

## Article

# Positive Organizational Practices, Life Satisfaction, and Psychological Capital in the Public and Private Sectors

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**Abstract:** Public and private sector employees confronted stressful life circumstances that affected the world during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, new knowledge on possible psychological and organizational resources is needed. This study aimed to explore positive organizational practices, psychological capital, and life satisfaction of employees in the public and private sectors. The survey applied the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), the Psychological Capital Questionnaire—PCQ-24, validated in the Lithuanian population (the Lith-PCQ-21), and the Positive Organizational Practices Questionnaire. The sample consisted of 582 employees, including 443 public sector and 139 private sector employees. The respondents' mean age was 42.0981 years (SD = 13.23083). The CFA results confirmed the six-factor structure of positive organizational practices,  $\chi^2 = 270,884.785$ ; Df = 406; CFI = 0.996; TLI = 0.996; NFI = 0.995; RMSEA = 0.074 [0.070–0.078]; SRMR = 0.043, the four-factor structure of psychological capital,  $\chi^2 = 32,780.109$ ; Df = 190; CFI = 0.983; TLI = 0.980; NFI = 0.978; RMSEA = 0.082 [0.076–0.088]; SRMR = 0.067, and one factor structure of life satisfaction,  $\chi^2 = 10,588.246$ ; Df = 10; CFI = 0.999; TLI = 0.999; NFI = 0.999; RMSEA = 0.022 [0.000–0.066]; SRMR = 0.014. The findings revealed that private sector employees demonstrated higher scores of dignity, support, care, forgiveness, and overall positive organizational practices than public sector employees. Private sector employees demonstrated higher optimism scores than public sector employees, and public sector employees demonstrated higher self-efficacy scores than private sector employees. Male employees demonstrated significantly higher scores on dignity, meaning, and forgiveness than females. Significant positive correlations were found between age and resilience, care and age, care and number of working years, care and number of working years in the current organization. Psychological capital mediated the link between positive organizational practices and life satisfaction. Positive organizational practices were linked to life satisfaction and psychological capital in both employees' groups, but the features of links were distinctive in the public and private sectors. These results signify the importance of positive organizational practices and psychological capital for the life satisfaction of employees.

**Keywords:** positive organizational practices; psychological capital; employees; organizations; public sector; private sector



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## 1. Introduction

Public and private sector employees encountered stressful circumstances that impacted the world due to the COVID-19 [1]. The initial research on the harm of the pandemic reveals an increase in the rates of unsatisfactory psychological wellbeing [2,3], including tense workplace responses [4–11]. Therefore, new knowledge on possible psychological and organizational resources to improve the wellbeing of employees is needed.

Furthermore, sustainability is described in terms of the ecological and socio-economic environment and enhancing the wellbeing of every human being [12,13]. This study

explores employees' positive organizational practices, psychological capital, and life satisfaction to identify the specifics in public and private sectors to facilitate optimal functioning at individual and organizational levels.

### 1.1. Positive Organizational Practices

Positive practices refer to activities that are sustaining and honorable [14]. In work teams, positive organizational practices not only enhance individual accomplishments but can also neutralize someone's low positivity, uplifting performance [15–21]. Research indicates that high-performance organizations care about human capital, including skills mismatch prevention [22]. Besides, they have three times as many "positive energizers" (who inspire and motivate others) as average organizations do [14,16,21].

Cameron et al. (2011) indicated that positive practices in organizations produce positive attitudes and affect in employees (e.g., satisfaction, happiness). Positive attitudes generate positive individual behaviors, which, in turn, produce organizational effectiveness, including profitability and productivity [14,15,20,21]. Additionally, Cameron et al. (2011) suggested three mechanisms for the effect of positive practices on organizational effectiveness. Firstly, researchers introduced amplification, enhancing positive emotions, and enabling effective social connections. Next, buffering procedure means shielding and reducing adverse effects of stress, trauma, and illness. Finally, heliotropism fosters positive energy and life-giving effects that elevate performance [14,23].

Cameron et al. (2011) noted that positive practices capture the whole breadth of positivity, namely "behaviors, techniques, routines" that reflect "exceptional, affirmative, and virtuous attitudes and actions." A positive practices scale with six dimensions was designed [14]. (1) Dignity or respect dimension suggests that people trust one another, treating one another with integrity, dignity, and respect; (2) Care dimension indicates that people respond to one another, genuinely caring for one another; (3) Support dimension suggests that people support one another in their endeavors, building solid relationships through kindness and helping those who are struggling; (4) Inspiration dimension postulates that people inspire one another by drawing out the good in one another; (5) Meaning dimension suggests that see the greater purpose in work and discover its profound meaning; (6) Forgiveness dimension proposes that people do not blame one another for mistakes but forgive one another's faults. These dimensions at work can be reliably evaluated [21,24].

Previous studies revealed that positive organizational practices were significantly related to work engagement, task performance, and social climate [21]. However, even though positive practices receive increased attention from researchers [14–21,25–27], there is a lack of research on the specifics of positive organizational practices in public and private sector organizations. Exploring positive organizational practices in the public and private sectors and analyzing the links to the possibly related variables might provide supplemental information on the contributing factors.

### 1.2. Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction signifies an evaluation of one's life and is the cognitive component of the psychological wellbeing construct of [28]. Research shows that persons satisfied with life have better health, including psychological wellbeing [29,30]. Vice versa, dissatisfaction with life is linked to lower levels of wellbeing, including low job satisfaction [31–41].

Vinas—Bardolet et al., in 2020, conducted a study that aimed to explore the influence of job characteristics on satisfaction with several life domains in 28 European Union countries. They revealed that satisfaction in the work domain ranked fourth in contributing to overall life satisfaction, after the standard of living, family life, and social life domains. The authors refer that the relatively low direct contribution to life satisfaction of the work domain was evident among low-skilled workers [37].

Even though there are several models on life satisfaction, and this construct has been extensively studied [28,31–53], there is a lack of research that explores the specifics of life satisfaction concerning other positive organizational behavior constructs, like positive

organizational practices or psychological capital, with the focus on the groups of employees working in the public and private sectors.

### 1.3. Psychological Capital

The construct of psychological capital emerged within the positive psychology movement and represented the importance of investigation in what is well with people and what contributes to flourishing and growth potential, including thriving at work [16,22,53–83]. Several decades ago, researchers extended positive focus to the workplace by focusing on the value of micro-oriented positivity in individuals and macro-oriented positivity in organizations [84–89]. Positive psychological resources such as hope or resilience, once considered “a quality of gifted individuals”, got empirical support to develop them [56,78,89–92].

A construct of psychological capital (PsyCap) is defined as “individual’s positive state of development [ . . . ], characterized by (1) having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making positive attributions (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to attain success” [93–95]. In other words, psychological capital suggests a constructive evaluation of one’s ability to handle challenges with sustained effort, and this appraisal reflects four dimensions: self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism. Moreover, psychological capital is a resource that goes beyond human capital (experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities) and social capital (relationships, networks). It deals with “who you are here and now” and “who you can become” in the proximal future if your psychological resources are developed and nurtured in the workplace [56,73,75,88,93].

Numerous studies have confirmed that psychological capital and its interventions are related to reduced work-related problems, not to mention positive wellbeing and work-related outcomes [96–105]. Research of the psychological capital in the public sector has evidenced its’ numerous benefits [57,106–109]. Similarly, the studies on psychological capital in the business, entrepreneurial, or marketing contexts demonstrated the added value of psychological capital and its interventions for the private sector organizations [110–119].

Even though the concept of psychological capital might be theoretically linked to positive organizational practices, the links between psychological capital and positive organizational practices are not sufficiently explored. Moreover, previous studies did not target possible differences in the public and private sectors.

