, study abilities, and engagement. Thus, the conversion of drive into quantifiable academic performance is mediated by emotional well-being.

Applicability to nations like Pakistan, where competitive exams, unequal resource distribution, and intense academic pressure are common, is limited because the majority of research on these dimensions originates from Western or resource-rich contexts (Fan & Williams, 2018; Datu & King, 2020). In order to inform culturally responsive interventions to improve student performance and well-being, this study investigates learning empowerment, PsyCap, and academic accomplishment among secondary school students in District Chakwal, Pakistan.

Problem Statement

The study aimed at investigating the perceptions of Grade 9 and Grade 10 students in public and private secondary schools of District Chakwal, Punjab. Pakistan regarding learning Empowerment, Academic achievement, and Psychological Capital by secondary school students.

Objective of the Study

The Present study was based on the following objectives:

1. To explain the degree of psychological capital among high school students.

2. To determine the degree of empowerment of the learners in secondary school.

To investigate the degree of academic performance of secondary school students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

PsyCap is a positive psychological construct, which encompasses optimism, resilience, self-efficacy and hope. It can be altered through planned educational interventions (Luthans et al., 2019). PsyCap facilitates the engagement of students, their adaptive working, and the development of their personality within educational environments (Kang, Zhang and Wu, 2025). The higher the PsyCap, the higher the engagement and positive accomplishment feelings, and reduced anxiety, which encourages academic perseverance (Springer Link, 2021). PsyCap can enhance the performance of students in high-stakes learning environments by serving as a buffer to academic stress and motivating students to achieve their goals and recover their motivation after failures (PubMed, 2022).

Learning empowerment is a term that is used to explain how students perceive themselves as competent, self-sufficient, and in control of their learning; this promotes self-motivation and engagement (Zhao, 2021). It allows exercising a proactive role in the academic performance of students through transformational learning, identity formation, and agency (Ali and Rehman, 2023). Empirical studies indicate that empowered learners enhance academic performance because they are goal oriented, persevering, and employ effective learning strategies (Chaudhry and Ali, 2022).

Academic achievement, which is defined by grades, exams, or performance-based assessments, is a knowledge, skills, and competencies of students (Khan et al., 2020). PsyCap makes people succeed by promoting participation, positive feelings and adaptive coping (Frontiers, 2025). The connection between psychological resources and academic achievements remains the same, as the performance and anxiety of empowered learners with high PsyCap are better (BMC Psychology, 2025).

The secondary students in underdeveloped nations have lower comprehension and participation because of the disparities in resources, rigorous curriculum, and limitations on instruction (Shahid & Jamil, 2023). High-stakes exams highly increase stress, burnout, and maladaptive behaviors and influence success and focus due to peer pressure and family instability (Tariq and Saeed, 2024). Learner-centered education and inclusive policies are essential to reducing these challenges. According to research, learning empowerment and PsyCap work in concert to improve students' autonomy and engagement while PsyCap boosts their motivation and coping skills (Luthans et al., 2020; Wang & Eccles, 2021). Together, these two concepts enhance both academic achievement and emotional health.

For academic achievement and engagement, PsyCap and learner empowerment are essential. Nonetheless, the majority of studies have been carried out in Western or higher education settings. To comprehend these dimensions' impact on student success and psychological well-being, secondary schools in resource-constrained environments like Pakistan must investigate them (Datu & King, 2020; Ali & Rehman, 2023).

METHODS AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of the study was to carry a research study using the perceptions of secondary school students regarding the learning Empowerment, Academic achievement and Psychological Capital. Here research design, population and sampling design, instrumentation, validity and reliability, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures are discussed.

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional descriptive survey design. Such a design is appropriate for providing a clear and systematic description of the characteristics, behaviors, and perceptions of a population at a specific point in time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It was considered the most suitable approach for describing the levels of learning empowerment, academic achievement, and psychological capital among Grade 9 and Grade 10 students enrolled in public and private secondary schools.

