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**An Expanded Psychological Capital (A-HERO) Construct for Creativity:
Building a Competitive Advantage for Sport Organisations**

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(ABS 3*)

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1 **Abstract**

2 **Research question:** In an attempt to advance the development of creativity among sport
3 employees, this study was designed to empirically evaluate the relationships among individual
4 sport employee psychological resources. These resources included pride, harmonious passion,
5 sport employee identification, and an expanded psychological capital construct. Moreover, the
6 application of psychological capital offers a modern approach to producing novel problem-
7 solving abilities.

8 **Research methods:** Within the study, structural equation modeling was utilised to build a model
9 of sport employee creativity, whereby an expanded psychological capital archetype of sport
10 employees, labeled A-HERO (i.e., authenticity, hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism), was
11 employed as a central feature of the model. The sample consisted of full-time American sport
12 employees ($N = 301$).

13 **Results and findings:** The higher-order construct of A-HERO was empirically validated. Pride
14 and passion influenced sport employee identification. Also, tenure moderated the relationship
15 between pride and sport employee identification. Importantly, A-HERO was found to facilitate
16 sport employee creativity.

17 **Implications:** The findings provide empirical evidence that demonstrates how certain
18 psychological features of sport employees can increase their creativity, which is the initial stage
19 of organisational innovation. Consequently, sport organisations can achieve a sustainable
20 competitive advantage through their employees' A-HERO and creativity. The results of this
21 study provide an improved understanding of positive organisational behaviour and creativity in
22 the sport workplace.

23 *Keywords:* organisational behaviour, human resource management, innovation, sport employees

An Expanded Psychological Capital (A-HERO) Construct for Creativity:

Building a Competitive Advantage for Sport Organisations

The discipline of sport organisational behaviour has witnessed an influx of scholarship that has been focused on affording sport organisations and their employees with a competitive advantage through employees' internal personal resources (e.g., Anagnostopoulos & Papadimitriou, 2017; Kim et al., 2019; Oja et al., 2019). As the sport industry grows increasingly competitive, organisational adaptation via knowledge generation has become paramount for organisational survival (Girginov et al., 2015; Hoeber et al., 2015). A prominent feature of knowledge generation is organisational innovation (Hoeber et al., 2015; Winand & Anagnostopoulos, 2017), which can positively influence sport organisations' performance (Delshab et al., 2021). Yet, achieving innovation first requires the nourishment of individual creativity (Amabile, 1988).

Employee creativity has been sparsely evaluated within sport, with a majority of studies having been centered on broader innovation processes (e.g., Delshab et al., 2021; Hoeber & Hoeber, 2012; Svensson et al., 2019; Winand & Hoeber, 2017). Despite the lack of scholarship in sport, creative behaviours have been delineated as a coveted and desirable outcome in modern research on positive organisational behaviour, with scholars emphasising the role of psychological capital (PsyCap)—which includes hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism (collectively referred to as HERO; Luthans, 2002)—in cultivating psychologically healthy workplaces (e.g., Zubair & Kamal, 2015). Contemporary constructs, such as PsyCap, offer nuanced interpretations of human potential, and could provide a deeper understanding of individual creativity (Luthans et al., 2015). For example, individuals with high levels of PsyCap are likely to acquire self-motivation capabilities, perseverance for achieving their goals, and

1 sufficient resources for completing assigned work and be engaged with work-related activities
2 (Avey et al., 2011). They also engender sought-after organisational behavioural outcomes,
3 including creative task completion (Rego et al., 2012). However, there is a surprising dearth of
4 studies on the performance outcomes of PsyCap in sport settings. The present research is
5 designed to probe into the effects of sport employees' PsyCap on creativity, which—as a critical
6 antecedent of innovation—has been regarded as an advantageous performance outcome in
7 contemporary organisations (Luthans et al., 2015).

8 The initiative to expand the understanding of creativity among sport employees is
9 grounded in the advantages of knowledge generation and innovation for sport organisations (e.g.,
10 adaptation and problem solving; Delshab et al., 2021; Girginov et al., 2015; Hoeber et al., 2015).
11 Beyond hiring people with the potential to exhibit creative ideas, it is crucial to encourage and
12 allow employees to exercise their imagination at work to better achieve an organisation's goals
13 (Avey et al., 2012). This initiative equally applies to the sport industry, where current trends
14 include active fan engagement and globalisation through technological and communication
15 advancements (Bonnie, 2017). These developments affect the changing needs of sport
16 occupations, such as visual literacy and creativity. To consistently and effectively communicate
17 with sport consumers, participants and sponsors, employees in sport organisations are compelled
18 to not only acquire analytic skills but also generate creative ideas. Still, a lingering issue remains
19 in that little research has been devoted to determining the ways by which creativity among sport
20 employees can be stimulated in the rapidly changing and competitive sport environment (Kim et
21 al., 2017).

22 PsyCap is uniquely positioned to provide insights into sport employees' creative
23 behaviours. In line with the tenants of supporting sport employees' development and growth, a

1 recent advancement in sport management PsyCap literature was utilised. In addition to the
2 traditional four constructs of PsyCap, this version of PsyCap was labeled a A-HERO to signify
3 the inclusion of authenticity for sport employees (Oja et al., 2019). Therefore, the current study
4 builds on and extends the comprehensive theoretical framework of Oja et al. (2019) by providing
5 empirical evidence of the multidimensionality of A-HERO as a PsyCap redefinition intended to
6 ensure specific relevance to sport employees. Utilizing A-HERO as opposed to the traditional
7 HERO model could provide unique insights into enabling sport employee creativity as being
8 authentic allows one to access all of their personal resources when problem-solving (Kernis,
9 2003; Vainio & Daukantaitė, 2016).