### 1.4. Importance of the Study

Private and public sector organizations are distinct in many ways (e.g., perceptions of meritocracy [120], human resources management strategies and trends [121–123], performance evaluation [124], links between human resource management practices and performance [125], quality initiatives [126]). Despite some similarities, research indicates numerous sectoral differences in employee-related variables, including employee engagement antecedents [127], work engagement [128], presenteeism and burnout [129], the effects of extrinsic rewards on psychological empowerment [130], leadership competencies [131], managerial work activities [132], job satisfaction [133], emotional changes and protective factors [134], public service motivation [135], addressing secondary traumatic stress [136], affective organizational commitment [137], talent management [138], determinants of general health, work-related strain, and burnout [139], employees’ work characteristics and burnout [140]. However, employees’ positive organizational practices in different sectors, especially under the COVID-19 pandemic, have not been targeted yet. Based on prior research indicating organizational behavior differences in different sectors and the importance of organizational practices [123,125,127,137,141], we hypothesized differences in positive organizational practices in the public and private sectors. Thus, this study, firstly, brings some preliminary insights on differences in positive organizational practices in different sectors under the stressful conditions of the pandemic.

Second, literature analysis revealed that studies that were conducted in different sectors reported higher psychological capital scores in the private sector (e.g., Mean = 5.35, SD = 1.25, [113]) to compare with the scores of psychological capital in the public sector (e.g., Mean = 4.6, SD = 0.55, [107]). Based on previous findings indirectly indicating psychological capital differences in different sectors, we hypothesized that comparative analysis would consequently reveal differences in psychological capital in the public and private sectors. To our knowledge, no comparative analyses were explicitly performed on psychological capital differences in different sectors, primarily under the COVID-19 conditions. The comparative analysis of psychological capital in different sectors, especially under challenging circumstances, adds value in introducing possible antecedents of psychological capital in different sectors.

Third, the COVID-19 pandemic brought several challenges for employees in both sectors, including moving to remote work [142], work overload, and mental health issues [4,5,7–11]. Employee life satisfaction has been challenged in both sectors, even though different sectors encountered specific problems. Prior studies reported some differences in life satisfaction between the sectors [127,139,143]. Based on previous research indicating detrimental effects of the pandemic on the psychological wellbeing of employees [1,3], we hypothesized some statistically significant differences in life satisfaction between the public and private sectors. Employees' life satisfaction in different sectors, primarily under the circumstances of the pandemic, has not been fully targeted yet. Hence, this study clarifies the life satisfaction of employees in different sectors.

Fourth, previous studies have reported interesting sociodemographic correlates of life satisfaction, psychological capital, and positive organizational practices. Namely, some studies indicated a significant effect of gender and age on life satisfaction [144,145], some significant effect of gender on psychological capital [146–148], and just some significant effect of age on psychological capital [149]. However, the role of age and gender on positive organizational practices has not been fully explored, even though previous research provided some results on the effects of age on positive organizational practices [21]. Therefore, based on previously reported studies, we hypothesized that gender and age differences are not statistically significant for positive organizational practices and psychological capital but significant for life satisfaction. Thus, this study provides preliminary information on the importance of employees' sociodemographic variables.

Fifth, numerous studies have reported links between psychological capital and wellbeing or life satisfaction [101,150–153]. Some studies have reported links between positive organizational practices and wellbeing [18,19,91] or links between organizational practices and psychological capital [154]. However, the links between positive organizational practices, psychological capital, and life satisfaction have not been fully targeted. Moreover, previous studies did not compare these links in the private and public sectors but instead focused on the role of positive organizational practices, employees' wellbeing, or psychological capital on organizational effectiveness separately. Therefore, we hypothesized links between positive organizational practices, psychological capital (self-efficacy, resilience, hope, optimism), and life satisfaction. Moreover, we expected to identify differences between public and private sector employees. Thus, this study clarifies the links between the study variables and their specifics in different sectors.

Additionally, this study might have practical value for human resources management and strategic management professionals, policymakers, and managers at organizational, societal, and governmental levels. If public sector employees demonstrate significantly lower scores of positive organizational practices, this study would indicate the need for human resources management reforms in the public sector. Of course, primarily, the findings of this study would appeal to Lithuania (the research sample were citizens of Lithuania), as the data might reflect the cultural specifics of this country.

Finally, private sector companies worldwide are encouraged to keep social responsibility and sustainability standards [155,156]. Similarly, in the public sector, organizations are obliged to keep good administration standards to ensure the population's wellbeing; other-

wise, countries would suffer painful consequences [157]. Keeping social responsibility or good administration standards involves employees' wellbeing-oriented human resources management [158]. We expect this study to add value in clarifying some of the employees' well-being antecedents.

To sum up, this study is based on positive organizational scholarship theory, which emphasizes factors that elevate and inspire individuals and organizations [14,20,25,55,117]. Positive organizational scholarship presumes the necessity of defining the possibilities for positive deviance rather than just improving on the challenging and broken [18,19]. Furthermore, this study is also based on the sustainable well-being approach, which suggests synergy between sustainability and well-being research [159].

Accordingly, during this challenging time of the pandemic, this study was primarily focused on positive aspects in different sectors and aimed to identify positive organizational practices, life satisfaction, and psychological capital of the public sector employees and compare the results with the scores of the private sector employees. As some studies indicated the possible effect of gender and age-related variables [144,146–148], we considered it essential to explore their role, as it might provide some additional information for a better understanding of the underlying mechanisms.

Based on previous research, we hypothesized that:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1).** *Public sector employees differ in their positive organizational practices from private sector employees;*

**Hypothesis 2 (H2).** *Public sector employees differ in their psychological capital from private sector employees;*

**Hypothesis 3 (H3).** *Public sector employees differ in their life satisfaction from private sector employees;*

**Hypothesis 4 (H4).** *Gender and age differences are not statistically significant for positive organizational practices and psychological capital but significant for life satisfaction.*

**Hypothesis 5 (H5).** *There exist associations between positive organizational practices, psychological capital (self-efficacy, resilience, hope, optimism), and life satisfaction; they differ between public and private sector employees.*

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Sample

This study applied a simple random sample design. The possible respondents were asked to participate in the study during the group meetings organized in several public and private sector organizations. Those participants who expressed an interest in participating in the study could take an envelope with questionnaires, which had to be sent back to researchers by mails. The participants were informed that personal data (names, organization) are omitted in the questionnaire to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

The sample consisted of 582 participants: 443 public sector employees and 139 private sector employees. The respondents' mean age was 42.0981 years ( $SD = 13.23083$ , age-range = from 20 to 76 years). The mean of the indicated number of working years was 19.9192 ( $SD = 12.88151$ ), and the mean of working years in the current organization was 12.6632 ( $SD = 12.13805$ ). The study's subjects included 115 males and 476 females.

Participation in the study was voluntary, and the participants did not receive any compensation. The procedure followed the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guidelines and the Declaration of Helsinki.

## 2.2. Instruments

This study used three instruments: the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), developed by E. Diener [28], the Psychological Capital Questionnaire—PCQ-24, developed by F. Luthans, and validated in the Lithuanian population (the Lith-PCQ-21) [145], and the Positive Organizational Practices questionnaire, developed by K. Cameron [24]. The instruments were translated into Lithuanian and back translated.

### 2.2.1. The SWLS

We applied the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) of E. Diener and colleagues [27] to evaluate the life satisfaction of employees. The SWLS is a short 5-item instrument designed to measure global cognitive judgments of satisfaction with one's life. The response pattern followed a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 7 (totally agree) to 1 (totally disagree). Validation studies confirmed the one-dimensional structure of the SWLS, evidencing the instrument's favorable psychometric properties, including high internal consistency and high temporal reliability [38,42]. The reliability results of the instrument in this study are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Cronbach alphas and McDonald's Omegas for the Psychological Capital and Positive Organizational Practices Questionnaires.

