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## **On the Relation between Leadership and Positive Psychological Capital in the Hospitality Industry**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyze the relation between leadership and positive psychological capital (PsyCap) in the hospitality industry. Questionnaires were applied to employees of five-star hotels operating in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus selected by a sampling method ( $N = 372$ ). The obtained data were analyzed using IBM SPSS 23. There are many studies on PsyCap and leadership, concentrating on the factors of organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and the organizational dimension. Research has increasingly explored the effects of PsyCap, leadership, job empowerment, and employee participation, while empirical sectorial studies that overlook comprehensive and dynamic relationships remain limited (Joo, Lim and Kim, 2016). This study aims to contribute to the literature with this dimension. The results of the research show that transformational leadership has a positive effect on PsyCap, while laissez-faire leadership has a significant and negative effect and transactional leadership has no effect.

*JEL Classifications: D23, L83, M12*

*Keywords: leadership; leadership styles; positive psychological capital*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Today, organizations need to perform above average to avoid failure and survive (Avey et al., 2008). Along with global competition, change is rapidly increasing, and the competitiveness of businesses depends on how well they adapt to these changes and developments (Friedman, 2005). To respond flexibly to changes, it is very important to know how to use intangible resources. Positive Psychological Capital (PsyCap) improves employee attitudes and behavior in this context (Rego et al., 2017). PsyCap also disrupts unwanted employee behavior and attitudes (Heled et al., 2016). For these reasons, it has been noted that PsyCap is a source of sustainable competitive advantage in today's competitive environment (Luthans and Youssef, 2004), which "goes beyond other capital", such as economic, humanitarian, and social capital (Luthans et al., 2015). Empirical research has revealed that PsyCap can be developed at a collective level and has had a number of outcomes, including increasing the organizational performance of businesses (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009; Heled et al., 2016).

Avolio et al. (2004) believed that PsyCap not only encourages employees to commit to carrying out their own tasks but also promotes positive behaviors, such as employees who undertake additional challenges. To confirm this, it is important to investigate the PsyCap predicates by examining the organizational or relational characteristics of employees (Avey, 2014). Empirical evidence on PsyCap is relatively insufficient, as discussed by several authors (Avey, 2014), although PsyCap is a new approach to organizations that creates a unique and long-term competitive advantage (Luthans et al., 2007; Rego et al., 2017; Reichard et al., 2011).

Luthans et al. (2005) view PsyCap as a positive psychological resource that can be influenced by leadership variables. Leadership behaviors have more influence on the results of employees compared with other behaviors (Salehzadeh, 2017). As a result, leadership styles strongly influence the behaviors and outcomes of followers (Den Hartog and Koopman, 2011) and are an important source of positive/negative emotions (Dasborough and Ashkanasy, 2002).

Research has shown that leaders have significant impact on followers' PsyCap (Anderson and Sun, 2017; Avey, 2014; Gauth et al., 2009; Ghafoor et al., 2011; Gyu Park et al., 2017; Malik and Dhar, 2011; Rego et al., 2017). From this view point, leadership style in this research is examined as a possible forerunner of the psychological capital of followers (McMurray et al., 2010).

When the literature is examined, it is seen that the studies that examine the effects of PsyCap on the hospitality industry are limited (Paek et al., 2015). In the hotel sector, positive behaviors of employees have a significant impact on the level of service provided to customers (Chow et al., 2006) and a significant contribution to organizational productivity (Paek et al., 2015). The availability of a positive working environment in the hotel sector with leadership resources has a great influence on improvements in the performance of the organization (Jung et al., 2015).

There has also been a call to conduct research on more culturally diverse examples (Walumbwa et al., 2012), given that many studies on leadership have come from the US (Gelfand et al., 2007; House and Aditya, 1997; Peterson, 2008; Rego et al., 2012).

This survey was conducted by surveying employees in five-star hotels operating in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus to verify the leadership's various influences on PsyCap. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, five-star hotels are

among the world's largest employers (Serafini and Szamosi, 2015). This is also the case for Cyprus, an island country, and in general the tourism sector, especially the five star hotels, creates tremendous economic value for Cyprus. About 3.5 million tourists visit Cyprus annually, and 8% of the people of Cyprus are employed in the tourism sector (Archontides, 2007; Boukas and Ziakas, 2014).