Population and Sampling

The current research was targeting male and female students in both the public and the private secondary schools within District Chakwal, Punjab, Pakistan. The target population that was available was in Grade 9 and Grade 10 students in the following schools. The multistage sampling method was used to select students in Grade 9 and Grade 10 in order to get a representative sample. Stratified sampling in the first stage was used to divide the schools into types (public and private), gender (boys and girls), and grade level (Grade 9 and Grade 10) so as to be representative of the different academic and other demographic backgrounds. During the second stage, the schools were selected based on convenience sampling since they were the schools that could be accessed based on administrative limits. In the chosen schools, the sampling of students was done randomly to reduce selection bias. The last sample consisted of 440 students (220 of Grade 9 and 220 of Grade 10) and an equal representation of males and females, and school type, which was enough to conduct statistical analysis and generalization in the context of the

district.

Instrumentation

The research instrument that was used in this research is a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed with references to the previously tested research materials and thorough research of available literature. Three scales were included in the questionnaire i.e., the Psychological Capital (PsyCap), Learner Empowerment (LE), and Academic Achievement (AA). Regarding the quantity of items that should be captured in the instrument, each construct was allocated 12 items. The ratings were based on a 5-point Likert scale, Strongly Disagree (1) and Strongly Agree (5). The demographic section included the background information required, including name, age, gender, type of school, and class level. Each questionnaire will be detailed as follows:

Validity and Reliability

The entire process of professional validation was applied to make sure that research instruments have duly captured the three important constructs of learning Empowerment (LE), Academic Achievement (AA), and Psychological Capital (PsyCap), among the selected sample of Grade 9 and 10 students in public and private secondary schools of District Chakwal, Punjab. Pakistan. Seven academic experts with educational backgrounds in assessment, instructional design, and educational psychology reviewed the questionnaire. Their contribution with regard to criticizing the language and content of the items, as well as clarity, was required in enhancing the same since there was a need to make sure that all the constructs were well and sufficiently represented.

The scales were first tested by the professionals in educational research and measurement and by the specialists of the University of Sargodha, Institute of Education. They were evaluated on the basis of their content validity, wording, cultural and adherence to study objectives. Based on their feedback, some of them were modified to be more readable and conceptually accurate, which enhances the general validity of the instrument. The sample population in the pilot study was selected through the convenience sampling technique after the review was done by experts among 50 Grade 9 and 10 students in public and private secondary schools. However, they failed to provide such people with the final data collection.

After reviewing, the pilot test was done to ensure the reliability and internal consistency of the questionnaire. The reliability of the instrument was high according to the results of the pilot study. The Cronbach alpha value of the overall instrument was found to be 0.813. Likewise, the three scales also performed well, including the Learning Empowerment (0.812), the Psychological Capital (0.861), and the Academic Achievement (0.794**),** whose coefficient values were found respectively. These coefficients demonstrated that the tool was stable and sound in the major research where the sample of students is larger and will be more valid since the coefficients will surpass the standard cutoff of 0.70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994).

DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS

After finalizing the research instrument, data were collected through face-to-face administration. Research associates assisted the researchers in distributing and collecting the questionnaires to ensure full participation and accuracy. Subsequently, data screening was conducted by removing 40 responses that were either incomplete or invalid, and, lastly, 400 responses were treated for the statistical analysis. Quantitative analysis of the data was performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 26). The constructs of interest were learning Empowerment (LE), Academic achievement (AA), and Psychological Capital

(PsyCap), where the perceptions of the Grade 9 and 10 students were investigated in a thorough way with the help of descriptive statistics, including frequency, mean, standard deviations, percentage, and rankings. Further, the demographic characteristics of the participants were also included.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The findings and the results of the study were the following:

Demographics

Four hundred students in Grades 9 and 10 from public and private secondary schools in District Chakwal, Punjab, Pakistan, made up the research data. With 201 males (50.3%) and 199 females (49.8%), the gender distribution was almost equal, reducing gender bias and improving the findings' dependability and generalizability. In terms of school type, the sample comprised students from both public (47.5%) and private (52.5%) schools, offering a balanced representation that enhances the validity of conclusions pertaining to Academic Achievement (AA), Learning Empowerment (LE), and Psychological Capital (PsyCap) and permits meaningful comparison across various educational settings. Both ninth-grade (53.8%) and tenth-grade (46.3%) students were included in terms of class level. This nearly equal distribution enhances the validity of findings pertaining to academic and psychological variables at various secondary education stages and supports comparative analysis across academic levels. Overall, the balanced distribution across gender, school type, and class level confirms that the sample is representative of the secondary school population in District Chakwal. This diverse sample allowed for a comprehensive investigation of Learning Empowerment, Academic Achievement, and Psychological Capital among learners, capturing sufficient representation across gender, academic program, and grade level.