Scales and Subscales	Cronbach's $\alpha$	McDonald's $\omega$
Psychological Capital	0.906	0.899
Self-efficacy	0.859	0.863
Hope	0.831	0.834
Resilience	0.769	0.765
Optimism	0.571	0.636
Positive Organizational Practices	0.962	0.962
Dignity	0.926	0.926
Support	0.914	0.916
Care	0.898	0.895
Meaning	0.906	0.907
Inspiration	0.827	0.836
Forgiveness	0.878	0.879
Life Satisfaction	0.881	0.882

### 2.2.2. The Positive Practices Questionnaire

Cameron et al.'s (2011) 29-item positive practices scale was used to measure the positive practices of employees in public and private sectors [24]. Respondents were asked to respond to the positive practice items/statements, and rate how they perceive their work team on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), such as "We treat each other with respect" and "We show kindness to one another." Two distinct studies revealed six stable dimensions: (a) caring (four items,  $\alpha = 0.93, 0.95$ ), (b) forgiveness (three items,  $\alpha = 0.85, 0.89$ ), (c) inspiration (three items,  $\alpha = 0.90, 0.93$ ), (d) meaning (five items,  $\alpha = 0.90, 0.92$ ), (e) dignity, or respect (seven items,  $\alpha = 0.94, 0.95$ ), and (f) support (seven items,  $\alpha = 0.95, 0.96$ ) [14]. The reliability results of the instrument in this study are provided in Table 1.

### 2.2.3. The Lith-PCQ-21

We applied the Lith-PCQ-21 scale [145] to assess respondents' positive psychological capital. As mentioned above, Psychological Capital or PsyCap is a higher-order construct consisting of four subscales: hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism. In this study, the response pattern followed a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 6 (totally agree) to 1 (totally disagree). The PCQ-24 has been validated during the last decade in many cultural contexts and countries [160–165].

In this study, for the reliability analysis of the instruments [166], Cronbach's alphas and McDonald's omegas were calculated (Table 1).

### 2.3. Statistical Analysis

To analyze the data, we applied SPSS v.26.0 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA). Additionally, for the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and mediation analysis, we applied AMOS v.26.0 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA) and JASP v. 0.14.1.0 (University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands).

In this study, to evaluate model fit, we used the CFI (Comparative Fit Index), the Normed Fit Index (NFI), the Tucker–Lewis coefficient (TLI), RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation), and SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual). The values higher than 0.90 for CFI, NFI, and TLI, and values lower than 0.08 for RMSEA and SRMR were considered indicative of a good fit, and  $p$ -values less than 0.05 were considered to be indicative of a good fit be statistically significant [167–169].

The Shapiro–Wilk test showed the departure from normality for the variables of psychological capital,  $W(474) = 0.979, p < 0.001$ ; self-efficacy,  $W(453) = 0.947, p < 0.001$ ; hope,  $W(474) = 0.949, p < 0.001$ ; resilience,  $W(474) = 0.956, p < 0.001$ ; optimism,  $W(474) = 0.964, p < 0.001$ ; positive organizational practices,  $W(474) = 0.972, p < 0.001$ ; dignity,  $W(474) = 0.961, p < 0.001$ ; support,  $W(474) = 0.961, p < 0.001$ ; care,  $W(474) = 0.961, p < 0.001$ ; meaning,  $W(474) = 0.971, p < 0.001$ ; inspiration,  $W(474) = 0.960, p < 0.001$ ; forgiveness,  $W(474) = 0.950, p < 0.001$ ; life satisfaction,  $W(474) = 0.985, p < 0.001$ .

The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test showed the following results: psychological capital,  $D(474) = 0.046, p < 0.001$ ; self-efficacy,  $D(453) = 0.110, p < 0.001$ ; hope,  $D(474) = 0.107, p < 0.001$ ; resilience,  $D(474) = 0.128, p < 0.001$ ; optimism,  $D(474) = 0.088, p < 0.001$ ; positive organizational practices,  $D(474) = 0.067, p < 0.001$ ; dignity,  $D(474) = 0.111, p < 0.001$ ; support,  $D(474) = 0.112, p < 0.001$ ; care,  $D(474) = 0.121, p < 0.001$ ; meaning,  $D(474) = 0.120, p < 0.001$ ; inspiration,  $D(474) = 0.133, p < 0.001$ ; forgiveness,  $D(474) = 0.133, p < 0.001$ ; life satisfaction,  $D(474) = 0.068, p < 0.001$ .

The distribution was moderately skewed: psychological capital skewness =  $-0.564$  ( $SE = 0.119$ ), kurtosis =  $0.218$  ( $SE = 0.219$ ); self-efficacy skewness =  $-0.779$  ( $SE = 0.105$ ), kurtosis =  $0.676$  ( $SE = 0.209$ ); hope skewness =  $-0.734$  ( $SE = 0.105$ ), kurtosis =  $0.333$  ( $SE = 0.209$ ); resilience skewness =  $-0.627$  ( $SE = 0.104$ ), kurtosis =  $-0.014$  ( $SE = 0.208$ ); optimism skewness =  $-0.212$  ( $SE = 0.105$ ), kurtosis =  $-0.477$  ( $SE = 0.210$ ); positive organizational practices skewness =  $-0.119$  ( $SE = 0.110$ ), kurtosis =  $1.171$  ( $SE = 0.219$ ); dignity skewness =  $-0.290$  ( $SE = 0.104$ ), kurtosis =  $0.859$  ( $SE = 0.208$ ), support skewness =  $-0.355$  ( $SE = 0.105$ ), kurtosis =  $1.217$  ( $SE = 0.210$ ), care skewness =  $-0.005$  ( $SE = 0.104$ ), kurtosis =  $0.385$  ( $SE = 0.208$ ), meaning skewness =  $-0.137$  ( $SE = 0.104$ ), kurtosis =  $0.333$  ( $SE = 0.207$ ), inspiration skewness =  $-0.228$  ( $SE = 0.104$ ), kurtosis =  $0.458$  ( $SE = 0.207$ ), forgiveness skewness =  $-0.355$  ( $SE = 0.103$ ), kurtosis =  $0.378$  ( $SE = 0.206$ ), life satisfaction skewness =  $-0.122$  ( $SE = 0.103$ ), kurtosis =  $-0.548$  ( $SE = 0.206$ ).

### 3. Results

The means, standard deviations, and correlations between the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (The Lith-PCQ-21) subscales in this study are reported in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The Psychological Capital Questionnaire (The Lith-PCQ-21): descriptive statistics and correlations.

The PsyCap Subscales	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1. Self-efficacy	4.1090	0.6924	-		
2. Hope	4.0913	0.6637	0.727 ***	-	
3. Resilience	4.0405	0.7034	0.628 ***	0.641 ***	-
4. Optimism	3.8855	0.6967	0.383 ***	0.452 ***	0.385 ***

*M*, mean; *SD*, standard deviation. \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

The means, standard deviations, and correlations between the Positive Organizational Practices Scale's subscales in this study are reported in Table 3.

**Table 3.** The Positive Organizational Practices Scale's subscales: descriptive statistics and correlations.

The Positive Organizational Practices Subscales	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Dignity	3.6134	0.7532	-				
2. Support	3.6789	0.7024	0.828 ***	-			
3. Care	3.3575	0.8046	0.757 ***	0.821 ***	-		
4. Meaning	3.3211	0.8119	0.595 ***	0.605 ***	0.612 ***	-	
5. Inspiration	3.4498	0.7928	0.700 ***	0.725 ***	0.736 ***	0.754 ***	-
6. Forgiveness	3.4777	0.8118	0.687 ***	0.664 ***	0.624 ***	0.554 ***	0.662 ***

*M*, mean; *SD*, standard deviation. \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

The means, standard deviations, and correlations between the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (The Lith-PCQ-21), the Positive Organizational Practices Scale's, and Satisfaction with Life Scale's (SWLS) in this study are reported in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Descriptive statistics and correlations between the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (The Lith-PCQ-21), the Positive Organizational Practices Scales, and Satisfaction with Life Scale's (SWLS).

