

# **The Effect of Positive Psychological Capital in Preventing Destructive Leadership Behaviours in a Portuguese Retail Chain**

**António Calheiros**

**Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra, Coimbra Business School | ISCAC**

*Although Leadership is mostly viewed under a positive light, there is growing research on leadership's negative impacts, a new field that has been called destructive leadership. This paper reviews the literature on destructive leadership and verifies if Positive Psychological Capital (PsyCap) of the followers can help prevent the occurrence of destructive leadership behaviours. 98 teams of a retail chain, comprising 567 employees, reported on their PsyCap, prosocial behaviours, and leaders' destructive behaviours. Results show that teams with high PsyCap neutralized the negative impact of one behaviour of destructive leadership in one of the measures of prosocial behaviours.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Leadership has long been one of the hottest topics in management literature, both in academic and practitioner domains. Most of that literature has put leadership under a positive light, focusing or even romanticizing on its many and impressive positive impacts, and inspiring aspiring leaders to be more than “mere” managers (Zaleznik, 1977, Kotter, 1990) and become charismatic (Conger and Kanungo, 1987), transformational (Bass, 1985) and/or authentic (Luthans and Avolio, 2003, George et al., 2007).

There is, however, a darker side of leadership. In a survey of 2539 professionals in 2010, a group of Norwegian researchers (Aasland et al., 2010) found that, depending on the estimation method, between 33,5% and 61% of respondents had been subject to some kind of consistent and frequent destructive leadership during the previous 6 months. Only 40% of respondents reported no exposure to such leadership behaviour. To categorize these destructive leadership behaviours, they used a framework they had previously developed (Einarsen et al., 2007) that encompasses two dimensions of leadership behaviour: directed at subordinates and directed at the goals, tasks and effectiveness of the organization.

A development of that model (Padilla et al., 2007) tries to understand what factors, besides the leader, are at the root of destructive leadership. This model presents us a toxic triangle, proposing that we must add susceptible followers and conducive environments are also necessary for destructive leadership to occur.

The aim of this study is to verify if the followers' Positive Psychological Capital (PsyCap - an individual's positive psychological state of development and is characterized by: (1) having confidence [self-efficacy] to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution [optimism] about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals [hope] in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond [resilience] to attain success”; Luthans et

al., 2007b, p. 3) can make them less susceptible to destructive leaders and act as a kind of vaccine or antidote to destructive leadership in organizations. The study was conducted through a survey of 567 employees of a Portuguese retail chain, who reported on their leaders' behaviours, on their PsyCap, and on their prosocial behaviours.

This paper begins by reviewing the literature on the main concepts of the study (Destructive Leadership, PsyCap, and Prosocial Behaviours), proceeds to describe the methodology of the empirical research that was conducted, and concludes by presenting and discussing the main findings and its implications.