Frequency Analysis of Psychological Capital (PC)

The following is the frequency analysis of students' responses regarding psychological capital:

Table 1. Frequency Analysis of Students' Responses about Psychological Capital

Statement	DST	Disagreement Zone		N	Agreement Zone		Result
		SDA	DA		A	SA	
I can find different ways to achieve my academic goals.	*f*	208	139	37	11	5	Disagree
	%	52%	34.8%	9.3%	2.8%	1.3%	
I keep trying even when the learning gets tough	*f*	160	187	41	5	7	Disagree
	%	40.0%	46.8%	10.3%	1.3%	1.8%	
I can solve problems that get in the way of my studies.	*f*	177	162	45	15	1	Disagree
	%	44.3%	40.5%	11.3%	3.8%	.3%	

I can think of many paths to academic success.	*f*	165	160	46	20	8	Disagree
	%	41.3%	40.0%	11.5%	5.0%	2%	
I am confident I can master difficult topics in my studies.	*f*	179	147	63	6	5	Disagree
	%	44.8%	36.8%	15.8%	1.5%	1.3%	
I can learn new material quickly.	*f*	164	133	81	20	2	Disagree
	%	41.0%	33.3%	20.3%	5.0%	.5%	
I can handle unexpected challenges in schoolwork.	*f*	164	173	51	12	0	Disagree
	%	41.0%	43.3%	12.8%	3.0%	0	
I can contribute useful ideas during group academic tasks.	*f*	165	160	37	11	5	Disagree
	%	41.3%	40.0%	9.3%	2.8%	1.3%	
I recover quickly after getting a poor grade.	*f*	177	187	40	6	7	Disagree
	%	44.3%	46.8%	10.2%	1.5%	1.8%	
I remain focused even when things don't go as planned.	*f*	165	160	45	15	2	Disagree
	%	41.3%	40.0%	10.3%	1.3%	5%	
I handle school stress without giving up.	*f*	208	139	37	11	5	Disagree
	%	52%	34.8%	9.3%	2.8%	1.3%	
I see setbacks as opportunities to improve.	*f*	164	133	41	5	7	Disagree
	%	41.0%	33.3%	10.3%	1.3%	1.8%	

Table 1 shows that the frequency analysis response of students on Psychological Capital indicates that in general, students in secondary school depict low levels of psychological capital. In all the 12 statements, most of the students were found to be in the disagreement areas (Strongly Disagree and Disagree) which shows that they are not confident in their skill to cope with academic challenges, set and achieve goals and be resilient in the learning process. As an example, over half of students did not agree with the statements like I can find various methods to reach my academic goals, I manage my school stress without losing it, which showed the problems with goal setting and coping with stress. On the same note, a significant percentage of students (40-46.8 percent) also disagreed with such statements as I continue to try when the learning gets hard and I get low grades and recover fast indicating that they have difficulty in persisting and academic resilience. The number of students who chose the neutral or agreement options were low, and the most frequent agreement zone (Agree and Strongly Agree) rarely was more than 5 percent of the total

number of items. These results indicate that students tend to believe they are less capable of mastering complex subjects, handling unforeseen obstacles, contributing to group projects, and considering multiple solutions to achieve academic goals. In general, the statistics indicate that psychological capital among the students at sampled schools is not fully developed, which implies the necessity of intervention aimed at improving self-efficacy, resilience, and adaptive learning strategies.

Frequency Analysis of Learner Empowerment (LE)

The following is the frequency analysis of students' responses regarding learner empowerment:

Table 2. Frequency Analysis of Students' Responses about Learner Empowerment

Statement	DST	Disagreement Zone		N	Agreement Zone		Result
		SDA	DA		A	SA	
I feel confident in making decisions about my learning.	*f*	178	129	61	24	8	Disagree
	%	44.5%	32.0%	15.3%	6.0%	2.0%	
I believe my opinions are valued in classroom activities.	*f*	132	169	75	18	6	Disagree
	%	33.0%	42.3%	18.8%	4.5%	1.5%	
I am motivated to learn because I see the purpose behind my studies.	*f*	125	149	72	47	7	Disagree
	%	31.3%	37.3%	18.0%	11.8%	1.8%	
I am responsible for my own academic success.	*f*	131	148	92	27	2	Disagree
	%	32.8%	37.0%	23.0%	6.8%	.5%	
I can accurately assess my own strengths and weaknesses in a subject.	*f*	125	162	91	16	6	Disagree
	%	31.3%	40.5%	22.8%	4.0%	1.5%	
I take an active role in deciding how to tackle my assignments.	*f*	131	151	89	17	12	Disagree
	%	32.8%	37.8%	22.3%	4.3%	3.0%	
I choose learning strategies that work best for me.	*f*	140	151	79	23	7	Disagree
	%	35.0%	37.8%	19.8%	5.8%	1.8%	
I set my own learning goals and track my progress.	*f*	174	128	80	13	5	Disagree
	%	43.5%	32.0%	20.0%	3.3%	1.3%	

I decide how to manage my study time effectively.	*f*	147	179	50	21	3	Disagree
	%	36.8%	44.8%	12.5%	5.3%	.8%	
I feel in control of my learning process	*f*	111	185	81	11	12	Disagree
	%	27.8%	46.3%	20.3%	2.8%	3.0%	
I regularly reflect on what and how I am learning.	*f*	115	180	81	20	4	Disagree
	%	28.8%	45.0%	20.3%	5.0%	1.0%	
I make choices about learning activities that suit my preferences.	*f*	168	140	72	12	8	Disagree
	%	42.0%	35.0%	18.0%	3.0%	2.0%	

Table 2 shows that the reaction of the students to the learner empowerment items indicates a relative absence of autonomy, control, and motivation in their academic experiences. In response to the question about their confidence in their decision-making as it relates to their learning, the number of those who strongly disagreed (44.5%) and those who disagreed (32.0%) showed that not many of them are confident in their skills to make decisions. Likewise, an aggregate 75.3% of the non-agrees and strongly so indicated that their views are preferred in classroom activities, indicating apparent failure to be acknowledged and have a level of participation in the classroom. The product I am motivated to learn because I see the purpose behind my studies also saw a significant negative reaction with 68.6% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, indicating a worrying trend in intrinsic motivation. They also do not hold a sense of personal agency in academic achievements, as more than 69.8 percent of the participants refused or strongly refused to say that it is their responsibility to achieve academically, which is also indicative of an external locus of control. Reaction to remarks such as I actively participate in determining how to approach my studies, and I select learning strategies that are most effective with me indicated that the vast majority of students use either structured or teacher-based styles of learning and not self-directed learning programs. In addition, 75.5% of the students also stated that they do not establish their own learning objectives or monitor their performance, and 81.6% said that they do not manage their study time effectively. Such statistics indicate a lack of self-control and time management. It is worth noting that a considerable number of students claim that they do not feel as being in charge of the process of their learning (74.1%) and that they do not think about their learning on a regular basis (73.8%). These are important signs of poor thinking. Moreover, very few claimed to make decisions regarding learning activities that suit them, which is a low level of individualized learning activity. To conclude, the results indicate that students are characterized by low levels of learner empowerment, which is low levels of autonomy, low levels of self-regulatory behavior, poor levels of motivation, and self-direction in their academic practices.

Frequency Analysis of Academic Achievement (AA)

The following is the frequency analysis of students' responses regarding academic achievement:

Table 3. Frequency Analysis of Students' Responses about Academic Achievement (AA)

Statement	DST	Disagreement Zone		N	Agreement Zone		Result
		SDA	DA		A	SA	
I am proud of my academic performance.	*f*	157	160	61	20	2	Disagree
	%	39.3%	40.0%	15.3%	5.0%	.5%	
I feel confident in my ability to succeed academically.	*f*	143	172	60	16	9	Disagree
	%	35.8%	43.0%	15.0%	4.0%	2.3%	
I enjoy learning and trying to improve my academic skills.	*f*	140	177	62	18	3	Disagree
	%	35.0%	44.3%	15.5%	4.5%	.8%	
I believe hard work leads to academic success.	*f*	162	155	57	19	7	Disagree
	%	40.5%	38.8%	14.3%	4.8%	1.8%	
I pay attention during lessons and stay focused.	*f*	164	161	60	8	7	Disagree
	%	41.0%	40.3%	15.0%	2.0%	1.8%	
I complete my homework on time.	*f*	132	169	82	15	2	Disagree
	%	33.0%	42.3%	20.5%	3.8%	.5%	
I ask questions when I don't understand something.	*f*	131	198	48	11	12	Disagree
	%	32.8%	49.5%	12.0%	2.8%	3.0%	
I participate actively in class activities.	*f*	176	155	49	17	3	Disagree
	%	44.0%	38.8%	12.3%	4.3%	.8%	
I consistently get good grades across subjects	*f*	132	195	59	10	4	Disagree
	%		48.8%	14.8%	2.5%	1.0%	
I meet or exceed my teachers' expectations.	*f*	146	184	62	7	1	Disagree
	%	36.5%	46.0%	15.5%	1.8%	.3%	
	f	112	174	80	26	8	Disagree