10 Along with examining the potential impact of A-HERO on creative work behaviours
11 among sport employees, three employee antecedent variables for A-HERO were included:
12 passion, pride, and organisational identification. Passion and pride among sport employees have
13 been considered distinctly critical concepts that likewise show positive relationships with
14 workplace attitudes (e.g., commitment, satisfaction, involvement) and organisational citizenship
15 behaviours (Swanson & Kent, 2017b). Sport employee identification (SEI), characterized by
16 collective enhancement and sport affinity (Oja et al., 2020), is another unique aspect of sport
17 employees who value their association with sport organisations and strive to improve themselves
18 and the institutions to which they belong (Oja et al., 2015; Todd & Kent, 2009). For these
19 reasons, the way ‘sport organisation’ is operationalised in this study is as ‘organised, competitive
20 team sport’ and the employees therein those people who are assumed professional
21 responsibilities in different business functions. Thus, in alignment with previous conceptual (e.g.,
22 Oja et al., 2015; Todd & Kent, 2009) and empirical (e.g., Anagnostopoulos, Winand &
23 Papadimitriou, 2016; Swanson & Kent, 2017a) research, we adopt a narrower approach to ‘sport’,

1 by drawing on team sport organisations. We also attempted to address the role of tenure
2 regarding pride's relationship with SEI. The current study is designed to (a) empirically test the
3 relationships among employee antecedent variables, tenure, A-HERO, and creative work
4 behaviours in sport organisations while (b) statistically validating the higher-order construct of
5 A-HERO measure consisting of five sub-constructs for sport employees.

6 **Theoretical Background & Literature Review**

7 **A-HERO for Sport Employees**

8 The positive organisational behaviour (POB) paradigm seeks to develop employees and
9 organisations with the use of positive constructs and a focus on human growth (Luthans &
10 Avolio, 2009). Due to its emphasis on positivity and growth, POB has received increasing
11 attention from scholars in the sport management discipline (e.g., Anagnostopoulos &
12 Papadimitriou, 2017; Kim et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2019; McDowell et al., 2018; Morgan et al.,
13 2019; Oja et al., 2019; Suseno & Gengatharen, 2018). Fundamental constructs within POB are
14 the aforementioned PsyCap and HERO model (Luthans, 2002). PsyCap has been described as a
15 means for employees to generate internal competencies, which can lead to a competitive
16 advantage for their organisations (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). The PsyCap paradigm is
17 exemplified by the "HERO within" model, which represents what one can become and is defined
18 as,

19 an individual's positive psychological state of development that is characterized by (1)
20 having confidence (efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at
21 challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and
22 in the future; (3) persevering towards goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to
23 goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity,

1 sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resiliency) to attain success. (Luthans et
2 al., 2015, p. 2)

3 A necessary step in the evolution of the HERO model consists of utilizing other positive
4 constructs within the existing framework (Luthans et al., 2015). There are several criteria that
5 must be assessed before a variable can be included within PsyCap (i.e., theory based, measurable,
6 state like, and related to work performance; Luthans et al., 2015). Efforts to expand PsyCap have
7 been previously undertaken such as incorporating flow as a fifth construct of PsyCap which
8 showed stronger explanatory power of non-sport employees' performance (Xu et al., 2016).

9 In an attempt to expand PsyCap in sport management, Oja et al. (2019) conceptualised A-
10 HERO for sport employees by introducing authenticity as a potential construct to be used within
11 the PsyCap framework and demonstrated authenticity's fulfillment of the requisite inclusion
12 criteria. Authenticity is viewed as the "unobstructed operation of one's true, or core, self in one's
13 daily enterprise" (Kernis, 2003, p. 1), and is viewed as a powerful component when determining
14 the functionality of individuals in the context of human growth and potential (Rogers, 1959;
15 Vainio & Daukantaitė, 2016). To date, sport scholars studying authenticity have focused on
16 authentic leaders (e.g., Kim et al., 2019; Takos et al., 2018); however, authenticity has also been
17 formatted to a person-centered position, as opposed to external, in the form of three perspectives:
18 *self-alienation*, which is the awareness of discrepancies between one's true self and their
19 environment; *authentic living* describes how one can act in accordance with their true self in
20 most social situations; *accepting external influence* is the degree to which one conforms and is
21 influenced by the expectations of others (Wood et al., 2008). Furthermore, the person-centric
22 version of authenticity has been utilised to explore the impact of employee authenticity in the
23 workplace, known as authenticity at work (Metin et al., 2016; van den Bosch & Taris, 2014).

1 Considering the internal properties of A-HERO, Oja et al. (2019) suggested individuals' internal
2 perspectives of authenticity (i.e., authentic living) would be an appropriate source of
3 measurement. Authenticity at work's value to sport organisations is exemplified by its positive
4 influence on employee engagement, satisfaction, and performance (Metin et al., 2016),
5 association with reaching one's full potential (Rogers, 1959; Vainio & Daukantaitė, 2016), and is
6 particularly important for sport employees due to the ever-present necessity of ethical decision-
7 making (Hums et al., 1999; Oja et al., 2019).

8 The development of A-HERO was based on the premise that PsyCap was particularly
9 relevant and valuable in sport organisations (Kim et al., 2017) and authenticity's role in
10 individuals reaching their full potential (Vainio & Daukantaitė, 2016). As such, A-HERO is
11 grounded in the abundance approach, which reflects positivity, growth, and fulfillment as
12 opposed to merely focusing on problem-solving undertakings (Anagnostopoulos &
13 Papadimitriou, 2017).

14 **Other Antecedents**

15 *Pride.* The construct of pride has had increasing interest from sport management scholars
16 (e.g., Oja et al., 2019; Swanson & Kent, 2017a, b). Pride is "generated by appraisals that one is
17 responsible for a socially valued outcome or for being a socially valued person" (Mascolo &
18 Fischer, 1995, p. 66). As such, pride is realised when an employee senses importance, value, and
19 an admirable work-status from their organisation (Swanson & Kent, 2017a; Todd & Harris,
20 2009). The construct also has a close relationship with achievement and status in that prideful
21 individuals are aware of their efficacy and self-worth (Blader & Tyler, 2009; Smith & Tyler,
22 1997; Wärnå et al., 2007; Williams & DeSteno, 2008). The view of pride in this study follows
23 the lead of Swanson and Kent (2017a) by emphasising both cognitive and affective features with

1 cognitive evaluations and affective feelings. In addition to being positioned as an antecedent of
2 A-HERO (Oja et al., 2019), pride amongst sport employees influences their satisfaction and
3 organisational citizenship behaviours and has the potential to be a significant factor in sport
4 organisations given its positive qualities (Swanson & Kent, 2017b).