## **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**

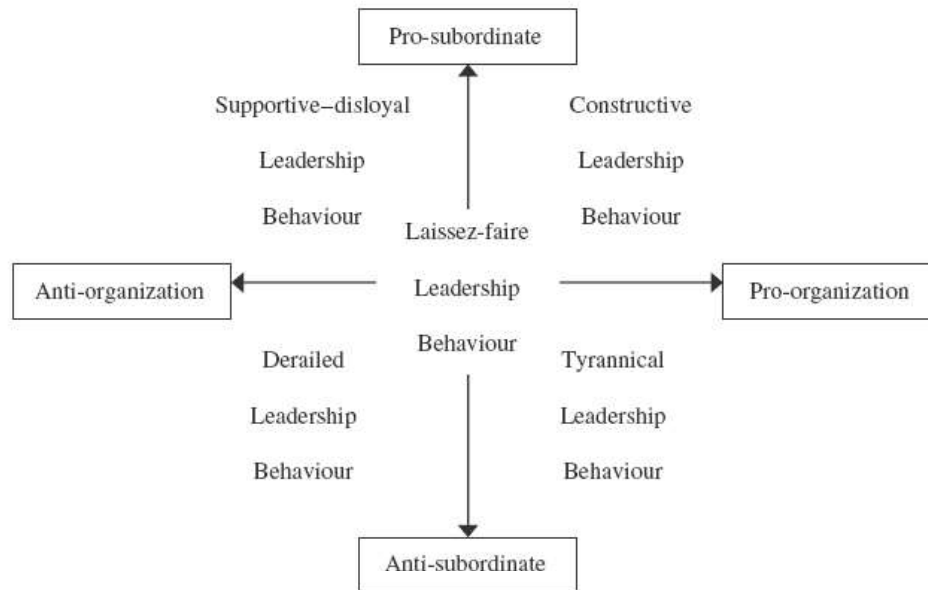
### **Destructive Leadership**

Destructive leadership is "the systematic and repeated behaviour by a leader, supervisor or manager that violates the legitimate interest of the organization by undermining and/or sabotaging the organization's goals, tasks, resources, and effectiveness and/or the motivation, well-being or job satisfaction of subordinates" (Einarsen et al., 2007, p. 208). These destructive leadership behaviours can be aggressive or passive behaviours. The leader may not have a clear intent to harm the subordinates or the organization. The authors' argument that destructive leadership is more about the outcomes of the leader behaviour than it is about the leader's intentions. Also, they assert that these behaviours must occur repeatedly and regularly. This is a very broad and inclusive definition, that encompasses previously researched negative leadership concepts, such as "abusive supervision" (Hornstein, 1996, Tepper, 2000), "petty tyranny" (Ashforth, 1994), "managerial tyranny" (Ma et al., 2004), "workplace bullying" (Namie and Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010), "derailed leadership", "harassing leadership", and "intolerable bosses" (Lombardo and McCall, 1984), comprising anti-subordinate behaviours; and "toxic leadership" (Lipman-Blumen, 2005), and "leader derailment" (McCall and Lombardo, 1983), concerning anti-organization behaviours.

Einarsen, Aasland & Skogstad (2007) propose a conceptual model of destructive leadership considering the two dimensions of destructive leadership behaviour: behaviour directed towards subordinates and behaviours directed towards the goals, tasks and effectiveness of the organization. Constructive leadership happens when leaders "act in accordance with the legitimate interest of the organization, supporting and enhancing the goals, tasks, and strategy of the organization as well as making optimal use of organization resources" (Einarsen, Aasland & Skogstad, 2007, p. 214). These leaders also "enhance the motivation, well-being and job satisfaction of their followers by engaging in behaviours such as inviting subordinates to an extended engagement, and granting involvement and participation in decision processes". Tyrannical leadership behaviours are those that "undermine the motivation, well-being or job satisfaction of subordinates" (Einarsen, Aasland & Skogstad, 2007, p. 212) even though they are not directly destructive of the organization best interest. These leaders typically get results at the cost of subordinates, not through them. Because these leaders can sometimes extract great performance from subordinates, they are sometimes view favourably by senior management. Supportive-disloyal leadership characterizes leaders who "show consideration for the welfare of subordinates while violating the legitimate interest of the organization by undermining task and goal attainment" (Einarsen, Aasland & Skogstad, 2007, p. 213). These leaders may benefit employees at the cost of the organization's resources and steal material, time or financial resources from the organization, and may also encourage loafing or misconduct by subordinates. Supportive-disloyal leaders may not be acting with the intent to harm the organization. They may simply have a different vision of the organization's purpose or fail to understand the legitimate interest of the organization. Finally, derailed leadership means engaging in both anti-subordinate behaviours (like bullying, humiliation, manipulation, deception or harassment) and anti-organizational behaviours (like absenteeism, shirking, fraud, or theft). According to McCall & Lombardo (1983), leader derailment can occur due to specific performance problems with business activities, inability to adapt to new situations or to develop new skills, being insensitive to others, or excessive

ambition (thinking more about the next job than about the present, pleasing upper management instead of focusing on performance, etc.).

**FIGURE 1**  
**CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF CONSTRUCTIVE/DESTRUCTIVE LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOURS**