I understand most of what is taught in class.	%	28.0%	43.5%	20.0%	6.5%	2.0%	
My schoolwork reflects my best efforts.	*f*	128	166	80	19	7	Disagree
	%	32.0%	41.5%	20.0%	4.8%	1.8%	

Table 3 shows that the academic achievement data indicates that students appraise their academic performance and their involvement in a very negative manner. Students exhibited low academic self-worth as 79.3% of them said that they are not proud of their academic results. On the same note, 78.8 percent of students said that they lack confidence in their academic performance, which supports the previous results of low psychological capital. Learning pleasure was also poor, with 79.3 percent of them stating that they do not take pleasure in perfecting their academic abilities, which could be a contributor to the passivity of learning behaviors. The perception of the efficiency of hard work was also low since 79.3 percent of the students did not agree that academic success was a result of hard work. This may be a sign of learned helplessness or the perception that academics are determined by external events. About the classroom behavior, 81.3% said that they cannot concentrate in classroom and 75.3% of the students said that they failed to do their homework on time. There were also low levels in help seeking behavior with the percentage who do not question when they are confused being 82.3. Such unwillingness might be the result of lack of confidence or fear of being judged. Also, there is no active involvement in the classroom since 82.8 percent of them reported to be poorly involved in classroom activities. This tendency is also observable in academic performance factors, as 81.8% of them refuse to agree with the regular good grades in all areas and 82.5% of them claim they do not achieve or even exceed the expectations of their teacher. Few students (8.5%) felt that they knew most of what is taught in the classroom and a large majority (73.5) expressed that their schoolwork was not the best they could do. The overall result of these findings indicates that there is low level of academic achievement, low level of involvement and lack of motivation in secondary school students.

Descriptive Statistics of Psychological Capital (PC)

The following are the descriptive statistics of psychological capital:

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Psychological Capital (PC)

Statement	N	Mean	S. D.
I can find different ways to achieve my academic goals.	400	1.66	.851
I keep trying even when the learning gets tough	400	1.78	.814
I can solve problems that get in the way of my studies.	400	1.75	.817
I can think of many paths to academic success.	400	1.87	.966
I am confident I can master difficult topics in my studies.	400	1.78	.854
I can learn new material quickly.	400	1.91	.923

I can handle unexpected challenges in schoolwork.	400	1.87	.857
I can contribute useful ideas during group academic tasks.	400	1.81	.917
I recover quickly after getting a poor grade.	400	1.78	.781
I remain focused even when things don't go as planned.	400	1.95	.907
I handle school stress without giving up.	400	1.94	.962
I see setbacks as opportunities to improve.	400	1.91	.996

Table 4 shows that the descriptive statistics for the Psychological Capital construct consist of questions that assess self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience among the students. The range of the mean scores is 1.66 to 1.95, which means that the respondents agree with the statements connected with the psychological strengths and positive attitude towards academic activities on a strong level. The lowest average score (M = 1.66) was on the item, I can find alternative ways to meet my academic goals, implying that, where students are determined and focused, some might not have creative ways of approaching academic assignments, or alternative ways of tackling the same. Other items in the category of I keep trying even when the learning gets tough (M = 1.78), I recover quickly after getting a poor grade (M = 1.78), and I am confident I can master difficult topics in my studies (M = 1.78) had low mean values, meaning that the students persisted and were resilient enough to overcome the challenges they encountered in their academic life. The mean score (M = 1.95) was the greatest in the case of remaining focused even when things do not go as planned and then closely came the mean score of, I handle school stress without giving up (M = 1.94). These findings show that there is a great potential among students to resilience and cope with stress and stay motivated under the pressure which is major aspect of emotional regulation and resilience. The values of standard deviation were between 0.781 and 0.996 representing a medium level of variation in responses. This implies that the overall pattern is positive in terms of psychological capital, but there are still dissimilarities among the group of students.