In this important economic sector, workers must have the basic qualities to achieve the objectives of the facility and be governed by appropriate leadership style. In this context, this study contributes to the richness of the literature. To identify the various influences of the leadership on the PsyCap, this research with the employees of the five-star hotels operating in Cyprus was aimed at providing managerial contributions to the hotel managers as well.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **A. Positive Psychological Capital**

The concept of PsyCap is defined as positive studies that give life to organizations in the literature, as well as emerging from positive psychological theories and research mostly applied in the organizational field (Baker and Schaufeli, 2008; Luthans et al., 2005). Luthans et al. (2017) defined PsyCap as “the positive psychological state of the individual towards positive development”. While PsyCap identifies and measures the different behavioral situations that ultimately relate to the performance of an employee in the organization (Luthans et al., 2007), it does not focus on what is wrong with employees; instead, it focuses on what is right with employees and how to develop it (Linley et al., 2006).

PsyCap consists of four positive psychological resources: self-sufficiency, optimism, hope, and endurance (Luthans et al., 2007). Self-sufficiency is a form of self-assurance, challenging difficulties and being able to undertake tasks (Stajkovic, 2006). Optimism is having a positive expectation about being successful now and in the future. Hope is the anticipation of ways of getting things done in difficult times (Luthans et al., 2007), leading to alternative ways of reaching targets (Luthans et al., 2004). Psychological endurance refers to continuing the struggle to achieve success when faced with problems and negativities.

Employee performance is important in all sectors. However, workers in labor-intensive service industries are an important part of the product and form the core of the service experience (Slåtten and Mehmetoğlu, 2011). Employees with high motivation are critical to the success of labor-intensive businesses (Slåtten and Mehmetoğlu, 2011). Creating a customer relationship with the employee in the tourism sector, ensuring continuity (Onsøyen et al., 2009), and creating customer loyalty provide competitive advantages to that organization (Chi and Gürsoy, 2009). In the tourism sector, employees' mental appearance, mood, and behavior are important because these have a critical impact on performance, results, and customer satisfaction. Among the various attitudes and behavioral factors related to this, the notion of loyalty is particularly evident when considering the strong relationship with business performance and competitive advantage (Baumruk, 2004).

Close relationships between customers and employees, especially in hotels, play the most important role in employee performance and are highly dependent on human

services (Brown et al., 2002). As service processes naturally involve interaction between employees and customers (Skaggs and Galli-Debicella, 2012), the interaction quality affects employee performance and the financial outcomes of service delivery. For this reason, positive behaviors of employees have a significant influence on the level of service and productivity provided to customers (Chow et al., 2006). Thus, the positive psychology of hotel employees has a great influence on the performance of the organization.

PsyCap concerns behavioral and psychological factors as well as entrepreneurial, managerial and economic consequences. PsyCap elements are associated with many organizational factors, particularly performance and extrinsic role behaviors (Luthans, 2002a, 2002b; Wright, 2003). A study by Luthans and Youssef (2007) found that employees' psychological endurance levels are related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment and happiness. In current literature examples, there are also relationships and empirical studies on leadership between PsyCap and various species. For example, McMurray (2010) noted that leadership behavior is an important determinant of psychological capital among employees in non-profit organizations. Rego et al. (2012) reported that its authentic leadership has boosted PsyCap activity among employees in different commercial enterprises in Portugal.

## **B. Leadership and PsyCap**

As a complex and popular topic (Douglas, 2012; Rowold and Borgmann, 2013), leadership has been the subject of many research studies (Ghafoor et al., 2011) because it plays a key role in the success of organizations (Kaiser et al., 2008; Kollée et al., 2013; Oc and Bashshur, 2013). On the basis of this interest lies the fact that the leaders play a central role in the organization, in improving the prosperity and performance of the members of the organization and in the success of the organization (Avolio et al, 2004; Avolio and Walumbwa, 2006).