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2
1. Psychological Capital questionnaire (The Lith-PCQ-21)	4.0351	0.5445	-	
2. Positive Organizational Practices	3.4967	0.6760	0.316 ***	-
3. Life Satisfaction (SWLS)	4.2756	1.3145	0.345 ***	0.369 ***

*M*, mean; *SD*, standard deviation. \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA): Model fit indices for the Positive Organizational Practices Scale, the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (The Lith-PCQ-21), and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS).

Models	$\chi^2$	Df	CFI	TLI	NFI	RMSEA [90% CI]	SRMR
Positive Organizational Practices, six factors structure	270,884.785	406	0.996	0.996	0.995	0.074 [0.070–0.078]	0.043
Psychological Capital, four factors structure	32,780.109	190	0.983	0.980	0.978	0.082 [0.076–0.088]	0.067
Life Satisfaction, one factor structure	10,588.246	10	0.999	0.999	0.999	0.022 [0.000–0.066]	0.014

We have conducted the independent samples *t*-test to test H1 if public sector employees differ in their positive organizational practices from private sector employees. The results are displayed in Table 6.



**Table 6.** Comparison of positive organizational practices in groups of public and private sector employees.

Organization		Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i>	Mean Difference	SE Difference	Cohen's <i>d</i>	95% CI for Cohen's <i>d</i>	
										Lower	Upper
Dignity	Public	3.579	0.701	−2.961	481	0.003	−0.235	0.079	−0.321	−0.535	−0.108
	Private	3.814	0.830								
Support	Public	3.648	0.659	−2.620	481	0.009	−0.196	0.075	−0.284	−0.498	−0.071
	Private	3.844	0.787								
Care	Public	3.334	0.745	−2.053	481	0.041	−0.177	0.086	−0.223	−0.436	−0.009
	Private	3.511	0.944								
Meaning	Public	3.313	0.749	−0.354	481	0.724	−0.031	0.088	−0.038	−0.251	0.174
	Private	3.344	0.985								
Inspiration	Public	3.433	0.739	−1.570	481	0.117	−0.133	0.085	−0.170	−0.383	0.043
	Private	3.567	0.914								
Forgiveness	Public	3.423	0.792	−3.336	481	0.001	−0.289	0.087	−0.362	−0.576	−0.148
	Private	3.712	0.825								
Positive Practices	Public	3.459	0.625	−2.394	481	0.017	−0.173	0.072	−0.260	−0.473	−0.046
	Private	3.632	0.783								

The analysis has shown some differences between groups: private sector employees demonstrated higher scores of dignity ( $p = 0.003$ ), support ( $p = 0.009$ ), care ( $p = 0.041$ ), forgiveness ( $p = 0.001$ ), and overall positive organizational practices ( $p = 0.017$ ) than public sector employees. No significant differences between the groups were found in meaning ( $p = 0.724$ ) and inspiration ( $p = 0.117$ ).

Furthermore, to test H2, which presumed that public sector employees differ in their psychological capital from private sector employees, we conducted the independent samples' *t*-test (Table 7).

**Table 7.** Comparison of psychological capital in groups of public and private sector employees.

Organization		Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i>	Mean Difference	SE Difference	Cohen's <i>d</i>	95% CI for Cohen's <i>d</i>	
										Lower	Upper
Self-efficacy	Public	4.152	0.673	1.911	476	0.057	0.149	0.078	0.215	−0.006	0.436
	Private	4.003	0.762								
Hope	Public	4.104	0.642	0.150	476	0.881	0.011	0.074	0.017	−0.204	0.237
	Private	4.093	0.728								
Resilience	Public	4.065	0.662	1.008	476	0.314	0.078	0.077	0.113	−0.107	0.334
	Private	3.987	0.779								
Optimism	Public	3.868	0.677	−1.918	476	0.056	−0.145	0.075	−0.216	−0.436	0.005
	Private	4.013	0.649								
Psychological Capital	Public	4.047	0.521	0.380	476	0.704	0.023	0.061	0.043	−0.178	0.263
	Private	4.024	0.628								

Some statistically significant differences between the groups were revealed. Public sector employees demonstrated higher self-efficacy scores than private sector employees ( $p = 0.057$ ). Private sector employees demonstrated higher optimism scores ( $p = 0.056$ ) than public sector employees. However, no significant differences between the groups were observed in the scores of hope ( $p = 0.881$ ), resilience ( $p = 0.314$ ), or overall psychological capital ( $p = 0.704$ ).

Next, the independent samples *t*-test was conducted to test H3, which assumed that public sector employees' life satisfaction differs from private sector employees. The results of the analysis are displayed in Table 8.

**Table 8.** Comparison of life satisfaction in groups of public and private sector employees.

Organization		Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i>	Mean Difference	SE Difference	Cohen's <i>d</i>	95% CI for Cohen's <i>d</i>	
										Lower	Upper
Life Satisfaction	Public	4.226	1.327	−1.776	533	0.076	−0.247	0.139	−0.187	−0.393	0.020
	Private	4.473	1.309								

*T*-test analysis revealed no statistically significant differences between public and private sector employees in life satisfaction ( $p = 0.076$ ).

Furthermore, we tested H4, which presumed that gender and age differences are not significant for positive organizational practices and psychological capital but significant for life satisfaction. Therefore, we firstly conducted the Independent samples *t*-test to explore the scores of the different genders (Table 9).

**Table 9.** Comparison of positive organizational practices, psychological capital, and life satisfaction in groups of different genders.

	<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i>	Mean Difference	SE Difference	Cohen's <i>d</i>	95% CI for Cohen's <i>d</i>	
							Lower	Upper
Self-efficacy	−0.736	426	0.462	−0.063	0.085	−0.092	−0.338	0.153
Hope	−0.800	426	0.424	−0.066	0.082	−0.100	−0.346	0.145
Resilience	−0.885	426	0.376	−0.075	0.085	−0.111	−0.356	0.135
Optimism	0.850	426	0.396	0.072	0.085	0.106	−0.139	0.352
PsyCap	−0.486	426	0.627	−0.033	0.068	−0.061	−0.306	0.185
Dignity	2.275	426	0.023	0.210	0.092	0.285	0.039	0.531
Support	0.957	426	0.339	0.085	0.089	0.120	−0.126	0.365
Care	0.372	426	0.710	0.037	0.101	0.047	−0.199	0.292
Meaning	2.030	426	0.043	0.207	0.102	0.254	0.008	0.500
Inspiration	0.953	426	0.341	0.093	0.097	0.119	−0.126	0.365
Forgiveness	2.572	426	0.010	0.257	0.100	0.322	0.075	0.568
Positive Practices	1.705	426	0.089	0.143	0.084	0.213	−0.032	0.459
Life Satisfaction	0.119	426	0.905	0.020	0.167	0.015	−0.230	0.260

The analysis revealed no statistically significant differences between the groups of different genders in self-efficacy, hope, resilience, optimism, and psychological capital. Similarly, no significant differences were identified in support, care, inspiration, positive organizational practices, and life satisfaction. However, males demonstrated significantly ( $p = 0.023$ ) higher scores on dignity (Mean = 3.802, SD = 0.741) than females (Mean = 3.592, 0.736). Similarly, males demonstrated significantly ( $p = 0.043$ ) higher scores on meaning (Mean = 3.477, SD = 0.888) than females (Mean = 3.270, 0.796). Surprisingly, males also demonstrated significantly ( $p = 0.010$ ) higher scores on forgiveness (Mean = 3.701, SD = 0.716) in comparison to females (Mean = 3.444, SD = 0.815).

Next, we conducted the correlational analysis to explore the links between the study variables and age-related variables (Table 10).

Bivariate correlation analysis demonstrated significant positive correlations between age and resilience ( $r = 0.092$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Significant correlations were also found between the positive practice of care and age ( $r = 0.125$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), care and number of working years ( $r = 0.126$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), care, and the number of working years in the current organization ( $r = 0.107$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). However, a significant negative correlation was found between several age-related variables and life satisfaction ( $p < 0.001$ ), which suggests that older employees in Lithuania are less satisfied with life than younger ones.