Descriptive Statistics of Learner Empowerment (LE)

The following are the descriptive statistics of learner empowerment:

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Learner Empowerment (LE)

Statement	N	Mean	S. D.
I feel confident in making decisions about my learning.	400	1.89	1.004
I believe my opinions are valued in classroom activities.	400	1.99	.914
I am motivated to learn because I see the purpose behind my studies.	400	2.16	1.048
I am responsible for my own academic success.	400	2.05	.934
I can accurately assess my own strengths and weaknesses in a subject.	400	2.04	.914

I take an active role in deciding how to tackle my assignments.	400	2.07	.994
I choose learning strategies that work best for me.	400	2.01	.968
I set my own learning goals and track my progress.	400	1.87	.928
I decide how to manage my study time effectively.	400	1.89	.871
I feel in control of my learning process	400	2.07	.926
I regularly reflect on what and how I am learning.	400	2.04	.883
I make choices about learning activities that suit my preferences.	400	1.88	.942

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics for the Learner Empowerment (LE) construct, which measures students' perceived autonomy, control, and motivation in their learning processes. The mean scores range from 1.87 to 2.16, indicating that respondents generally disagreed or slightly disagreed with statements related to learner empowerment. This illustrates how their academic experiences are perceived to lack autonomy and self-direction. "I set my own learning goals and track my progress" had the lowest mean score (M = 1.87, SD = 0.928), indicating that students rely more on outside guidance than on self-control. "I am motivated to learn because I see the purpose behind my studies" (M = 2.16, SD = 1.048) had the highest mean, but it was still in the disagreement zone, suggesting a weak but slight sense of purpose. Low levels of perceived agency are also evident in other items, such as "I feel in control of my learning process" (M = 2.07) and "I take an active role in deciding how to tackle my assignments" (M = 2.07).The standard deviations range from 0.871 to 1.048, indicating moderate variability in responses across the sample. Overall, the results suggest that students in this context experience low learner empowerment, characterized by limited autonomy, weak goal-setting, and minimal active engagement in their learning processes.

Descriptive Statistics of Academic Achievement (AA)

The following are the descriptive statistics of academic achievement:

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Academic Achievement (AA)

Statement	N	Mean	S. D.
I am proud of my academic performance.	400	1.88	.881
I feel confident in my ability to succeed academically.	400	1.94	.932
I enjoy learning and trying to improve my academic skills.	400	1.92	.865
I believe hard work leads to academic success.	400	1.89	.940
I pay attention during lessons and stay focused.	400	1.83	.878
I complete my homework on time.	400	1.96	.855

I ask questions when I don't understand something.	400	1.94	.909
I participate actively in class activities.	400	1.79	.871
I consistently get good grades across subjects	400	1.90	.812
I meet or exceed my teachers' expectations.	400	1.83	.765
I understand most of what is taught in class.	400	2.11	.954
My schoolwork reflects my best efforts.	400	2.03	.932

Table 6 shows the descriptive analysis of the responses of students with reference to Academic Achievement, that is, their self-perception in relation to their performance, effort, engagement, and outcomes in school. The average scores are between 1.79 and 2.11, which represents the general positive attitude towards academic performance amongst the respondents. The standard deviations are between 0.765 and 0.954, which has quite a similar pattern of responses with a rather slight difference in understood and self-evaluated responses. The lowest mean score was obtained in the following item: I participate actively in the activities in the classroom (M = 1.79, SD = 0.871), then there was a slight difference between the following items: I pay attention during the lessons and stay focused (M = 1.83, SD = 0.878) and I meet or even surpass the expectations of my teachers (M = 1.83, SD = 0.765). These poor scores indicate that students tend to have high engagement and attention which are key aspects of academic performance. The best mean score was recorded on the statement that I comprehend most of what was taught in the classroom (M = 2.11, SD = 0.954), then the statement that my schoolwork shows my best work (M = 2.03, SD = 0.932). Although they are still in the bottom part of the Likert scale, these scores show that there is a certain variability in the understanding and self-evaluation of effort by students, which may indicate individual differences in their learning abilities or support resources. A healthy academic self-concept and intrinsic drive are also manifested in the moderate levels of agreement of items like; I am proud of my academic performance (M = 1.88), I always get good grades in all the subjects (M = 1.90), and I believe hard work results in academic success (M = 1.89). Particularly, the standard deviation of meeting or exceeding expectations of teachers is relatively low (SD = 0.765), which may indicate that students agree with each other, which is probably indicative of the common academic view.