5 ***Tenure.*** Employee tenure refers to the degree of time that an individual has worked for a
6 respective organisation (Oshagbemi, 2000). Notably, tenure plays an important role in
7 developing one's organisational identification (Riketta, 2005). In the current study, tenure
8 indicates the length of working at the current sport organisation, and it has been included to
9 explore its role in the relationship between sport employees' pride and SEI as suggested by Todd
10 and Harris (2009).

11 ***Harmonious passion.*** Passion, in the work context, has often been split between two
12 competing perspectives of harmony and obsession (Vallerand et al., 2003; Vallerand & Houliort,
13 2003). Both of the harmonious and obsessive versions facilitate divergent features of work
14 passion's definition: "individual's emotional and persistent state of desire and on the basis of
15 cognitive and affective work appraisals, which results in consistent work intentions and
16 behaviours" (Perrewé et al., 2014, p. 146). The contrasting positions of work passion (i.e.,
17 harmonious and obsessive) provide different insights into the emotions and desires of employees.
18 Harmonious passion was selected for the current study in an effort to maintain the abundance
19 approach with an emphasis on the positive growth and development of sport employees
20 (Anagnostopoulos & Papadimitriou, 2017). The harmonious version of work passion
21 characterised by "a strong desire to freely engage" (Marsh et al., 2014, p. 797), and is akin to an
22 intrinsic desire to participate in work activities (Vallerand et al., 2003). Moreover, harmonious
23 passion seems to exhibit the two dimensions of the emotional aspect of Perttula and Cardon's

1 (2013) conceptualisation of “passion for work”; namely, joy and subjective vitality. The former
2 refers to feelings of enjoyment, happiness, and love toward the job, whereas the latter refers to a
3 feeling of energy at work (Ryan & Frederick, 1997). Similar to pride, sport management scholars
4 have begun to investigate the benefits of passion in diverse work settings and positions such as
5 CEOs in charitable foundations (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2016), paid personnel in municipal
6 sport organisations (Papadimitriou et al., 2017), board Chairs in nonprofit national sport
7 organisations (Zeimers & Shilbury, 2020) or paid personnel in sport franchises (Swanson & Kent,
8 2017a).

9 ***Sport employee identification.*** The construct known as SEI was developed to build sport-
10 specific theory and to provide a more detailed description of the organisational identification of
11 sport employees (Oja et al., 2015). Initially, SEI was centered on the idea that sport employees
12 identified with both the sport organisation as a whole as well as with the team or teams of the
13 organisation, and was hypothesised to comprise both organisational and team identification
14 properties (Oja et al., 2015). The psychometric properties of SEI were later examined and it was
15 determined that team identification was not an appropriate measure for SEI (Oja et al., 2020).
16 The construct was further defined based on the development of a scale to measure SEI whereby
17 two dimensions of SEI were validated. The first dimension, collective enhancement, is centered
18 on the social identification aspects such as group achievement, positive self-esteem, perceptions
19 of oneness, and a shared fate (Burke & Stets, 2009; Oja et al., 2020; Stoner et al., 2011). The
20 other dimension was labeled sport affinity and signified the similarities between sport
21 organisations and sport employees thereby inducing perceptions of unity (Oja et al., 2020; Pratt,
22 1998; Stoner et al., 2011). Sensing similarities is a critical component of organisational
23 identification in that individuals seek membership to organisations that reflect their values,

1 which provides an awareness of fit between member and organisation (Pratt, 1998; Stoner et al.,
2 2011).

3 **A Consequence: Creativity**

4 Creativity is “the production of novel and useful ideas by an individual or small group”
5 (p. 126) and is sometimes conflated with innovation, which is the tangible result of “the
6 successful implementation of creative ideas” (Amabile, 1988, p. 126). As such, creativity can be
7 viewed as the initial stage of the innovation continuum in that individuals’ creative ideas spur the
8 process of eventual organisational innovation (Amabile, 1988, 1996). Therefore, the study of
9 creativity is essential to understanding how organisations can produce innovation as creativity
10 “provides the raw material for organisational innovation” (Amabile, 1988, p. 150). Sport
11 management literature, with recent exceptions (e.g., Barnhill & Smith, 2019; Smith et al., 2020;
12 Smith & Green, 2020), is devoid of research that is specifically focused on individuals’ creativity.
13 Conversely, sport management scholars have examined the broader perspective of organisational
14 innovation (e.g., Delshab et al., 2021; Hoeber & Hoeber, 2012; Wemmer et al., 2016; Winand &
15 Hoeber, 2017). One value of creative sport employees is the incitement of organisational
16 innovation, and a successive competitive advantage resulting from their sport organisations’
17 improved performance (Amabile, 1988; Delshab et al., 2021; Luthans et al., 2015). Another
18 benefit is creativity’s relationship with employee growth and development. In line, therefore,
19 with the main premise of positive organisational scholarship that examines “positive deviance”,
20 or the ways in which organisations and their members flourish and prosper in extraordinary ways
21 (Cameron et al., 2003), creativity—by definition—is positive deviance. This is because by
22 generating ways of doing things differently, and doing things better, creativity deviates from the
23 status quo (Zhou & Ren, 2013).

Hypothesis and Model Development

The current research model (Figure 1) contains three antecedents (i.e., pride, harmonious passion, and SEI), a moderator (i.e., tenure), and an outcome variable (i.e., creativity) of A-HERO. The current model has been repositioned to offer a more detailed interpretation of the initial A-HERO model (Oja et al., 2019). One example of divergence includes positioning pride and harmonious passion as antecedents of SEI, which is now the single direct antecedent of A-HERO. Another differentiation of the model is utilising creativity as the outcome variable, which was suggested as a possible avenue of future research (Oja et al., 2019).

[Please insert Figure 1 about here]

Pride is an understudied variable in sport management, which creates difficulty in ascertaining the impact the variable may have on sport employees and organisations (Swanson & Kent, 2017a). Nevertheless, there is empirical evidence that supports pride as an antecedent of organisational identification for sport employees (Todd & Harris, 2009) and for volunteers (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2014). The theoretical support for the relationship is centered on how having pride in one's work organisation generates feelings of self-esteem, which evokes identification with the organisation (Blader & Tyler, 2009; Boezeman & Ellemers, 2014). Given that SEI is a form of organisational identification, and self-esteem is grounded in the construct via the collective enhancement dimension's achievement and self-worth properties, it is expected that a sport employee's pride will positively influence their identification with their sport organisation as the increase to self-esteem will support perceptions of membership.