Leadership scholars stated that positive and motivational leaders increase their ability to produce PsyCap among members of the organization (Lew, 2009; Weberg, 2010) and negative leaders are an important source of negative feelings within the organization (Dasborough and Ashkanasy, 2002). The leader largely determines the behavior of employees (Malik and Dhar, 2017). This may be attributed to the role modelling of followers' leaders (Walumbwa et al., 2010). When followers perceive that their leaders behave positively, they act positively in an attempt to imitate their leaders (Avolio and Walumbwa, 2006).

Several different leadership styles have been discussed in the literature (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2017), and a number of new leadership styles have been proposed since 2000 to reveal significant missing aspects of charismatic, transformational, and transactional leadership styles (Anderson and Sun, 2017). But the overlap between the many leadership styles under investigation is extremely problematic (Derue et al., 2011) and is probably a "repetition of the concept" (Morrow, 1983). As a result, it is understood that change is only the extent and perception of the concept of leadership (Sürücü and Yeşilada, 2017). For this reason, this study analyses transformational leadership (which is the most commonly researched topic in the literature), transactional leadership (Anderson and Sun, 2017) and laissez-faire leadership as passive leadership styles (Hinkin and Schriesheim, 2008; Sandhåland et al., 2017). Transformational leadership is

one of the most influential examples of contemporary leadership theories (Judge and Bono, 2000). Meta-analysis by Wang et al. (2011) has shown that transformational leadership is both effective and widely used (Günzel-Jensen et al., 2017).

The transformational leader recognizes the tendencies, needs, and desires of subordinates through personalized attention and uses them to motivate followers (Sürücü et al., 2018; Sahin et al., 2014). The transformational leader not only increases positive results but also reduces the stress level of followers in the organization (Ghafoor et al., 2011) by reducing the influence of negative influences on employee satisfaction and performance (Gill et al., 2010). Such leaders enable employees to overcome psychological disruptions and gain the power they need to overcome future challenges (Kelloway et al., 2012).

Research has shown that the transformational leader plays an important role in improving the psychological performance of members of the organization (Ghafoor et al., 2011) and improving their well-being (Kelloway et al., 2012). This contributes to improving PsyCap (Gooty et al., 2009) and is an important precedent of psychological capital (Luthans et al., 2005). The following hypothesis has been developed to investigate in this context.

*Hypothesis 1: Transformational leadership influences PsyCap in a significant and positive way.*

Transactional leadership is based on a changing process, contrary to transformational leadership (Günzel-Jensen et al., 2017), and is defined as the exchange of rewards and goals between employees and management (Howell and Avolio, 1993).

When members of the organization provide a sample service, they are usually rewarded with salary, promotion, appreciation, etc., while in other cases they are generally criticized or penalized (Walumbwa et al., 2010). Transactional leaders, on the other hand, help their followers determine what needs to be done to achieve their desired goals (McMurray et al., 2010). In this process, they intensively supervise the members of the organization, identify mistakes and then take corrective actions (Birasnav, 2014).

It can be argued that when the psychological capital of the members of an organization are supervised by leaders whose PsyCap is high, both the performance of the members of the organization and the PsyCap will increase (Walumbwa et al., 2010). The following hypothesis has been developed to investigate in this context.

*Hypothesis 2: Transactional leadership influences PsyCap in a significant and positive way.*

Laissez-faire leaders avoid assuming responsibility or making decisions; they intervene in employees' activities only when there are problems and where it is difficult to prevent them (Che et al., 2017). They lack leadership skills (Kelloway et al., 2005) and may create a negative organizational environment because they cannot provide feedback to their subordinates in their activities (Arnold et al., 2015). In this sense, such leaders affect the psychological health of members of an organization negatively (Nguyen et al., 2017). In summary, laissez-faire leadership is associated with lower security behaviors (Mullen et al., 2008), psychological distress (Skogstad et al., 2007), and employee role conflict and ambiguity (Hinkin and Schriesheim, 2008).

Studies have shown that laissez-faire leadership has an adverse effect on employees' perceptions (Hinkin and Schriesheim, 2008), affects employees' welfare negatively (Kelloway et al., 2012), and increases employee stress (Che et al., 2017). Toor and Ofori (2008), on the other hand, found that PsyCap has a negative relationship with the laissez-faire leadership in the survey. Based on these research studies and literature, the following hypothesis has been developed.