To test H5, assuming the links between positive organizational practices, psychological capital (self-efficacy, resilience, hope, optimism), and life satisfaction in both public and private sectors, we firstly conducted multiple linear regression (forward method) analyses in the groups of public and private organizations' employees.

The results of multiple regression models in public and private sectors, when the dependent variable is life satisfaction, and the predictors are positive organizational practices and psychological capital, are displayed in Table 11.

**Table 10.** Bivariate correlations between age, number of working years, number of working years in the current organization, psychological capital, positive organizational practices, and life satisfaction.

Variables	Age	Number of Working Years	Number of Working Years in the Current Organization
Number of working years	0.889 ***	-	
Number of working years in current organization	0.598 ***	0.688 ***	-
Psychological Capital	0.041	0.070	0.039
Self-efficacy	-0.013	0.007	-0.014
Hope	0.042	0.069	0.001
Resilience	0.092 **	0.085	0.012
Optimism	0.048	0.061	0.001
Positive Organizational Practices	-0.033	-0.033	-0.025
Dignity	0.006	0.017	0.028
Support	0.014	0.027	0.053
Care	0.125 ***	0.126 ***	0.107 **
Meaning	0.056	0.045	0.030
Inspiration	0.018	0.008	-0.055
Forgiveness	0.031	0.036	0.022
Life Satisfaction	-0.168 ***	-0.164 ***	-0.119 ***

\*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

**Table 11.** Multiple regression model, the dependent variable is life satisfaction, and the predictors are psychological capital and positive organizational practices.

Dependent Variable	Predictors/ Models	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		<i>t</i>	Sig.	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i>	Sig.
		<i>B</i>	Std. Error	Beta							
Life Satisfaction	Public Sector employees										
	1 (Constant)	1.405	0.446			3.154	0.002	0.337	0.114	42.097	<0.001
	Hope	0.696	0.107	0.337		6.488	0.000				
	2 (Constant)	0.565	0.474			1.192	0.234	0.404	0.163	31.838	<0.001
	Hope	0.578	0.108	0.280		5.357	0.000				
	Forgiveness	0.388	0.089	0.229		4.386	0.000				
	3 (Constant)	0.105	0.510			0.207	0.836	0.421	0.177	23.346	<0.001
	Hope	0.343	0.147	0.166		2.338	0.020				
	Forgiveness	0.401	0.088	0.237		4.554	0.000				
	Self-efficacy	0.331	0.141	0.163		2.343	0.020				
	Private Sector employees										
	1 (Constant)	1.326	0.569			2.333	0.022	0.509	0.259	32.172	<0.001
Positive Organizational Practices	0.870	0.153	0.509		5.672	0.000					
2 (Constant)	0.075	0.696			0.108	0.914	0.567	0.322	21.595	<0.001	
Positive Organizational Practices	0.608	0.173	0.356		3.513	0.001					
Hope	0.539	0.186	0.294		2.902	0.005					

In the group of public sector employees, several significant regression equations were found concerning the factor of life satisfaction. In model 1, the dependent variable was life satisfaction, and the predictor was hope,  $F(1, 420) = 42.097$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , with  $R^2 = 0.114$ , which is a sub-factor of psychological capital. Predicted life satisfaction was equal to  $1.405 + 0.696$  (hope) points. Life satisfaction increased 0.696 points for each hope ( $p < 0.001$ ) point. In model 2, the dependent variable was life satisfaction, and the predictors were hope and forgiveness, which is one of positive practices  $F(2, 419) = 31.838$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , with  $R^2 = 0.163$ . Predicted life satisfaction was equal to  $0.565 + 0.578$  (hope) +  $0.388$  (forgiveness) points. Life satisfaction increased + 0.578 points for each hope ( $p = 0.001$ ) point and + 0.388 points for each forgiveness ( $p < 0.001$ ) point. In model 3, the dependent variable was life satisfaction, and the predictors were hope, forgiveness and self-efficacy,  $F(1, 420) = 23.346$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , with  $R^2 = 0.177$ . Predicted life satisfaction was equal to  $0.105 +$

0.343 (hope) + 0.401 (forgiveness) + 0.331 (self-efficacy) points. Life satisfaction increased +0.343 points for each hope ( $p < 0.001$ ) point, +0.401 points for each forgiveness ( $p < 0.001$ ) point and +0.331 for each self-efficacy ( $p = 0.020$ ) point. Thus, hope, forgiveness, and self-efficacy contributed significantly to the model and were significant predictors of life satisfaction of public sector employees.

In the group of private sector employees, several significant regression equations were also identified regarding the factor of life satisfaction. In model 1, the dependent variable was life satisfaction, and the predictor was positive organizational practices,  $F(1, 137) = 32.172$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , with  $R^2 = 0.259$ . Predicted life satisfaction was equal to  $1.326 + 0.870$  (positive organizational practices) points. Life satisfaction increased 0.870 points for each positive organizational practices ( $p < 0.001$ ) point. In model 2, the dependent variable was life satisfaction, and the predictors were positive organizational practices and hope,  $F(1, 136) = 21.595$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , with  $R^2 = 0.322$ . Predicted life satisfaction was equal to  $0.075 + 0.608$  (positive organizational practices) +  $0.539$  (hope) points. Life satisfaction increased +0.608 points for each positive organizational practices ( $p = 0.001$ ) point and +0.539 points for each hope ( $p < 0.001$ ) point. Thus, positive organizational practices and hope contributed significantly to the model and were significant predictors of life satisfaction of private sector employees.

Next, a multiple linear regression model (forward method) was calculated to predict psychological capital based on positive organizational practices in groups of public and private sector employees. The results of multiple regression models in public and private sectors, when the dependent variable is psychological capital, and the predictors are positive organizational practices, are displayed in Table 12.

**Table 12.** Multiple regression model, the dependent variable is psychological capital, and the predictors are positive organizational practices.

Dependent Variable	Predictors/Models	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients		<i>t</i>	Sig.	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i>	Sig.	
		<i>B</i>	Std. Error	Beta							
Psychological Capital	Public Sector employees										
	1 (Constant)	3.523	0.124		28.477	0.000	0.232	0.054	19.073	<0.001	
	Meaning	0.159	0.036	0.232	4.367	0.000					
	Private Sector employees										
	1 (Constant)	2.396	0.259		9.263	0.000	0.550	0.303	40.839	<0.001	
	Positive Organizational Practices	0.446	0.070	0.550	6.391	0.000					

In the group of public sector employees, some significant regression equations were found concerning the factor of psychological capital. In model 1, the dependent variable was psychological capital, and the predictor was meaning, which is one of the positive organizational practices,  $F(1, 420) = 19.073$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , with  $R^2 = 0.054$ . Predicted psychological capital was equal to  $3.523 + 0.159$  (meaning) points. Psychological capital increased 0.159 points for each meaning ( $p < 0.001$ ) point. Thus, meaning contributed considerably to the model and was a significant predictor of the psychological capital of public sector employees.

In the group of private sector employees, some significant regression equations were also found concerning the factor of psychological capital. In model 1, the dependent variable was psychological capital, and the predictors were positive organizational practices,  $F(1, 134) = 40.839$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , with  $R^2 = 0.303$ . Predicted psychological capital equals  $2.396 + 0.446$  (positive organizational practices) points. Psychological capital increased 0.446 points for each positive organizational practices ( $p < 0.001$ ) point. Thus, positive organizational practices contributed significantly to the model and were a significant predictor of the psychological capital of private sector employees.

Next, we conducted multiple linear regression (forward method) analysis using positive organizational practices as the criterion and psychological capital and life satisfaction as the predictors. The results are presented in Table 13.

**Table 13.** Multiple regression model, the dependent variable is positive organizational practices, and the predictors are psychological capital and life satisfaction.