Hypothesis 1a: Sport employee work pride will have a positive influence on SEI.

Tenure at the current sport organisation is predicted to moderate the relationship between pride and SEI. Moderation requires an interaction effect between the moderator (i.e., work

1 tenure) and the independent variable (i.e., pride), which changes the relationship between the
2 independent variable and dependent variable (i.e., SEI; Hayes, 2018). The interaction between
3 work tenure and pride is expected as the length of time one works for a sport organisation
4 impacts their perceptions (Todd & Andrew, 2006), including pride (Todd & Harris, 2009). More
5 so, Todd and Harris (2009) noted the potential of tenure as a moderator of pride's relationship
6 with organisational identification. Tenure's interaction with pride is resultant of the influence of
7 time on sport employees' work experiences (Todd & Harris, 2009). Further, tenure has a positive
8 relationship with organisational identification (Riketta, 2005). Then, an increase in tenure is
9 likely to interact with a sport employees' pride, and positively change pride's relationship with
10 SEI because those with longer tenures will be more apt to experience pride and consequently a
11 positive impact on their organisational identities (Todd & Harris, 2009), which is similar to
12 tenures influence on organisational identification (Riketta, 2005). Conversely, those with a lower
13 level of tenure will not have had adequate time to realize pride's positive influence on SEI
14 (Blader & Tyler, 2009; Boezeman & Ellemers, 2014).

15 *Hypothesis 1b:* Sport employee tenure at the current sport organisation will moderate the
16 relationship between pride and SEI such that as tenure increases (decreases), the positive
17 relationship between pride and SEI increases (decreases).

18 Work passion generally represents one's desire to engross themselves in work behaviours
19 (Perrewé et al., 2014). The current model utilised in this study specifically focused on the
20 harmonious version of passion, which is defined by autonomous engagement in work activities
21 (Marsh et al., 2014; Vallerand et al., 2003). Identification and passion have rarely been discussed
22 together in the sport setting and thus the directionality of the relationship is irresolute. In the
23 current model, harmonious passion is predicted to positively influence SEI as the origin of the

1 passion and identification is similar (i.e., involvement with sport; Pratt, 1998). To this point, the
2 passion or desire to engage in sport work activities is likely to spur a sense of membership to
3 sport organisations. As one experiences increased passion for their work, they are more likely to
4 accept their work as part of their identity (Vallerand et al., 2003). This is relevant to the sport
5 affinity dimension of SEI in that sport is the pathway to identification for sport employees as it
6 signifies a goodness of fit (Oja et al., 2020; Pratt, 1998; Stoner et al., 2011). Additionally, one's
7 harmonious passion should improve a sense of membership engaging in work activities is likely
8 to engender a shared fate of membership with the organisation as the willingness to participate
9 within the organisation will build comradery and a sense of oneness with the sport organisation,
10 which is the basis of the collective enhancement dimension of SEI (Oja et al., 2020). As such,
11 having a passion for working in sport is expected to lead to SEI.

12 *Hypothesis 2: Sport employee harmonious passion will positively influence SEI.*

13 Within the model, SEI is hypothesised to positively influence A-HERO. This position
14 was initially put forth in Oja et al.'s (2019) conceptual model. SEI is positioned as a higher-order
15 factor with sport affinity and collective enhancement as first-order factors, and an overall SEI
16 second-order factor. The higher-order structure is guided by the correlations among first-order
17 factors (Oja et al., 2020) and supporting parsimony (Brown, 2015). The hypothesised
18 relationship is grounded in the belief that highly identified sport employees view their sport
19 organisation as an extension of themselves and a resulting desire to use personal internal
20 resources to support the organisation (Oja et al., 2015). SEI will seemingly facilitate authenticity
21 as identified individuals experience a genuine symmetry with working in sport (Oja et al., 2020).
22 Additionally, SEI can support personal development that is germane to the other components of
23 A-HERO in the form of believing in the organisation (i.e., hope), embracing challenges (i.e.,

1 efficacy), continuing through difficult times (i.e., resilience), and appropriate self-attribution (i.e.,
2 optimism; Kim et al., 2017; Oja et al., 2015; Oja et al., 2019).

3 *Hypothesis 3:* SEI will positively influence A-HERO for sport employees.

4 Lastly, A-HERO is hypothesised to positively influence sport employee creativity.

5 Evaluating the outcomes of A-HERO—and PsyCap in general—is an important aspect of the
6 construct’s development and to this point, employee creativity has been hypothesised as a
7 coveted and distal evidence-based outcome in the most recent PsyCap intervention model
8 (Luthans & Youssef, 2017). Additionally, cognitive processes (i.e., A-HERO) are considered
9 antecedents of individual creativity (Amabile, 1988, 1996). The authenticity portion of A-HERO
10 should support creativity as staying true to oneself will provide individuals with the necessary
11 autonomy to reach one’s full potential and think creatively when confronting problems (Kernis,
12 2003; Vainio & Daukantaitė, 2016). Hope and optimism support employees not only with
13 increased motivation from realistic and practical plans but also recognising new possibilities
14 from fluctuations in the organisational environment (Luthans et al., 2007). Efficacy can likewise
15 support creativity as those who are confident in their work skills are more likely to develop new
16 methods to confront challenges, and resilient employees will utilise their personal resources to
17 persevere through arduous periods with new and creative ideas (Luthans et al., 2015).

18 *Hypothesis 4:* A-HERO will positively influence sport employee creativity.

19 **Methods**

20 **Procedures and Participants**

21 The population of this study was employees who worked for American sport
22 organisations involving sport teams. The researchers created a database of potential participants
23 from sport organisations with publicly available email addresses throughout the United States. A

1 cluster sampling technique was used to ensure a random sample, which involved randomly
2 selecting clusters of sport organisations and then soliciting their managerial employees'
3 participation (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). A cluster was defined as a sport organisations'
4 managerial sport employees. When a specific sport organisations' employee was randomly
5 selected, the publicly listed emails of all managerial-based units of sport employees were sent an
6 email invitation. Thus, all sport employees from managerial-based units within a selected
7 organisation had an equal opportunity to participate. Participants worked for competition-focused
8 sport organisations including professional, national, dual-level, minor leagues, and intercollegiate
9 organisations.