DISCUSSIONS

The present study provides important new information about the connections between learning empowerment (LE), psychological capital (PsyCap), and academic performance (AA) among secondary school pupils in District Chakwal, Pakistan. Overall, the findings indicate low levels of PsyCap, AA, and LE, which indicate issues with self-control, motivation, and healthy psychological functioning. Descriptive analyses show that students generally lack optimism, hope, confidence, and resilience. Over 80% of students struggle to improve their grades, and over 70% are unable to find other ways to achieve their academic goals. These findings highlight deficiencies in self-efficacy and hope (Luthans et al., 2020; Datu & King, 2020). Despite these low ratings, considerable abilities in attention and stress management were noted, indicating some emotional regulation ability. In a similar vein, students demonstrated low learner empowerment and an external locus of control, which may impede the development of PsyCap (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Chaudhry & Ali, 2022; Ali & Rehman, 2023). They also showed limited autonomy, weak goal setting, poor decision-making confidence, and minimal engagement in learning strategies. Although students showed rudimentary abilities in comprehending material and finishing assignments, academic accomplishment was also poor across engagement, self-perception, and performance outcomes, indicating

a gap between potential and actual performance (Fan & Williams, 2018; BMC Psychology, 2025). Since low empowerment restricts psychological resources, which in turn inhibits academic achievement, the results together support the theoretical claim that (PsyCap) mediates the link between (LE) and (AA) .In order to improve motivation, resilience, and overall academic success, these findings highlight the significance of promoting learner empowerment and PsyCap in secondary schools, especially in settings marked by teacher-centered instruction, high-stakes exams, and limited learning resources (Luthans et al., 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2020).

CONCLUSIONS

This research paper has offered a descriptive analysis of learner empowerment, psychological capital and academic performance of secondary school students in District Chakwal. The results indicated that the students tended to record low scores in learner empowerment that were manifested in low autonomy, low goal setting, low confidence in choice, and low application of self-managed learning behaviors. It was also reported that the level of psychological capital was low in the main elements of the capital, such as self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience, and this implied that a number of students did not have psychological means to effectively go through the academic demands. Moreover, academic performance measured by self-reported data indicated that the students were low engagement with their academic performance, inconsistent academic performances, and low-confidence levels in their academic performance. In general, the paper demonstrates the current level of learner empowerment, psychological capital, and school success among students at secondary school and offers a clear descriptive explanation that can be used as a reference point in future studies and school planning in the same schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following were the recommendations of the study:

1. Schools may aim at promoting self-directed learning and autonomy by giving students the opportunity to make their own decisions regarding the learning process and to establish their own objectives.

2. The development of psychological capital by employing systematic resilience, self-efficacy, hope and optimism training programs may help students manage academic stress and remain motivated to achieve success.

3. Schools are to promote active participation of students in classroom activities, their self-reflection and effective time management.

4. Both learner empowerment and psychological resources may also be enhanced by practices on the part of the teachers that offer emotional support, guidance, and positive reinforcement.

5. Lastly, the role of parents and communities in awareness and counseling programs may help students have a holistic academic and mental growth.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The following are the suggestions for future research:

1. Further studies may be conducted on how learner empowerment and psychological capital change

over time and the relationship between the change and the academic performance of the students.

2. Research might be dedicated to intervention-based methods to empower and increase psychological resources of students in secondary schools.

3. Also, studies may be done on how contextual variables, including type of school, classroom, peer and teacher support, affect the growth of learner empowerment, psychological capital, and academic achievement.

4. Further research on how school resources and environments influence the constructs can be done through comparative studies among different educational settings (e.g. a public school versus a private school, rural versus urban setting, etc).

5. Future research may employ longitudinal or experimental designs to explore causal pathways and test interventions.

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