*Hypothesis 3: Laissez-faire leadership influences PsyCap in a significant and negative way.*

### III. METHOD

#### A. Data Collection and Sample

The research was conducted at five-star hotels in Kyrenia, Rizokarpasia, and Nicosia, the three most popular (coastal) destinations in Northern Cyprus. Because time, cost, and control would be difficult to access across the whole of the research universe, stratified random sampling was used to select the sample to represent the study universe. Accordingly, the number of interviewed employees among 4,471 employees working in five-star hotels in the Northern Cyprus was expected to be 354, with a 95% confidence interval and a 5% sampling error.

In determining the sample size, the formula proposed by Barlett, Körtlik, and Higgins (2001) was utilized. The number of samples' formula is as follows:

$$n = \frac{N * t^2 * p * q}{(N - 1)d^2 + t^2 * p * q} \quad n = \frac{4471 * (1.96)^2 * 0.50 * 0.50}{(4470)(0.05)^2 + (1.96)^2 * 0.50 * 0.50} = 354$$

where N: Universe Size; n: Sample size; p: Probability of occurrence of the examined event; q: Probability of will not occurrence of the examined event (1-P); t: Theoretical value found at a certain significance level, relative to Z table; and d: Acceptable deviation tolerance (Barlett, Kotrlik, and Higgins, 2001, p. 46)

The researchers interviewed 372 participants to avoid missing values. The distribution of the participants by region is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
Distribution of participants by region

Region	Number of Employees *	Ni/N	Sampling Size
Kyrenia	3,416	0.76	285
Rizokarpasia	780	0.17	65
Nicosia	275	0.06	22
Total	4,471	1	372

\* Source: TRNC Tourism and Planning Office

In total, 34.95% of participants were female, and 65.05% were male. Regarding the age of the participants, 25% were 25 years and below, 32% were between 26 and 30 years, 16.9% were between 31 and 35 years, and 26.2% were 36 years and over. Regarding education level, 33.3% were in high school, 14.2% were undergraduates, and 22.6% were postgraduates. Regarding the nationality, 17.2% of the participants were Cypriots, 66.7% were Turkish citizens, and 16.1% were citizens of other countries. Regarding positions within the hotels, 21.5% of the participants were in the position of manager and 78.5% were non-managerial staff. Details of the sample characteristics are shown in Table 2

**Table 2**  
Characteristics of the sample

Characteristics of Respondents	Content	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Sex	Female	130	34.95
	Male	242	65.05
Age Group	25 and below	93	25.00
	Between 26–30	119	31.98
	Between 31-35	63	16.92
	36 and above	97	26.20
Education	Secondary school and below	111	29.83
	High school	124	33.33
	Undergraduate	53	14.24
	Postgraduate Degree	84	22.6
Nationality	Cyprus	64	17.2
	Turkish (R. T.)	248	66.7
	Others	60	16.1
Position	Manager	80	21.5
	Non-managerial staff	292	78.5

## B. Measures

First, the face (or content) validity, which is the most basic validity type, is provided by asking the opinion of experts regarding the questionnaire (Zikmund, 1997). In this study, the experts included hotel managers and academics from Cyprus. The experts reviewed the survey and provided feedback for greater clarity and alignment with the building dimensions. Their feedback led to changing, removing, or combining several items. The second stage of the preliminary survey includes the sampling of the questionnaire, i.e., distribution to those in the tourism sector.

After the first 100 questionnaires were collected, the researchers performed factor analysis and scale reliability. Because the first results were meaningful and there were no worrying comments from the participants, they continued to apply the questionnaires. An informative email was sent to question the hotel management's willingness to participate in the survey. Upon formal authorization from hotel managers, expert interviewers conducted face-to-face surveys. During the completion of the questionnaires (10–15 minutes), the interviewers were present to answer questions or concerns.