Dependent Variable	Predictors/ Models	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		<i>t</i>	Sig.	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i>	Sig.
		<i>B</i>	Std. Error	Beta							
Positive organizational practices	Public Sector employees										
	1 (Constant)	2.883	0.112			25.768	0.000	0.283	0.080	28.591	<0.001
	Life satisfaction	0.134	0.025	0.283		5.347	0.000				
	2 (Constant)	2.224	0.214			10.375	0.000	0.339	0.115	21.240	<0.001
	Life satisfaction	0.102	0.026	0.216		3.915	0.000				
	Hope	0.194	0.054	0.198		3.586	0.000				
	Private Sector employees										
	1 (Constant)	0.886	0.438			2.025	0.046	0.551	0.303	40.066	<0.001
	Psychological Capital	0.684	0.108	0.551		6.330	0.000				
	2 (Constant)	0.756	0.414			1.828	0.071	0.624	0.390	29.036	<0.001
Psychological Capital	0.502	0.114	0.404		4.410	0.000					
Life satisfaction	0.192	0.054	0.328		3.584	0.001					

In the public sector employees, several significant regression equations were found concerning the factor of positive organizational practices. In model 1, the dependent variable were positive organizational practices, and the predictor was life satisfaction,  $F(1, 418) = 28.591, p < 0.001$ , with  $R^2 = 0.080$ . Predicted positive organizational practices were equal to  $2.883 + 0.134$  (life satisfaction) points. Positive organizational practices increased 0.134 points for each life satisfaction ( $p < 0.001$ ) point. In model 2, the dependent variable were positive organizational practices, and the predictor was life satisfaction and hope,  $F(2, 417) = 21.240, p < 0.001$ , with  $R^2 = 0.115$ . Predicted positive organizational practices were equal to  $2.224 + 0.102$  (life satisfaction) +  $0.194$  (hope) points. Positive organizational practices increased +0.102 points for each life satisfaction ( $p < 0.001$ ) point and +0.192 points for each hope ( $p < 0.001$ ) point. Thus, life satisfaction and hope contributed significantly to the model and were significant predictors of positive organizational practices of public sector employees.

In the private sector employees, several significant regression equations were found concerning the factor of positive organizational practices. In model 1, the dependent variable were positive organizational practices, and the predictor was psychological capital,  $F(1, 131) = 40.066, p < 0.001$ , with  $R^2 = 0.303$ . Predicted positive organizational practices were equal to  $0.886 + 0.684$  (psychological capital) points. Positive organizational practices increased 0.684 points for each psychological capital ( $p = 0.046$ ) point. In model 2, the dependent variable were positive organizational practices, and the predictor was psychological capital and life satisfaction,  $F(2, 130) = 29.036, p < 0.001$ , with  $R^2 = 0.390$ . Predicted positive organizational practices were equal to  $0.756 + 0.502$  (psychological capital) +  $0.192$  (life satisfaction) points. Positive organizational practices increased +0.502 points for each psychological capital ( $p < 0.001$ ) point and +0.192 points for each life satisfaction ( $p = 0.001$ ) point. Thus, psychological capital and life satisfaction contributed significantly to the model and were significant predictors of positive organizational practices of private sector employees.

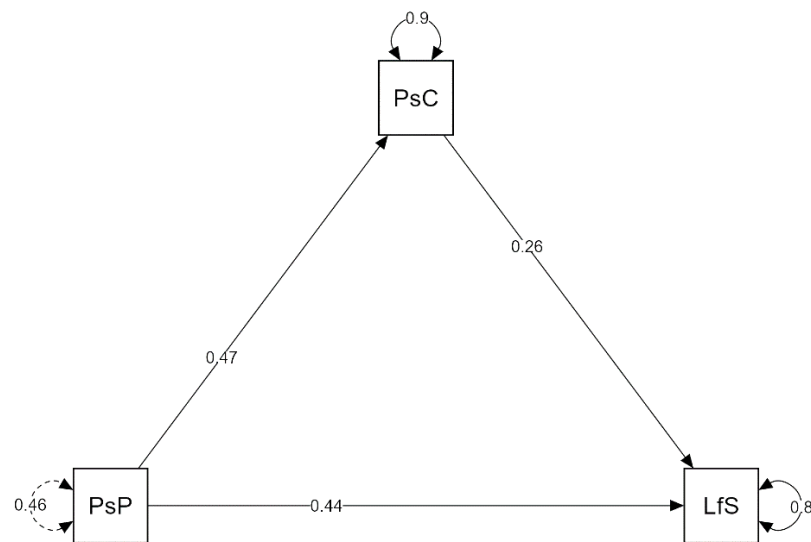
Additionally, to examine specifics of the links [170,171] between positive organizational practices, psychological capital, and life satisfaction in the total sample of employees, a simple mediation analysis was performed using JASP v. 0.14.1.0. The outcome variable for the analysis was life satisfaction. The predictor variable was positive organizational practices. The mediator variable for the analysis was psychological capital. The results of the mediation analysis are presented in Table 14.

**Table 14.** Mediation analysis results in the total sample of employees.

Path	Effect	Estimate	SE	z-Value	p	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
Positive Practices → Life Satisfaction	Direct	0.416	0.067	6.200	<0.001	0.284	0.548
Positive Practices → PsyCap → Life Satisfaction	Indirect	0.117	0.027	4.342	<0.001	0.064	0.169
Positive Practices → Life Satisfaction	Total	0.533	0.067	7.993	<0.001	0.402	0.663

SE, standard error.

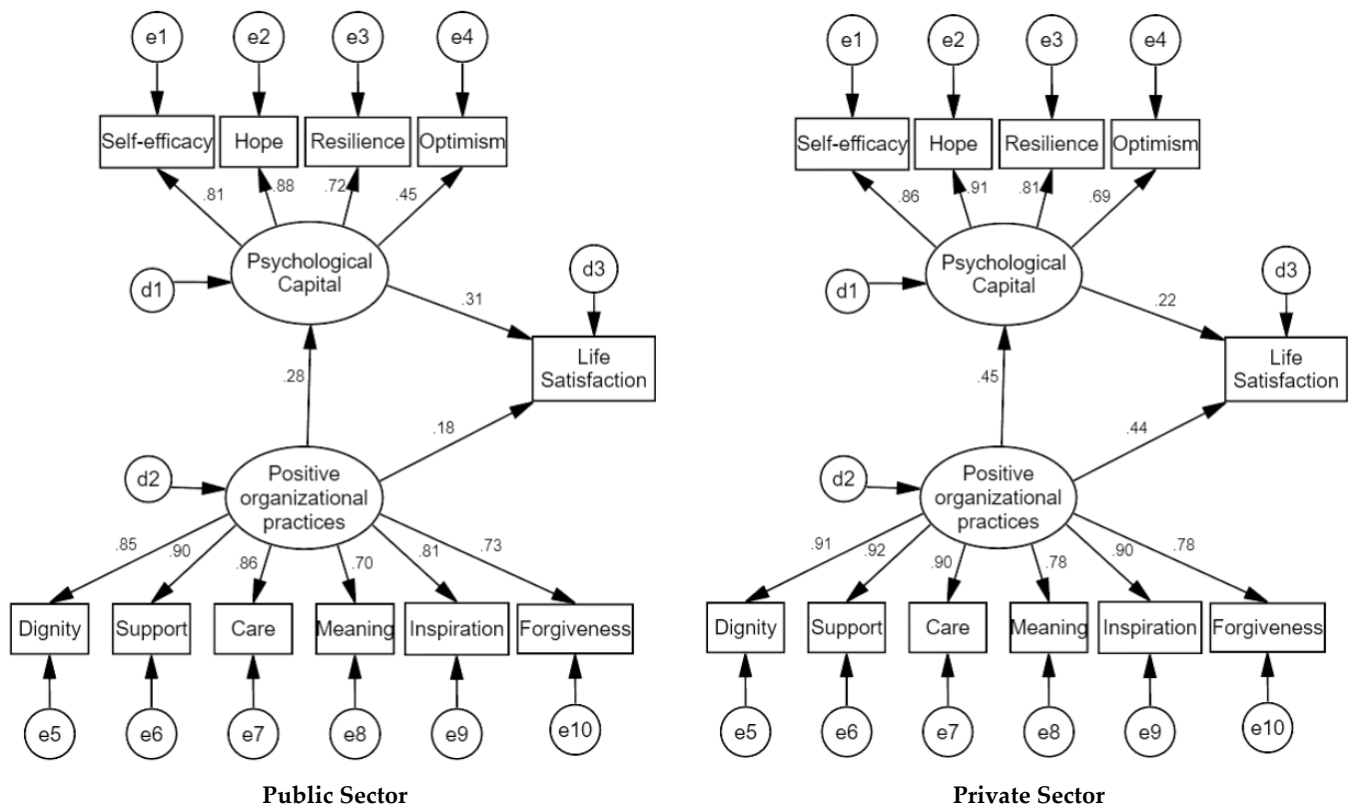
The indirect effect of positive practices on life satisfaction was statistically significant, Effect = 0.117 (95% CI = 0.064, 0.169). However,  $R^2$  for life satisfaction in the total sample was 0.193, and psychological capital was 0.087. The path plot is presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Mediation analysis: path plot in the total sample of employees. PsP: positive practices; PsC: psychological capital; LfS: life satisfaction.