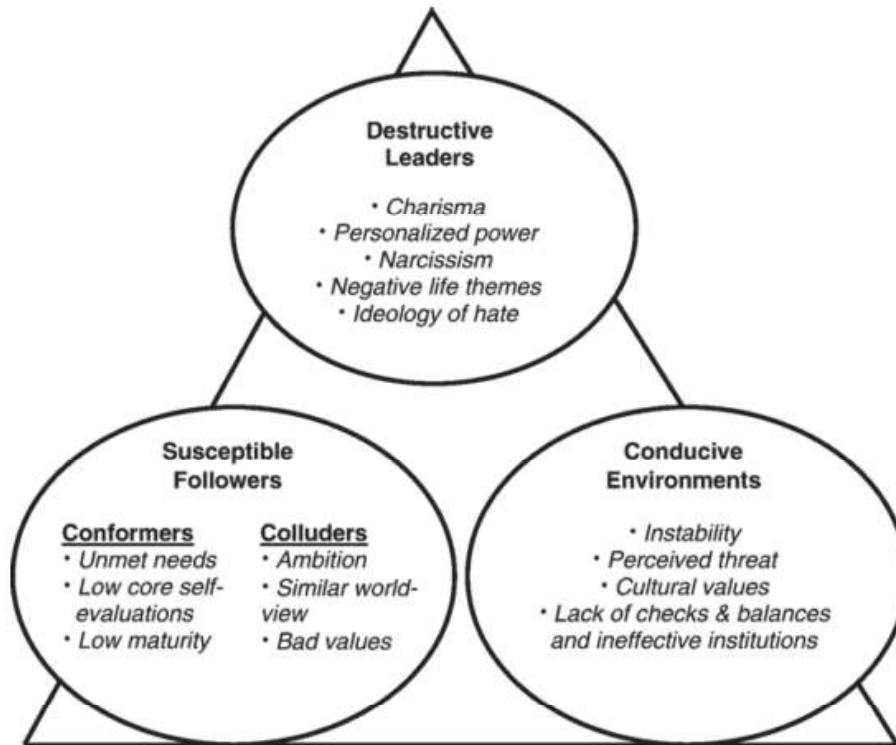


Source: Aasland et al. (2010)

In addition to these three types of destructive leadership behaviours, one should also consider laissez-faire leadership as destructive. In fact, the same research team (Skogstad et al., 2007) propose (and validate) the hypothesis that laissez-faire leadership is not a type of zero-leadership, but a type of destructive leadership behaviour, passive and indirect, with significant negative impacts. They associate this leadership behaviour to what Kelloway et al. (2005) called poor leadership and to what Bass (1990) calls avoidant or passive leadership, which consists of a leadership style in which has been appointed to and physically still occupies the leadership position, but in practice has abdicated the responsibilities and duties assigned to him or her. These leaders avoid decision-making, show little concern for goal attainment and seldom involve themselves with their subordinates, even when it's necessary. Whether this passive behaviour is a result of incompetence, lack of knowledge or strategic intent to harm, it clearly violates the legitimate interest of both the organization and the subordinates (Aasland et al., 2010).

Padilla, Hogan & Kaiser (2007) help understanding destructive leadership by analysing also the context of those behaviours. In addition to a destructive leader, they propose that destructive leadership flourishes when we find susceptible followers and conducive environments (the toxic triangle). According to these authors, destructive leadership presents five features: (1) Destructive leadership is seldom absolutely or entirely destructive; there are both good and bad results in most leadership situations; (2) the process of destructive leadership involves domination, coercion, and manipulation rather than influence, persuasion, and commitment; (3) the process of destructive leadership has a selfish orientation; it is focused more on the leader's needs than the needs of the larger social group; (4) The effects of destructive leadership are outcomes that compromise the quality of life for constituents and detract from the organization's main purposes; and (5) destructive organizational outcomes are not exclusively the result of destructive leaders, but are also products of susceptible followers and conducive environments. In the following paragraphs, these three elements of the toxic triangle of destructive leadership are analysed more thoroughly.

**FIGURE 2  
THE TOXIC TRIANGLE**



Source: Padilla, Hogan & Kaiser (2007)

Destructive leaders are charismatic and narcissistic, have a personalized need for power, present negative life themes and an ideology of hate. Charisma is necessary but apparently not sufficient for a leader to be destructive. Narcissism is linked to charisma and to the personalized need for power, involving domination, grandiosity, arrogance and the selfish pursuit of pleasure. Narcissistic leaders live in their own world, ignoring the group's needs and opinions, abusing power and exercising it autocratically, making decisions disconnected from reality. The personalized need for power is related with the use of the leadership position for self-promotion and personal gain. Negative life themes usually result from traumatic life experiences that form a destructive image of the world. An ideology of hate results in a worldview, vision and rhetoric containing images of hate, directed at victory over rivals and destruction of enemies, which fosters a culture of intimidation. It is not enough to possess one of these characteristics to be a destructive leader. It is not even enough possessing them all. In many situations, potentially destructive leaders don't reach positions of power. For them to do so, susceptible followers and conducive environments are necessary (Padilla et al., 2007).

Padilla, Hogan & Kaiser (2007) accept Kellerman (2004) and Lipman-Blumen (2005) suggestion that subordinates accept domineering and abusive leaders because they have a need for safety, security, group membership, and predictability in an uncertain world. Some subordinates benefit from the leader's destructive activities and thus contribute to the toxic vision of the leader. There is also a natural tendency to obey authority figures and to conform to group norms, in order to obtain social order, cohesion, identity and coordination. However, Padilla, Hogan & Kaiser (2007) adopt Kellerman (2004) distinction between bystanders (allow bad leadership to happen, comply out of fear, try to minimize the consequences of not going along) and acolytes ("true believers", who join in the destruction, and actively participate in the leader's agenda seeking personal gain). The former are called conformers and the latter

colluders. Conformers are vulnerable due to their unmet needs (economic difficulties or loneliness), to negative self-evaluations (low self-esteem and self-efficacy), and to psychological immaturity (integrated and socially valued identity not entirely formed). Colluders are ambitious (consider the destructive leader as a vehicle for achieving a higher status), selfish (ignore the socially destructive consequences of their actions) and share the leader's world-view (the sharing of values generates greater satisfaction, commitment and motivation).