10 The sample of sport employees ($N = 301$) was deemed sufficient as according to the item-
11 to-response ratio of 1:5 (Hair et al., 2010) the preferred sampled size for the hypothesised model
12 needed to exceed 170. Among research participants, there were 183 males (60.8%), 108 females
13 (35.8%), and 10 choosing not to identify (3.4%). The participants self-identified themselves as
14 Caucasian ($n = 274$, 90.7%), African-American ($n = 8$, 2.7%), Hispanic ($n = 8$, 2.7%), and other
15 ($n = 12$, 3.9%). The demographics are in congruence with the distributions of studies with similar
16 research populations (e.g., Oja et al., 2020; Swanson & Kent, 2017a). On average, the tenure at
17 the current sport organisation was approximately nine years ($M = 8.7$, $SD = 9.2$). Potential non-
18 response error was examined by dividing the responses into two groups based on early and late
19 respondents and comparing 10 randomly selected Likert-type scale items (one item for each
20 latent variable) and demographic questions. There were no statistically significant differences
21 between the two groups' responses, indicating the absence of a non-response bias or a threat to
22 external validity (Lindner et al., 2001).

23 **Instruments**

1 All self-report questionnaire items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1
2 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*; except for background and demographic information
3 questions). The final survey contained three items measuring job pride (Todd & Harris, 2009),
4 three items measuring harmonious passion at work (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2016), four items in
5 each dimension of sport employee identification (i.e., sport affinity and collective enhancement;
6 Oja et al., 2020), and eight items measuring creative work behaviours (Farmer et al., 2003).

7 As a higher-order construct having five sub-constructs, the A-HERO scale is composed
8 of authenticity at work items and original PsyCap items. In order to measure sport employees'
9 authenticity, it is imperative to consider individual perspectives at workplace settings (Kim et al.,
10 2019). Given the recommendation of Oja et al. (2019) the four items from the authentic living
11 dimension of the Authentic at Work scale were adapted (van den Bosch, & Taris, 2014), which
12 has demonstrated acceptable validity and reliability. Avey et al.'s (2008) 12-item PsyCap scale
13 was used, which contains hope (four items), efficacy (three items), resilience (two items), and
14 optimism (three items) and has demonstrated acceptable reliability and construct validity.

15 **Data Analysis**

16 Prior to employing structural equation modeling (SEM) and testing the moderation
17 effect of work tenure to evaluate the research hypotheses, several data preparation procedures
18 were conducted. First, univariate outliers and coding errors were controlled by utilising the
19 Qualtrics web-based survey platform. Second, the multivariate normality assumption was
20 checked by calculating the Mardia's coefficients on Mplus 8.4. The multivariate skewness ($z =$
21 253.9 , $SD = 2.7$) and kurtosis ($z = 1301.7$, $SD = 5.0$) were significant ($p < .001$), indicating that
22 the data set violated the normality assumption. To address this issue, a maximum likelihood
23 mean-adjusted estimator (Satorra & Bentler, 1994) was used in the subsequent multivariate data

1 analyses. Third, for two higher-order constructs (i.e., sport employee identification & A-HERO),
2 separate confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) were performed for each higher-order variable in
3 accordance with the two-step approach for higher-order constructs (Brown, 2015). Brown's
4 (2015) procedure consists of evaluating the first-order factors (e.g., authenticity, hope, efficacy,
5 resilience, and optimism) together but without a second-order factor (e.g., A-HERO) present and
6 reviewing fit statistics and correlations amongst the first-order factors. Once the correlations and
7 fit indices were deemed acceptable, the second-order factors were introduced in separate models
8 for evaluation. After establishing the statistical and theoretical cogency of the second-order
9 models, the next step was to finalise the full measurement model with all constructs.

10 After establishing an acceptable full measurement model, a structural model was then
11 developed to test the relationships among the variables. To examine the interaction effect of
12 tenure on pride and sport employee identification, bootstrapping with Mplus moderation testing
13 codes were utilised (Stride et al., 2015). The individual measurement models, the full
14 measurement model, and a hypothesised structural model were evaluated by goodness-of-fit-
15 indices such as Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), the root mean
16 square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardised root mean square residual
17 (SRMR). While CFI and TLI values that are equal to or greater than .90 represent acceptable fit
18 (Hair et al., 2010), RMSEA and SRMR values that are equal to or less than .08 indicate
19 acceptable fit (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Factor loadings were also reviewed for their
20 theoretical congruency and meaningfulness. The latent variables were considered reflective,
21 meaning that each individual item was not an independent aspect of the construct, rather all items
22 were reflective of the overall construct and were subject to removal if they performed poorly
23 statistically (i.e., < .50 factor loading) or if they were not theoretically representative of their

1 construct based on the degree of congruence with the other items (Hair et al., 2010). Lastly,
2 composite reliability (CR; Bagozzi & Yi, 1998), average variance extracted (AVE; Fornell &
3 Larcker, 1981) values, and correlations among latent constructs were reviewed to assess
4 reliability and construct validity statistics.

5 **Results**

6 **Measurement Models**

7 In evaluating the measurement models including second-order constructs, model fit for
8 sport employee identification ($\chi^2 = 896.4$, $df = 28$, $p < .001$, CFI = .96, TLI = .94, SRMR = .07,
9 RMSEA = .08) and A-HERO ($\chi^2 = 1146.0$, $df = 91$, $p < .001$, CFI = .99, TLI = .99, SRMR = .04,
10 RMSEA = .02) were acceptable. One item from authentic at work, "*I find it easier to get on with*
11 *people in the workplace when I'm being myself*," and one item from hope, "*If I should find*
12 *myself in a jam at work, I could think of many ways to get out of it*," were removed from further
13 analysis due to low factor loadings ($< .50$) and dissimilarities with the other items (Hair et al.,
14 2010). The CR and AVE values of each latent construct exceed the suggested levels of .70
15 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1998) and .50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) respectively, which provided evidence
16 of satisfactory reliability and convergent validity. To assess discriminant validity, AVE values
17 were compared with squared inter-construct correlation values and all squared correlations were
18 less than corresponding AVE values, which supports discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker,
19 1981). The correlations among first-order factors were also reviewed, and no extreme
20 multicollinearity or singularity issues were discovered ($< .85$; Kline, 2005).