Furthermore, to investigate different aspects of the associations between the study variables, we have conducted a structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis separately in groups of public and private sector employees. Applying the SEM methodology is beneficial as it analyses whether the theoretical structural relationships between the constructs are meaningful and significant [167–169]. In this research, we applied covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM). The CB-SEM is typically preferred to the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) when the research objective is confirmation of well-developed structural and measurement theory based on common variance, and the research requires a global goodness-of-fit criterion or the measurement models are simple (5 or fewer constructs and 50 or fewer indicators) [168–170,172].

Standardized results of the models are presented in Figure 2. Model fit was evaluated based on the CFI (Comparative Fit Index), the Normed Fit Index (NFI), the Tucker–Lewis coefficient (TLI), and RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation). As mentioned above, the values higher than 0.90 for CFI, NFI, TLI, and values lower than 0.08 for RMSEA indicate a good fit. Findings revealed that the fit of the model was acceptable. Model fit in the public sector was:  $\chi^2 = 188.481$ ; Df = 42; CFI = 0.941; TLI = 0.908; NFI = 0.928; RMSEA = 0.089 [0.076–0.102]. Model fit in the private sector was:  $\chi^2 = 96.767$ ; Df = 42; CFI = 0.944; TLI = 0.912; NFI = 0.908; RMSEA = 0.103 [0.076–0.131].



**Figure 2.** Standardized results on the model of associations between positive organizational practices, psychological capital, and life satisfaction in the public and private sectors.

To sum up, the SEM and other analyses showed that positive organizational practices are linked to life satisfaction and psychological capital in both public and private sector employees' groups, but the features of links are distinctive in the public and private sectors.

#### 4. Discussion

This study was the first to compare positive organizational practices, psychological capital, and life satisfaction in the public and private sectors. The relationship between psychological capital and life satisfaction has been previously extensively studied [65,150,152,173–176]. Some studies analyzed organizational practices and life satisfaction [14,18,177,178]. However, most of the previous studies targeted the variables of positive organizational practices, psychological capital, and life satisfaction separately, with a narrow focus on differences between the public and private sectors. This study primarily targeted the differences of positive organizational practices, psychological capital, and life satisfaction and their associations in the public and private sector organizations. The study was based on positive organizational scholarship and sustainable wellbeing approaches. The examination of positive organizational practices was based on a model developed by K. Cameron et al.; the examination of life satisfaction was based on a model developed by E. Diener et al., and the examination of psychological capital was based on a model developed by F. Luthans et al. The context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought remarkable changes to both the public and private sectors [1,4,6–11,41,68,99,179,180], makes the findings of this study important for strategic management of organizations and their human resources.

##### 4.1. Public Sector Employees Partially Differ in Their Positive Organizational Practices from Private Sector Employees

This study assumed (H1) that public sector employees differ in their positive organizational practices from private sector employees. This assumption was based on previous

research indicating organizational culture differences between the public and private sectors. Thus, we have conducted the independent samples *t*-test and compared the scores of positive organizational practices in both groups. The results partially confirmed this hypothesis, as significant differences between the groups were found: private sector employees demonstrated higher scores of dignity (respect), support, care, forgiveness, and overall positive organizational practices than public sector employees. However, no significant differences between the groups were found in meaning and inspiration. Previous research might partially explain these results suggesting variations of positive organizational practices in different environments [14,18,20]. However, it is unclear why private sector employees differed from public sector employees in dignity, support, care, forgiveness, and overall positive organizational practices. Due to the relatively small sample size and the possible effect of cultural context, the results should not be generalized but taken cautiously and need further investigation. Indeed, these findings suggest that Lithuanian public sector human resources management needs considerable reforms. To ensure the wellbeing of citizens and make sustainable decisions, public sector employees have to meet good ethical conduct standards. Daily organizational behaviors reflect the capacity to meet these standards. Thus, this study's findings could primarily appeal to Lithuanian human resources management and strategic management professionals, policymakers, and managers at organizational, societal, and governmental levels.

#### *4.2. Public Sector Employees Partially Differ in Their Psychological Capital from Private Sector Employees*

Furthermore, we presumed (H2) that public sector employees differ in their psychological capital from private sector employees. This assumption was based on previous research, which revealed that private sector employees demonstrated higher scores of psychological capital. Hence, we conducted the independent samples' *t*-test, which revealed statistically significant differences between the groups. As expected, private sector employees demonstrated higher optimism scores than public sector employees. Surprisingly, public sector employees demonstrated higher self-efficacy scores than private sector employees. However, no significant differences between the groups were observed in hope, resilience, or overall psychological capital scores. These studies align with prior research on psychological capital in public [57,106–109] and private [110–119] sectors. However, it is unclear why the employees in public and private sectors differed in self-efficacy and optimism, but they did not differ in hope, resilience, or overall psychological capital. As the samples of public and private sector employees may reflect specifics of organizational cultures, these results must be regarded with caution and need further examination. Furthermore, even though self-efficacy is related to many positive variables, including high self-esteem or trust in one's decision making, but if public sector employees demonstrate high scores on self-efficacy and low scores on dignity (respect), support, care, forgiveness, and overall positive organizational practices, this could signify serious risks and potential problems at organizational and societal levels.

#### *4.3. Public Sector Employees Do Not Differ in Their Life Satisfaction from Private Sector Employees*

In this study, we assumed (H3) that public sector employees differ in their life satisfaction from private sector employees. This assumption was based on previous research suggesting different work overload and thriving at work levels in the public and private sectors [181]. Thus, we have performed the independent samples *t*-test and compared the life satisfaction scores in both groups. The results did not confirm this hypothesis, as no significant differences were found between the groups of public and private sector employees in life satisfaction. However, these results should be taken with caution, as the data were collected under challenging circumstances, which may similarly affect the life satisfaction of employees in the public and private sectors. Therefore, these findings should be taken with concern and need further examination.



#### *4.4. Gender and Age-Related Variables Are Partially Significant for Positive Organizational Practices, Psychological Capital, and Life Satisfaction*

In this research, we presumed (H4), that gender and age-related differences are not statistically significant for positive organizational practices and psychological capital, but they are significant for life satisfaction, as some previous studies indicated the possible effects. *T*-test analysis revealed no statistically significant differences between the groups of different genders in psychological capital, including self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism. Similarly, no significant differences were identified in support, care, inspiration, positive organizational practices, and life satisfaction. However, this study found that male employees demonstrate significantly higher scores on dignity, meaning, and forgiveness. Next, we conducted the correlational analysis to explore the links between the study variables and age-related variables, as some previous research suggested the possible impact of age on satisfaction with life and psychological capital. Correlation analysis demonstrated significant positive correlations between age and resilience. Significant correlations were found between the positive practice of care and age, care and number of working years, care and number of working years in the current organization. A significant negative correlation was found between several age-related variables and life satisfaction, suggesting that senior employees in Lithuania are more caring but less satisfied with life than younger ones. To sum up, the findings of this study on the significance of gender and age-related variables for positive organizational practices, psychological capital, and life satisfaction might reflect the specifics of the Lithuanian population. They should not be generalized, as some studies revealed different results [118,182–185].