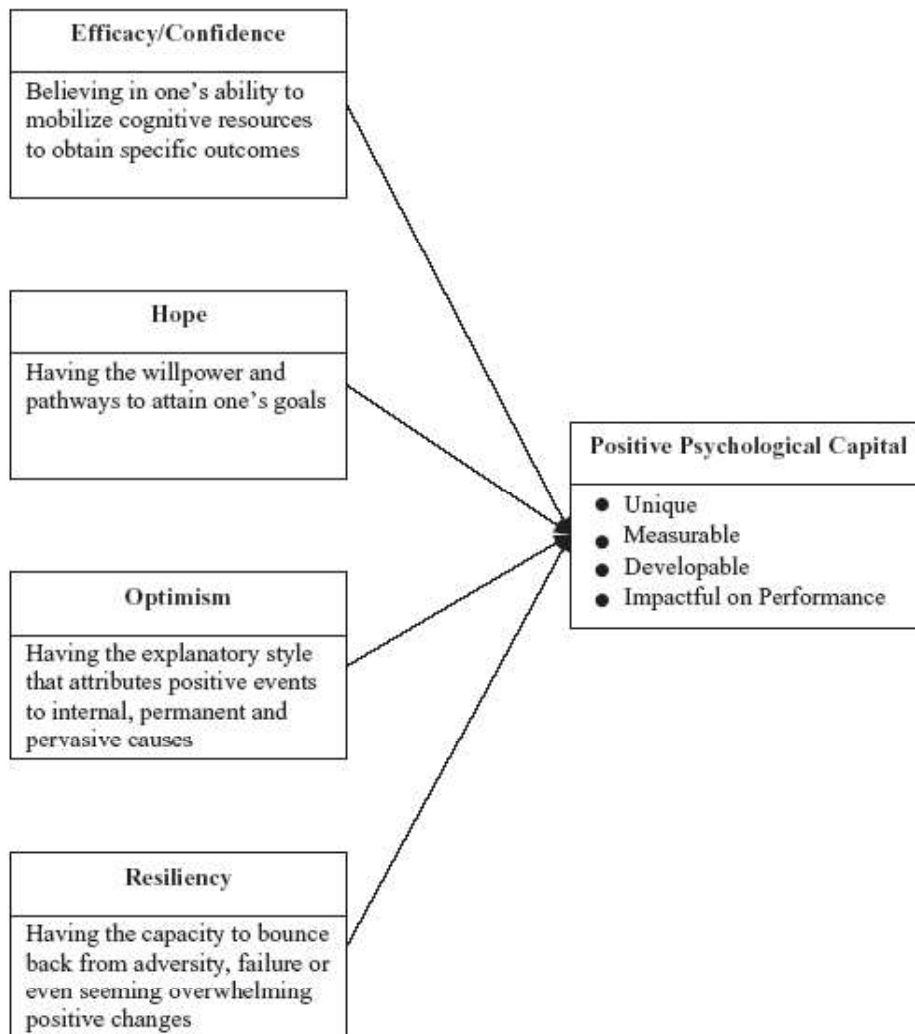
The third component of destructive leadership is a conducive environment. There are four environmental factors that are important for destructive leadership: instability, perceived threat, cultural values, and the absence of checks and balances and institutionalization. (Padilla et al., 2007).

### **Positive Psychological Capital**

Positive Psychological Capital (PsyCap) is the main concept of the Positive Organizational Behaviour field of research. It encompasses and signifies the positive side of organizational behaviour, instead of the negative.

PsyCap is an individual's positive psychological state of development and is characterized by: (1) having confidence [self-efficacy] to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution [optimism] about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals [hope] in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond [resilience] to attain success" (Luthans et al., 2007b, p. 3).

**FIGURE 3**  
**DIMENSIONS OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL**



Source: Luthans and Youssef (2004)

According to Luthans and Youssef (2004), Efficacy draws from the extensive theory and research of Albert Bandura, and is defined as one's confidence in his or her ability to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action necessary to execute a specific course of action within a given context. People who are self-efficacious (self-confident) choose challenging tasks and endeavours, extend motivation and effort to successfully accomplish their goals, and persevere when faced with obstacles. Self-efficacy has substantial research backup as to its positive impact in organizational settings.