As a data collection tool, the questionnaires consisted of three parts: introductory characteristics, psychological capital scale, and leadership scale. The Psychological Capital Scale developed by Luthans et al. (2007) and was used as the Turkish adaptation developed by Çetin and Basım (2012). In the context of the validity-reliability study conducted by Çetin and Basım (2012), the values of goodness of fit based on the confirmatory factor analysis that the scale consists of four sub-dimensions were found appropriate (optimism, psychological endurance, hope, self-efficacy). Moreover, Cronbach's alpha value was found to be 0.89 according to the internal consistency test conducted within the reliability study of the scale. All measurement items used a 5-point Likert scale. Sample questions included "I feel confident in representing my work area in meetings with management", "When I have a setback at work, I have trouble recovering from it, moving on (R)", and "I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job". The calculated Cronbach's alpha value of the general scale was 0.93.

The leadership styles scale "Multifactor Leaderboard Questionnaire MLQ", developed as a three sub-dimensional (transformational, transactional and laissez-faire) by Avio and Bass (1995), was used as the Turkish adaptation developed by Cemaloğlu (2007). All measurement items used a 5-point Likert scale. Sample questions included "The leader/manager asks the employees for their ideas when deciding, but he gives the final decision himself", "The leader/manager creates a family environment in the workplace", and "The leader/manager is late to make the decision".

The validity of the scales was confirmed by confirmatory factor analysis, and the reliability was tested by calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The results show that the scales were suitable for use. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the variables used in the study are shown in parentheses in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
Mean, standard deviation, reliability and correlations

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Transformational leadership	3.72	0.90	(0.87)						
2. Transactional leadership	3.34	0.85	0.67**	(0.86)					
3. Laissez-faire leadership	2.72	0.99	-0.10*	0.27**	(0.81)				
4. Optimism	4.82	0.85	0.30**	0.19**	-0.06	(0.88)			
5. Psychological endurance	5.00	0.80	0.32**	0.19**	-0.14**	0.62**	(0.89)		
6. Hope	4.99	0.80	0.43**	0.24**	-0.20**	0.66**	0.76**	(0.87)	
7. Self-sufficiency	5.04	0.84	0.40**	0.21**	-0.15**	0.57**	0.75	0.72**	(0.91)

Note: Cronbach's Alpha coefficients are given in parentheses diagonal.

\* p<0.10 \*\* p<0.05

#### IV. FINDINGS

In the study, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated using IBM SPSS 23 to determine the direction and strength of the correlation between the independent variable (leadership styles) and the dependent variable (PsyCap). The result of the analysis is shown in Table 3.

The Cronbach's alpha values of the subscales used in the research are 0.81 and above. The correlation results indicate there is a significant relationship between dependent and independent variables. In the analysis of the correlation, it is seen that the transformational and transactional leaderships have a positive relationship with all the sub-dimensions of PsyCap and a negative leadership relationship with the laissez-faire leadership. Regression analysis was applied to determine the effect of leadership styles on PsyCap. Demographic variables (sex, age, education) are controlled and regression analysis results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**  
Regression results

Variables	Optimism	Psychological Endurance	Hope	Self- Efficacy
Sex	-0.144	-0.135**	-0.088*	-0.054
Age	0.050	0.077	0.040	0.046
Education	-0.172**	-0.100*	-0.097*	-0.042
Transformational leadership	0.260***	0.264***	0.376***	0.409***
Transactional leadership	0.023	0.038	0.031	-0.041
Laissez-faire leadership	-0.046	-0.115**	-0.176***	-0.097**
<i>F</i>	11.427***	11.556***	18.839***	13.762***
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.15	0.16	0.23	0.18

Note: The entries in the table are standardized  $\beta$ s. \*  $p < 0.10$  \*\*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Examination of Table 3 shows transformational leadership ( $\beta = .260, p < .001$ ), psychological endurance ( $\beta = .264, p < .001$ ), hope ( $\beta = .376, p < .001$ ), and self-efficacy ( $\beta = .409, p < .001$ ). Laissez-faire leadership was; It is seen that there is a significant and negative effect on psychological endurance ( $\beta = -.115, p < .05$ ), hope ( $\beta = -.176, p < .001$ ), and self-efficacy ( $\beta = -0.097, p < .05$ ). Apart from these findings, it has been found that transactional leadership has no effect on PsyCap. It can be said that the leadership style that influences PsyCap most in this case is transformational leadership. The obtained findings support H1 and H3, while H2 was rejected

#### V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Leaders are sources of information about which behaviors the organizational members will follow because they have a higher status and power than their followers (Walumbwa et al., 2010). Leaders who are aware of how their PsyCap, or generally the level of positivity, can achieve success by affecting their followers' psychological states and

behaviors. They may identify appropriate leadership styles and behaviors to enhance their organization's performance.