21 The full measurement model, including all constructs in the hypothesised structural
22 model, was then evaluated ($\chi^2 = 796.0$, $df = 577$, $p < .001$, CFI = .94, TLI = .93, SRMR = .06,
23 RMSEA = .04). Four items from the creativity scale were eliminated based on the advice of Hair

1 et al. (2010) in that the removed items all had unacceptable factor loadings (i.e., $< .50$). The
2 modified measurement model exhibited an acceptable model fit ($\chi^2 = 587.6$, $df = 447$, $p < .001$,
3 CFI = .96, TLI = .95, SRMR = .06, RMSEA = .03), and the final set of questionnaire items are
4 presented on Table 1. The CR and AVE values for each latent construct exceeded the suggested
5 levels of .70 and .50 (Table 2). The AVE values were higher than the squared correlation values
6 for their respective constructs, supporting discriminant validity. The correlations among factors
7 did not exceeded the .85 cutoff (Table 2).

8 [Please insert Table 1 and 2 about here]

9 **Hypotheses Testing**

10 With the acceptability of the full measurement model, research hypotheses were
11 investigated by calculating individual standardized path coefficients among variables (Figure 2).
12 The structural model had acceptable fit statistics ($\chi^2 = 607.4$, $df = 452$, $p < .001$, CFI = .95, TLI
13 = .95, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .04). The path from pride to sport employee identification was
14 positive and significant ($\gamma = .46$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$), supporting hypothesis 1a. Within the
15 relationship between pride and sport employee identification, the conditional effect of tenure at
16 the current sport organisation was estimated. Mplus moderation testing codes (Stride et al., 2015)
17 were used to create low, medium, and high moderator values based on percentiles of the
18 distribution along with simple slopes and intercepts. The results revealed a significant interaction
19 effect of tenure ($\gamma = .69$, $SE = 2.4$, $p < .05$) with the 95% confidence interval [.14, 1.28] in the
20 relationship between pride and sport employee identification, supporting Hypothesis 1b. Restated,
21 the positive relationship between the two aforementioned variables was stronger among sport
22 employees who had a longer tenure with their sport organisation. The paths from harmonious
23 passion to sport employee identification ($\gamma = .44$, $S.E. = .06$, $p < .001$), sport employee

1 identification to A-HERO ($\gamma = .43$, S.E. = .07, $p < .001$), and A-HERO to creative work
2 behaviours ($\gamma = .49$, S.E. = .06, $p < .001$) were all positive and statistically significant, reflecting
3 support for Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4.

4 [Please insert Figure 2 about here]

5 **Discussion**

6 Both aspects of Hypothesis 1 were confirmed with pride positively influencing SEI
7 (Hypothesis 1a), and the relationship was moderated by work tenure (Hypothesis 1b). Pride's
8 relationship to SEI, as a form of organisational identification, is further confirmation of previous
9 studies (e.g., Blader & Tyler, 2009; Boezeman & Ellemers, 2014; Todd & Harris, 2009). The
10 current results informed that having pride in one's sport organisation proliferates the
11 identification process as pride creates a stronger appeal for perceived membership and
12 association (i.e., organisational identification). In this way, pride facilitates a deeper cognitive
13 state of association with a sport organisation as pride can stimulate self-esteem, which creates a
14 stronger appeal for membership with the organisation, thus facilitating the organisational
15 identification process (Blader & Tyler, 2009; Boezeman & Ellemers, 2014).

16 Hypothesis 1b provides added context as the duration of tenure at an organisation
17 enhanced the relationship whereby the pride of those sport employees who had a longer tenure
18 had a stronger influence on their SEI. Resultantly, one's tenure at a sport organisation interacted
19 with their pride to create different experiences concerning their identification process (cf. Todd
20 & Andrew, 2006). Given the aforementioned dynamic between pride and SEI, tenure is a
21 probable moderator due to the necessary internalisation of one's pride in their sport organisation
22 to influence their organisational identification. For pride to influence organisational
23 identification a cognitive link between individual and organisation must be forged, and tenure

1 seemingly provides a gradually strengthening tether between the pride one feels for their sport
2 organisation and the likelihood of perceived membership to that sport organisation.

3 Harmonious passion was also found to be an antecedent of SEI, confirming Hypothesis 2.
4 In this study the directionality of this relationship positioned harmonious passion as an
5 antecedent based on the principle that enthusiastically engaging in work activities would ignite a
6 shared similarity between individual and work, thus spurring organisational identification
7 (Perrewé et al., 2014; Pratt, 1998; Vallerand et al., 2003). Of particular note is the involvement
8 with sport and competition, which appears to be the agent that binds work passion to SEI. That is,
9 by engaging in work tasks that one is passionate about (i.e., managing sport) the similarity or
10 affinity between employee and organisation, as well as membership recognition, is strengthened
11 (Pratt, 1998). A strong and healthy passion for working in sport, coupled with completing tasks
12 that involve unique aspects of sport, are resultantly likely to solidify both a sense of oneness with
13 the sport organisation and the congruence between sport employee and organisation. Then, one's
14 harmonious passion for working in sport would facilitate their SEI given the improvements to the
15 goodness of fit and shared fate among passionate sport employees (Oja et al., 2020; Stoner et al.,
16 2011).

17 For Hypothesis 3, the relationship between SEI and A-HERO was significant. This result
18 extends the knowledge pertaining the utility of SEI by demonstrating its positive impact on sport
19 employees' psychological resources (i.e., A-HERO). Furthermore, the result builds upon
20 proposed relationships between SEI and psychological capital (Kim et al., 2017; Oja et al., 2019)
21 by utilising a higher-order SEI to establish the relationship. This is a meaningful development as
22 the higher-order variables constitute the totality of the first-order sub-constructs (i.e., collective
23 enhancement and sport affinity; Brown, 2015). In this way, there is now empirical evidence that

1 indicates the unified sub-constructs of SEI have a positive influence on psychological capital and
2 specifically A-HERO. This positions SEI as a valuable construct that can be used to develop the
3 human capacities of sport employees.