Hope draws from the work of positive psychologist C. Rick Snyder as being a motivational state that is based on the interaction between three factors: goals, agency and pathways (Luthans and Youssef, 2004). People are driven to accomplish their goals by their sense of agency, which provides them with an internalized determination and willpower to invest the energy necessary to achieve their goals. Those with high hope are also motivated by their sense of having the capability to develop ways to get the things they want, which provides them with the ability to generate alternative pathways towards the accomplishment of their goals if the original ones have been blocked.

Optimism involves a positive explanatory style that attributes positive events to internal, permanent, and pervasive causes, and negative events to external, temporary, and situation-specific ones. This allows individuals to take credit for favourable events in their lives, boosting their self-esteem and morale. It also

allows them to distance themselves from unfavourable life happenstances, shielding them from depression, guilt, self-blame, and despair (Luthans and Youssef, 2004). Unlike hope, optimism has been applied not only to clinical applications, but also in organizational settings. Seligman has been one of the most relevant researchers on Optimism.

Finally, Resiliency is the capacity to bounce back from adversity, uncertainty, failure, or even positive but seemingly overwhelming changes such as increased responsibility (Luthans and Youssef, 2004). Resiliency allows individual and environmental protective mechanisms to operate through enhancing the assets and/or reducing the risk factors within individuals and/or their environment. Even though resiliency only now beginning to be studied in the workplace context, it meets the POB criteria. Moreover, recent analyses by organizational scholars suggest that resilient people can thrive and grow through setbacks and difficulties. They bounce back not only to their original but to even higher levels of performance, and find meaning and value in their lives in the process. There are three recognized components of such resiliency: a staunch acceptance of reality; a deep belief, often reinforced by strongly held values, that life is meaningful; and an uncanny ability to improvise and adapt to significant change.

### **Prosocial Behaviours**

Prosocial Behaviours are a component of Organizational Citizenship Behaviours (OCBs). We can trace the origins of Organizational Citizenship Behaviours to Katz's breakthrough paper "The motivational basis of organizational behaviour" (Katz, 1964). In this work, Katz identifies three types of behaviour he considers necessary for an organization to function properly: people must be induced to enter and remain in the organization, they must carry out specific role requirements in a dependable fashion, and there must be innovative and spontaneous activity that goes beyond role prescriptions. It's this last kind of behaviour that allows organizations to thrive, that lubricate the social machinery (Smith et al., 1983), and fill in the gaps in prescribed behaviours. These kind of behaviours comprise acts of cooperation, helpfulness, suggestions, gestures of goodwill, altruism, etc. Other authors call these behaviours organizational spontaneity (George and Brief, 1992; George and Jones, 1997), prosocial organizational behaviour (Brief and Motowidlo, 1986; George and Bettenhausen, 1990; George, 1991), contextual performance (Borman and Motowidlo, 1997; Motowidlo, 2000) or extrarole behaviour (Van Dyne, Cummings and Parks, 1995). Podsakoff et al (2009) found more than 650 articles on Organizational Citizenship Behaviour and related constructs.

Brief and Motowidlo (1986), calling these behaviours prosocial organizational behaviour, make some important distinctions between different kinds of behaviours. First, they distinguish between organizationally functional (contribute to the accomplishment of organizational goals) and dysfunctional (for example, behaviours that help other employees achieve personal goals that may be irrelevant or contrary to organizational objectives) behaviours. They also distinguish between prosocial behaviours that are role-prescribed or extra-role. Thirdly, they make a distinction regarding the targets of the behaviours: co-worker, customer, and the organization as a unit.

## **EMPIRICAL STUDY**

### **Hypotheses**

Considering the previous review, the two first hypotheses are very obvious:

Hypothesis 1: Destructive Leadership is negatively correlated with prosocial behaviours.

Hypothesis 2: PsyCap is positively correlated with prosocial behaviours.

But the purpose of this study is more ambitious. Several forms of destructive leadership have been associated with impacts in some of the components of PsyCap. Duffy et al. (2002) found that social undermining (behaviour intended to hinder, over time, the ability to establish and maintain positive interpersonal relationships, work-related success, and favourable reputation.), that fits in the definition of destructive leadership, had a negative impact on subordinates' self-efficacy. Ashforth (1997) found petty tyranny to have an impact on helplessness and self-esteem (sense of competence and self-worth), which we can associate with positive psychological capital's components of optimism and self-efficacy. This

means that destructive leadership can have a negative impact on PsyCap, which in turn will result in a similar impact on prosocial behaviours. And that is hypothesis 3:

Hypothesis 3: PsyCap mediates the relation between destructive leadership and prosocial behaviours.