In fact, this finding is an expected result because the motivational tendency of transformational leadership is integrated with the motivational tendency of PsyCap. Perceiving a leader as a transformational leader ensures that the organizational members have a positive sense of the future on the basis of motivated endeavor and determination, and that they have the power to overcome the challenges they may face in the future. The findings obtained emphasize that transformational leadership behaviors can create favorable conditions for the development of PsyCap. This is one of the main contributions of the current research. From a practical viewpoint, this finding suggests that a transformational leader is important in directing the workforce to positive psychological resources.

The laissez-faire leadership, which lacks leadership qualities, negatively affects the PsyCap. This finding is paralleled by the study of Toor and Ofori (2008). Avoidance of responsibility, avoidance of decision-making, and lack of feedback to subordinates constitute the basis for a negative psychological impact on followers. This environment creates ambiguity and role conflict between the organizational members (Hinkin and Schriesheim, 2008). As a result, the psychological well-being of organizational members deteriorates (Kelloway et al., 2012) over time and results in less confidence in the leader (Mullen et al., 2011). Negative impact on the PsyCap of the laissez-faire leadership is expected in light of the negative effects on the organization.

Another result in the study is that the transactional leader has no effect on PsyCap. In transactional leadership, based on the change process between leader and follower, the leader intensively supervises the organizational members for the accomplishment of their duties. Personnel who are seen as unsuccessful in these checks and inspections are generally criticized or penalized. This situation is contrary to the nature of positive psychology, which focuses not on what is wrong with people but on what is right and how to develop it (Linley et al., 2006; Luthans et al., 2006).

Therefore, it is clear that in organizations where transactional leadership is strong, the PsyCap will not be strong, especially if the results are evaluated in terms of hotel management.

## VI. LIMITATIONS

Besides the findings, there are some limitations in the study. The most important limitation is that data are collected from a single source. Therefore, it must be taken into consideration when evaluating the findings. Therefore, collecting data from many sources in future research will increase the generalizability of the findings. The tourism sector may vary according to country and regional differences. For this reason, studies on the tourism sector in future periods can be conducted in different countries and regions and the comparison can provide new findings. Finally, future studies can include which characteristics of the transformational leader influence PsyCap. In this sense, in-depth research (e.g., qualitative or mixed method) will be useful to determine which features of the transformational leadership affect PsyCap.

### APPENDIX-A

1. I feel confident analyzing a long-term problem to find a solution.
2. I feel confident in representing my work area in meetings with management.
3. I feel confident contributing to discussions about the company's strategy.
4. I feel confident helping to set targets/goals in my work area.
5. I feel confident contacting people outside the company (e.g., suppliers, customers) to discuss problems.
6. I feel confident presenting information to a group of colleagues.
7. If I should find myself in a jam at work, I could think of many ways to get out of it.
8. At the present time, I am energetically pursuing my work goals.
9. There are lots of ways around any problem.
10. He/She has a clearly defined vision that overlaps with organizational goals and inspires all employees to achieve these goals.
11. When I perform well, he/she gives me positive feedback.
12. He/She sets an example for employees with their attitudes.
13. He/She avoids interfering with occasions when self-consciousness is needed.
14. The expectation of leadership scale is that he/she believes that the employees will perform the best.
15. He/She personally rewards me for my extraordinary success.
16. He/She deals with the personal and career development of the employees and guides them.
17. He/She encourages employees to produce creative ideas.
18. He/She ignores good performance mostly.
19. He/She is late in making a decision.
20. He/She encourages employees to become team members in the direction of common goals.
21. He/She appreciates me if my work is perfect.
22. He/She does not go into action until the chords are chronic.
23. He/She praises me when I overperform.
24. In situations where needed support, he/she is reluctant to provide that support.

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