#### *4.5. Associations between the Study Variables Partially Differ in the Compared Groups*

Based on a literature review and previous analyses, we assumed (H5) associations between positive organizational practices, psychological capital (self-efficacy, resilience, hope, optimism), and life satisfaction. We also presumed these associations differ in public and private sector employees. Thus, we tested several models of associations between these study variables. Firstly, we conducted multiple linear regression analyses in public and private organizations' employees. The findings revealed that hope, forgiveness, and self-efficacy were significant predictors of the life satisfaction of public sector employees.

Interestingly, in the private sector employees, significant predictors of life satisfaction were positive organizational practices and hope. Next, the study revealed that meaning (positive organizational practice) was a significant predictor of the psychological capital of public sector employees. In the private sector employees, overall positive organizational practices significantly predicted psychological capital. Additionally, the findings suggested that life satisfaction and hope were significant predictors of positive organizational practices of public sector employees. However, overall psychological capital and life satisfaction were significant predictors of positive organizational practices in the private sector. To examine the links between positive organizational practices, psychological capital, and life satisfaction in the total sample of employees, we also conducted a simple mediation analysis that disclosed that psychological capital mediated the link between positive organizational practices and life satisfaction. These results are new and significantly contribute to the research on psychological capital as a mediator [113,118,186,187]. The SEM analysis disclosed that positive organizational practices are linked to life satisfaction and psychological capital in both public and private sector employees' groups. However, the features of links are distinctive in the public and private sectors. These results signify that the positive organizational practices, psychological capital, and life satisfaction are interrelated constructs, as indicated by previous studies [75,90,98,153,183,187–190]. Moreover, the findings suggest the importance of positive organizational practices and psychological capital for the life satisfaction of the public and private sector employees. However, explaining the associations between the variables needs further investigation, especially establishing links to indicators like personality traits, sustainability, or organization management.

To summarize, this study demonstrated that positive organizational practices, psychological capital, and life satisfaction and their associations differ between public and private sector organizations. The findings are consistent with some previous studies suggesting the links between the study variables. However, the mechanism underlying the links' specifics in different samples is still unclear and needs further investigation.

#### *4.6. Theoretical Implications*

Wellbeing (life satisfaction) is a critical sustainable development goal [12,13]. This study, which aimed to explore positive organizational practices, psychological capital, and life satisfaction in public and private sector organizations, adds to the psychology of sustainability and sustainable development, focusing on the sustainable development of every person, facilitating the flourishing of intrapersonal talents. Moreover, the psychology of sustainability and sustainable development also emphasizes well-being in different environments, and the findings of this study point to the significance of creating better organizational environments for everyone.

Even though the variables of positive organizational practices, psychological capital, and life satisfaction have been broadly researched, most of the previous studies targeted variables with a narrow focus on differences between the public and private sectors. This study primarily targeted the differences of positive organizational practices, psychological capital, life satisfaction, and their associations in the public and private sectors. The findings were consistent with some previous studies, but they also revealed the complexity of the relations between positive organizational practices, psychological capital, and life satisfaction in groups of public and private sector employees. It is unclear why private sector employees demonstrated higher scores of dignity, support, care, forgiveness, and overall positive organizational practices than public sector employees. The links between positive organizational practices, psychological capital, and life satisfaction in different sectors also need a thorough examination. In the future, it would be valuable to identify the underlying mechanisms in associations between positive organizational practices, psychological capital, life satisfaction, and the links to the constructs like sustainability, flow, employee engagement, or thriving at work, which has recently received the increased attention of researchers [82,191–198]. Besides, establishing links between sustainability and positive organizational practices in the public and private sectors might be particularly important, as constructive changes are vital to reaching sustainable development goals.

#### *4.7. Practical Implications*

As mentioned above, sustainability is described not only in terms of the ecological and socio-economic environment but also in terms of enhancing the quality of life of every human being, and psychology of sustainability introduces a framework focused on a positive approach based on keywords such as growth, enrichment, promotion [12]. Research indicates that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, employees in different sectors faced challenges that affected the world, including emotional difficulties related to stressful pandemic life circumstances. Therefore, new knowledge on possible psychological and organizational resources is needed. This study explored the role of the organization's sector (public or private) on positive organizational practices, psychological capital, and life satisfaction. The results revealed that positive organizational practices, as well as psychological capital, might predict life satisfaction and, vice versa, life satisfaction predicts certain aspects of positive practices and psychological capital. It means that to improve well-being (life satisfaction) and, consequently, efficacy and performance of employees, organizations would preferably target positive organizational practices and psychological capital. The findings imply that policymakers, researchers, strategic managers, and leaders of public and private sector organizations, to promote employee performance linked to life satisfaction, should target employees' positive organizational practices and psychological capital. Focus on employees' wellbeing would also assist in promoting the sustainable

happiness of a person and society as a whole, as sustainability is also defined in terms of improving the wellbeing of every human being.

Furthermore, this study suggests that the Lithuanian public sector needs substantial improvements, and this study's findings could primarily appeal to Lithuanian human resources management and strategic management professionals, policymakers, and managers at organizational, societal, and governmental levels.

#### 4.8. Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations to this study could be mentioned. First, this study lacks objective indicators concerning the participants and their organizations. This study used self-reported measures only and omitted detailed information on the type of the organization (health, education, etc.; production; services, etc.). Second, the research samples were not representative, suggesting the necessity to analyze representative samples. Third, the results should be regarded cautiously due to the relatively small sample size, even though the sample size met the criteria for statistical analyses. Next, this study was conducted in Lithuania, and the findings might reflect the specifics of this country. International comparisons of the sectors would add value to this field of research. Besides, the results indicate a need for longitudinal research design because it is possible only to identify significant relationships among the examined variables based on the data obtained. Finally, the researchers started collecting the data before the quarantine, limiting the significance of the results nowadays when many employees work remotely.

### 5. Conclusions

This study targeted positive organizational practices, psychological capital, and life satisfaction in public and private sector organizations. The findings revealed that public sector employees differed from private sector employees: private sector employees demonstrated higher scores of dignity, support, care, forgiveness, and overall positive organizational practices than public sector employees, but no significant differences between the groups were found in meaning and inspiration. Private sector employees demonstrated higher optimism scores than public sector employees, and public sector employees demonstrated higher self-efficacy scores than private sector employees. No significant differences between public and private sector employees were observed in hope, resilience, or overall psychological capital and life satisfaction scores. This study revealed that male employees demonstrated significantly higher dignity, meaning, and forgiveness scores. Correlation analysis demonstrated significant positive correlations between age and resilience, care and age, care and number of working years, care and number of working years in the current organization. The findings revealed that life satisfaction was predicted by hope, forgiveness, and self-efficacy in the public sector and by positive organizational practices and hope in the private sector. Meaning (positive organizational practice) was a significant predictor of psychological capital in the public sector, while in the private sector, positive organizational capital was predicted by general positive organizational practices. Life satisfaction and hope predicted positive organizational practices in the public sector. In the private sector, positive organizational practices were predicted by overall psychological capital and life satisfaction. To sum up, positive organizational practices were linked to life satisfaction and psychological capital in both public and private sector employees' groups, but the features of links were distinctive in the public and private sectors. These results signify the importance of positive organizational practices and psychological capital for the life satisfaction of the public and private sector employees.

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