Whereas destructive leadership can negatively affect the subordinates' PsyCap, we can also propose that subordinates' PsyCap may filter destructive leadership's negative impact on prosocial behaviours. Subordinates with a more developed positive psychological capital will have more competencies to resist the leader's destructive behaviour and to reduce their impact. In a literature review on workplace victimization, Aquino (2009) identified low self-esteem and low control over the work as predictors of victimization. In a previous study (Aquino, Grover, Bradfield, & Allen, 1999), victims had already been associated with insecurity, and negative views of themselves and of their situation. Self-efficacy (believing in one's ability to mobilize cognitive resources to obtain specific outcomes) and hope (having the willpower and pathways to attain one's goals) are psychological capacities that reduce insecurity and negative views of themselves and their situations. Self-efficacy has also been associated with perceptions of control and as a significant contributor to functioning under stress and fear (Bandura & Locke, 2003). Grandey et al. (2007) found abusive supervision to cause exhaustion and negative emotions. Psychological capital has been found to impact positive emotions (Peterson, et al., 2012). Avey et al. (2009) found that developing and leveraging employees' positive psychological capital helped them better coping with work-related stress. Also, considering the characteristics associated with susceptible followers, we can verify that they correspond to low scores on the positive psychological capital components. This would mean that subordinates with a highly developed positive psychological capital (confident, optimistic, hopeful, and resilient) will be less susceptible to destructive leadership behaviours. Which brings us to hypothesis 4:

Hypothesis 4: Positive psychological capital moderates the relation between destructive leadership and prosocial behaviours.

## **Sample**

The sample selection was carried out aiming to obtain high validity (through the size of the sample) to the study, by trying to isolate (as much as possible) the variables. This would bring the study closer to a *ceteris paribus* situation thus minimizing the leader attribution error (Hackman and Wageman, 2005). This way, a retail chain was selected, being enquired all of the 681 employees, distributed by 122 stores; with a total of 35 leaders (all leaders manage more than one store). Retail stores are organized as work teams, sharing the same work procedures and offering customers the same range of products and services. This way, the link between leadership and team performance should be clearer than in other sectors.

The participants were mostly female (95% of employees and 83% of leaders). Leaders, on average, are 34 years and 6 months old, have been in the company for 5 years and 2 months, being 3 years and 5 months of those in the current store. All leaders have college education. Employees, on average are 29 years and 7 months old, have been in the company for 4 years and 5 months (56% of employees are in the company for less than 5 years), and are in their current store for 3 years and 2 months. 40% of employees have college education.

In agreement with management, in order to limit the time demand on teams, the research instruments were divided in two questionnaires. In each store, half of the employees would answer a questionnaire on the leaders' destructive behaviours and the other half would rate the team's psychological capital as well as their perceived performance. The leader would answer a questionnaire similar to the latter, also rating the team's psychological capital and perceived performance.

After the collection of all the questionnaires, the stores with less than two answers to each questionnaire were eliminated, remaining a total of 98 stores, comprising 280 questionnaires of leadership behaviours and 287 questionnaires of teams' psychological capital and perceived performance.

## **Instruments**

The Psychological Capital Questionnaire, developed by Luthans et al (2007b), empirically validated by Luthans et al (2007a), and now of widespread use in research (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009, Avey et al., 2010, Walumbwa et al., 2011, Peterson et al., 2012, Newman et al., 2014), was used. This questionnaire



has 24 items, six for each of the Psychological Capital components (Self-efficacy, Hope, Resilience, and Optimism). The used scale range is from 1: “strongly disagree” to 6: “strongly agree”). Sample items are: (a) I feel confident in representing my work area in meetings with management [self-efficacy]; (b) When things are uncertain for me at work, I usually expect the best [optimism]; (c) I can think of many ways to reach my current work goals [hope]; (d) I usually take stressful things at work in stride [resilience]. This scale has been previously translated and validated by Arménio Rego (Rego et al., 2010, Rego et al., 2012).