4 The findings of the current study indicated a positive relationship between A-HERO and
5 the creativity of sport employees, confirming Hypothesis 4. In a similar vein, several studies
6 corroborated the critical role of one's PsyCap in increasing work-related performance (Avey et
7 al., 2011; Luthans et al., 2011; Rego et al., 2012). Employees with high levels of PsyCap are able
8 to pursue multiple pathways (hope) to achieve planned goals and have confidence in their
9 abilities (efficacy) to do so. They are likely to learn from failures (resilience) and recognise new
10 possibilities from changes (optimism). Given that authenticity has been included as a sub-
11 construct of expanded PsyCap, the results align with those of previous work in connection to the
12 relationship between authenticity at work and job performance (e.g., Metin et al., 2016).
13 Authentic living in the current research setting points to sport employees' expression of emotions
14 and behaviours on the basis of conscious awareness. Then, authentic sport employees can solve
15 problems by finding novel solutions because they are better equipped to reach their full potential
16 (Vainio & Daukantaitė, 2016). These aspects of A-HERO collectively influence creativity. The
17 results of the present work thus count as conclusive evidence that A-HERO favorably affects
18 sport employees' creativity.

19 **Theoretical Contributions and Practical Implications**

20 With regards to the theoretical contribution of the study, there was empirical support for
21 incorporating authenticity as a sub-construct into PsyCap for sport employees (Oja et al., 2019).
22 Luthans et al. (2015) listed high-potential positive constructs and concluded that authenticity
23 fulfilled all of the inclusion criteria of PsyCap. Although a few attempts have been made to

1 expand HERO by including other positive constructs (e.g., flow; Xu et al., 2016), this work is
2 unique in that it considered the distinct circumstances surrounding sport employees. Specifically,
3 a successful sport business venture should take into account an employee's mindset to support
4 authenticity in order to generate novel ideas that will allow the organisation to thrive in the ultra-
5 competitive sport industry (Nicklaus, 2020). In the current study, authenticity and sport were
6 conceivably interrelated as pride, passion, and organisational identification all featured the
7 concept of sport. Within the work context, sport may facilitate the authentic self of sport
8 employees as sport represents a common focal point and could stipulate a crucial psychological
9 aspect of sport employees and their resulting functionality in the workplace. In turn, proliferating
10 authenticity among sport employees offers a plethora of positive outcomes beyond creative
11 behaviours (e.g., psychological well-being; Vainio & Daukantaitė, 2016). Sport management
12 scholars have recently examined how authentic leadership enhances follower and organisational
13 outcomes (Kim et al., 2019, McDowell et al., 2018; Takos et al., 2018), but the present work
14 highlighted the importance of each sport employee's authenticity in creative behaviours that are
15 beneficial in the contemporary sport industry.

16 Studies on positive organisational behaviour have underscored not only employee
17 flourishing but also job performance to build an organisational competitive advantage (Luthans
18 & Youssef, 2017). For example, Newman et al. (2014) comprehensively reviewed PsyCap,
19 including possible multi-level outcomes (i.e., individual, team, and organisational levels), and
20 called for empirical research to unravel the mechanisms by which PsyCap influences a variety of
21 work outcomes. One such outcome is Newman et al.'s (2014) framework for innovative
22 behaviour, which is a noteworthy result of employee creativity (Amabile, 1988). Sport
23 management scholars have primarily foregrounded PsyCap's contribution to gaining an

1 organisational competitive advantage by generating psychological well-being among sport
2 employees (e.g., Kim et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2020; Oja et al., 2019). The present study inquired
3 into sport employee creativity, thereby advancing the body of knowledge on sport organisational
4 behaviour and the knowledge creation capabilities of sport organisations (Girginov et al., 2015;
5 Hoeber et al., 2015). In the current sport industry where innovation is increasingly necessary
6 (Winand & Anagnostopoulos, 2017), the ability to generate creative ideas represents a distinct
7 competitive advantage due their influence on innovation and subsequently organisational
8 performance (Bonnie, 2017; Delshab et al., 2021; Svensson et al., 2019). The findings of this
9 study provide empirical evidence of positive deviance (Cameron et al., 2003), through the
10 approach of positive organisational behaviour, for sport employees and organisations with
11 enhanced employee creativity, as it can lead to a competitive advantage (e.g., knowledge
12 creation; Delshab et al., 2021; Girginov et al., 2015; Hoeber et al., 2015).

13 One prominent practical implication is the value of having pride, harmonious passion, or
14 an attraction to sport organisations. Thus, sport managers and human resource personnel ought to
15 seek those with a harmonious passion or connection with sport, as emotions such as passion and
16 pride are elements that can facilitate identification with a sport organisation and subsequent
17 creative work behaviours. Considering the role that creativity plays in building a competitive
18 advantage (Avey et al., 2012; Luthans et al., 2015; Zubair & Kamal, 2015), assisting and
19 strategically hiring sport employees who demonstrate pride, passion, and an affinity for sport
20 organisations' work tasks would be valuable.

21 Aligning with the abundance approach (Cameron & Lavine, 2006), sport organisations
22 rather than exclusively focusing on problem solving, may start pursuing possible advancements
23 by embracing and enabling their workforces' highest potential. Taking this path, employees'

1 creativity becomes of paramount importance. However, for individual employees to generate
2 creative ideas they can only do so when they work in well-designed jobs that are characterised by
3 high-levels of autonomy, skill variety, task identity, task significance and job-based feedback
4 (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). It is therefore the careful *design* of jobs (Grant, 2007) that will
5 make a significant contribution to a sport employee's positive experiences and positive actions at
6 work. One way to achieve this ambition is by providing employees within sport organisations
7 with a larger module of work, which, in turn should boost skill variety and task identity
8 characteristics. Furthermore, putting, for example, all members of the marketing department of a
9 sport team franchise in direct contact with specific sponsors/clients will give them continuing
10 responsibility for managing those relationships, thereby boosting autonomy, skill variety,
11 feedback (Oldham, 2013) and thus allowing individual creativity to flourish.