For the destructive Leadership construct, the selected measure was the Destructive Leadership Scale (Aasland et al., 2010); using 22 items with four points (from 0: “not at all” to 3: “very often, almost always”). Sample items are: Your immediate superior: (a) Gives recognition for good performance? [constructive leadership]; (b) Has encouraged you to enjoy extra privileges at the company’s expense? [supportive-disloyal leadership]; (c) Has humiliated you, or other employees, if you/they fail to live up to his/her standards? [tyrannical leadership]; (d) Has used his/her position in the firm to profit financially/materially at the company’s expense? [derailed leadership]; (e) Is likely to be absent when needed? [laissez-faire leadership]. Since there was no previous study using the scale in the Portuguese language, a first translator translated the items from English to Portuguese, and a second translator independently back-translated them to English. Both translators discussed discrepancies between the two versions and the final version was obtained.

To assess prosocial behaviours was used a 15 item scale developed by Bettencourt and Brown (1997) and widely used presently (Chow et al., 2015, Tsaour et al., 2014, Ho and Gupta, 2012, Hsu et al., 2011, Huang, 2011). It was chosen for its suitability to contact employees. The instrument assesses the perceived role-prescribed and extra-role customer service as well as cooperation. Sample items are: (a) Meets formal performance requirements when serving customers [role-prescribed customer-behaviour]; (b) Helps customers with problems beyond what is expected or required [extra-role customer-behaviour]; (c) Helps other employees who have heavy work loads [cooperation]. The assessment was made by the team supervisor. Since there was no previous study using the scale in the Portuguese language, a first translator translated the items from English to Portuguese, and a second translator independently back-translated them to English. Both translators discussed discrepancies between the two versions and the final version was obtained.

## FINDINGS

### Results

**TABLE 1  
CORRELATIONS**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. constructive leadership	1								
2. supportive-disloyal leadership	0,080	1							
3. tyrannical leadership	-,317**	,389**	1						
4. derailed leadership	-,280**	,439**	,638**	1					
5. laissez-faire leadership	-,316**	,380**	,349**	,510**	1				
6. PsyCap	0,062	-0,107	-0,198	-0,033	0,047	1			
7. role prescribed customer service	0,060	-0,129	-0,114	-0,003	-0,012	,423**	1		
8. extra-role customer service	0,120	-0,146	-,240*	-0,062	-0,075	,421**	,813**	1	
9. cooperation	0,177	-0,068	-0,133	-0,060	-0,068	,369**	,634**	,649**	1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The destructive leadership behaviours are negatively correlated with constructive leadership and positively correlated with each other, except for supportive-disloyal leadership. This makes some sense, since supportive-disloyal leadership comprises behaviours beneficial to subordinates, whereas the others

mostly have a negative impact on subordinates. Leadership behaviours mostly don't exert a statistically significant effect on prosocial behaviours. The exception is the negative impact of tyrannical leadership on extra-role customer service. This can be explained by the professionalism of teams. They don't let tyrannical leadership to impact their role performance, but that makes them less available to go beyond their prescribed roles. The absence of impact on cooperation can be explained because cooperation is a behaviour directed at their co-workers, not the organization or the leader. This means that hypothesis 1 was only partially verified, since only one of the destructive leadership behaviours (tyrannical leadership) showed a statistically significant impact on one of the prosocial behaviours (extra-role customer service).

The team's PsyCap was found to be correlated with all the measures of prosocial behaviours (role-prescribed, extra-role and cooperation). Hypothesis 2 is a winner, validating previously identified relations between PsyCap and performance (Youssef and Luthans, 2007, Luthans et al., 2007a, Clapp-Smith et al., 2009, Walumbwa et al., 2010) and Organizational Citizenship Behaviours (Avey et al., 2010, Beal III et al., 2013, Kim, 2013, Hsiao et al., 2015)

The lack of significant correlation between PsyCap and destructive leadership behaviours leads to reject hypothesis 3 for this sample. This is an unexpected result, especially considering recent study by Wu and Lee (2016), that found PsyCap to mediate the relation between abusive supervision (a concept very similar to Tyrannical Leadership) and knowledge sharing.

Concerning the moderating effect of PsyCap on the influence of destructive leadership on prosocial behaviours, using the Johnson-Neyman technique (Potthoff, 1964, Preacher et al., 2007, Hayes and Matthes, 2009), it was identified a significance region for the conditional interaction between tyrannical leadership and extra-role customer service. For very low scores of team PsyCap (below average minus one standard deviation), there is the negative effect of tyrannical leadership on extra-role customer service. However, when the scores of team psychological capital get above that point, the effect no longer is statistically significant. So, Hypothesis 4 is verified.

## **Discussion**

Although these results may be considered somewhat discouraging, there are some contextual circumstances to consider and a very bright spot to hang on to.

The research team proposing the Destructive Leadership model (Skogstad et al., 2014) presented two recent studies (with 6 month and 2 year time frames), in this case focusing on the impacts of leadership in the subordinates' job satisfaction. They found some similar results. Constructive Leadership was not a predictor of job satisfaction, as in this case was not correlated with prosocial behaviours. And only one of the destructive forms of leadership was a predictor of job satisfaction in each of the studies – Tyrannical Leadership in the 6 month study and Laissez Faire Leadership in the 2 year study.

Fortunately for the organization, but unfortunately for the purpose of this study, the frequency of destructive leadership behaviours in the sample wasn't very high. Most of the leaders had very low scores on the destructive leadership behaviours, which means there was little variability in the sample, making it more difficult to find statistically significant effects. If we consider the Aasland et al. (2010) survey mentioned in the beginning, this sample seems kind of peculiar. It may be useful to try to understand the causes for this reduced presence of destructive leaders. One possible explanation may reside in organizational culture. Some authors (Schein, 2010, Bass and Avolio, 1993, Schneider et al., 2013) propose that there is a dialectic relationship between leadership and organizational culture. Initially, founders of new organizations create and shape the organizational culture by way of their traits and behaviour and, as the organization matures, the culture begins to define the leadership. Bass and Avolio (1993) suggest that the ability to understand and work within a certain culture is a prerequisite to leadership effectiveness. However, most research on the relationship between organizational culture and leadership focuses on analysing how leadership impacts organizational culture (Giberson et al., 2009, Hennessey, 1998, Hai Nam and Mohamed, 2011, Ogbonna and Harris, 2000, Schneider et al., 2013, Zehir et al., 2011). Research on trying to understand how organizational culture impacts leadership (Giritli et al., 2013, Shamir and Howell, 1999) is a bit more scarce. This may be an opportunity for future work

trying to understand how recruitment practices and other influence mechanisms may lead organizations to hire leaders with a certain profile and guide them to certain behaviours.

Other point could be related to the professionalism and quality of the management procedures and approach of the studied company. When the variation in the results is small, and those results are good, maybe these organizational fixtures leave very little space for the impact of leadership. The substitutes for leadership theory (Kerr and Jermier, 1978) may help understanding these results. The substitutes for leadership that are present in this study, training and knowledge (99% of employees had at least completed high school, and 40% of employees have a university degree), unambiguous, routine and methodologically invariant tasks (the study focused the sales assistants of a retail chain), organizational formalization (the organization features very thorough work procedures and performance guidelines), and closely-knit, cohesive, interdependent work groups, are very likely to diminish the teams' need for leadership, thus limiting the leaders' capacity to exert a more impactful influence on performance. Also, one of the proposed leadership neutralizers (spatial distance between superior and subordinates), may have contributed to this results, since most leaders were responsible for more than one team, which may limit their impact.

These above-mentioned limitations (limited number of destructive leaders, specificity of the organization's procedures and industry) suggest the need to further study destructive leadership in other contexts. It is important to verify if these results are context-specific or applicable to other organizations and also to increase our knowledge on antecedents and moderators of destructive leadership.

The bright spot is that this study reinforces the relevance of PsyCap for organizations. Not only PsyCap has a positive effect on all prosocial behaviours, but it also has a moderator effect on the negative impact of tyrannical leadership. This supports the idea that developing a team's psychological capital can also be a means to protect organizations from the negative impacts of tyrannical leadership. Luthans and Youssef (2004) have proposed a set of strategies to develop the four components of PsyCap, and Luthans et al. (2010) have obtained empirical evidence that short training interventions may be used to develop participants' PsyCap. These results are very important in supporting PsyCap interventions as a sound investment for organizations, joining other studies corroborating PsyCap's positive impact on performance (Youssef and Luthans, 2007, Luthans et al., 2007a, Clapp-Smith et al., 2009, Walumbwa et al., 2010) and on Organizational Citizenship Behaviours (Avey et al., 2010, Beal III et al., 2013, Kim, 2013, Hsiao et al., 2015).

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this study is to verify if the followers' Positive Psychological Capital (PsyCap), can make them less susceptible to Destructive Leadership and act as a kind of vaccine or antidote to destructive leadership in organizations.

The empirical study found an impact of one of the destructive leadership behaviours (tyrannical leadership) on one of the measures of prosocial behaviour (extra-role customer service), and found also that this effect only happened when the teams' PsyCap was low (below average minus one standard deviation).

These results bring implications both for research and for practice. In research, it is important to study destructive leadership in broader samples, with more variability of leadership behaviours and to test other possible vaccines or antidotes to destructive leadership. In practice, this study shows that PsyCap interventions can be a very profitable investment, for they can make organizations less susceptible to destructive leadership, which was verified to have an impact on performance.

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