12 **Limitations and Future Directions**

13 This research has several limitations. First, among many potential constructs to be
14 included in PsyCap, only authenticity was integrated into the analysis to empirically test the
15 conceptual framework of A-HERO (Oja et al., 2019). On the basis of emerging and rich body of
16 knowledge of positive psychology, it is also necessary to account for other highly promising
17 constructs (e.g., emotional intelligence, flow, gratitude, integrity, virtues) in accordance with
18 different sport contexts. Another promising construct that is germane to positive work outcomes
19 is work grit, a motivational driver of individual growth (Jordan et al., 2019). Although A-HERO
20 has now been demonstrated to satisfy the criteria for integration into the PsyCap framework,
21 proposing and examining other concepts as additional sub-constructs of PsyCap are
22 recommended to fully delineate sport employees' positive states of performance and well-being.

1 Second, the research model encompassed only sport employees' antecedents for A-
2 HERO (i.e., pride, passion, SEI). In other words, leaders, organisations, and other external
3 influences should be scrutinised in future research to better predict the A-HERO and creativity of
4 sport employees. Correspondingly, leadership styles (e.g., shared leadership, political skill) and
5 organisational climates (e.g., ethical climates, organisational justice) that are potentially
6 conducive to favourable work experiences should be considered.

7 Third, the sample was predominantly White, which could indicate that the model contains
8 a White perspective. Recent studies of sport employees have contained a similar pattern of
9 predominantly White samples (Oja et al., 2020; Swanson & Kent, 2017a), which means that the
10 population itself could be largely White. Future studies that use purposive samples to target
11 specific demographics of sport employees to examine their influences within the sport industry
12 would be valuable. Given the presence of a largely White sample, studies exploring ethnicity and
13 its influence on the model are particularly important. A specific recommendation is level of sport
14 (e.g., professional sport, club sport) as previous sport employee studies have contained
15 homogenous samples for level of sport, but little is known pertaining to the differences, if any,
16 between those who work at the various levels of sport. Lastly, future investigations are needed to
17 further examine institutional and structural barriers to sport employee creativity (Paek et al.,
18 2020).

19 **Conclusion**

20 This study represents a robust analysis of (a) individual-level mechanisms to stimulate
21 sport employee creative work behaviours and (b) the application and validation of the A-HERO
22 construct. Pride and harmonious passion for working at a sport organisation were found to
23 positively influence SEI, which in turn supported sport employee creativity. Also, work tenure

1 moderated the relationship between pride and SEI, which indicated that those who have longer
2 work tenures will experience a stronger influence of their pride on SEI. Importantly, enjoying or
3 appreciating sport could be the lynchpin that supports the relationships within the model. Lastly,
4 the A-HERO construct was empirically validated, which signifies a significant advancement in
5 PsyCap literature.

6 ****Institutional Review Board approval of human subjects was granted****

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Table 1

Finalised Survey Questionnaire, Standardized Coefficients (β), Construct Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Values

Constructs and Items	β	CR	AVE
Pride		.86	.68
I feel especially respected in social settings when I discuss my job in sports.	.81		
My job gives me a feeling of importance when talking to others outside of work	.84		
In social settings, I feel valued and admired because of my job	.82		
Harmonious Passion		.81	.60
My work is in harmony with other activities in my life	.85		
My work is in harmony with other things that are part of me	.82		
My work is well integrated in my life	.63		
Sport Employee Identification		.74	.60
(Sport Affinity)	(.61)	.84	.58
Working in sport allows me to at least partially retain my identity as an athlete	.54		
I consider athletics to be an important part of who I am	.90		
Being involved in a competitive sport environment is important to me	.71		
Sport is a fundamental part of who I am	.85		
(Collective Enhancement)	(.91)	.88	.65
If my sport organisation wins a big game, I feel personal success	.78		
My sport organisation's successes are my successes	.82		
Assisting in the success of my sport organisation makes me see the organisation as part of who I am	.81		
When someone praises my sport organisation it feels like a personal compliment	.75		
A-HERO		.84	.53
(Authenticity)	(.58)	.83	.62
I am true to myself at work in most situations	.82		
At work, I always stand by what I believe in	.76		
I behave in accordance with my values and beliefs in the workplace	.78		
(Hope)	(.83)	.77	.53
Right now I see myself as being pretty successful at work	.77		
I can think of many ways to reach my current work goals	.71		
At this time, I am meeting the work goals I have set for myself	.70		
(Efficacy)	(.57)	.85	.66
I feel confident in representing my work area in meetings	.80		
I feel confident contributing to discussion about the sport organisation's strategy	.78		
I feel confident presenting information to a group of colleagues	.85		
(Resilience)	(.77)	.71	.55
I usually take stressful things at work in stride	.67		
I can get through difficult times at work because I've experienced difficulty before	.81		
(Optimism)	(.83)	.79	.56
I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job	.78		
I'm optimistic about what will happen to me in the future as it pertains to work	.81		
I can be 'on my own', so to speak, at work if I have to	.64		
Creative Work Behaviour		.81	.51
I always think of other ways to solve problems when I run into obstacles	.73		
I can cope with several new ideas and problems at the same time	.72		
I help other people develop new ideas	.69		

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I have a lot of new ideas	.71
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Table 2

Constructs, Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), and Correlations

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Factors	Mean	SD	1 (a)	2 (b)	3 (c)	4 (d)	5 (e)
1. Pride	4.94	1.25	1				
2. Passion Harmonious	4.62	1.44	.30*	1			
3. Sport Employee ID	5.20	1.21	.55*	.51*	1		
a. Sport affinity	5.40	1.28					
b. Collective enhancement	5.03	1.31	(.55*)				
4. A-HERO	5.66	.70	.28*	.42*	.36*	1	
a. Authenticity	5.70	.82					
b. Hope	5.56	.85	(.41*)				
c. Efficacy	5.64	1.10	(.47*)	(.43*)			
d. Resilience	5.62	.70	(.49*)	(.47*)	(.64*)		
e. Optimism	5.44	.97	(.43*)	(.71*)	(.43*)	(.64*)	
5. Creative Work Behaviours	5.66	.76	.21*	.03	.11	.50*	1

**p* < .001