The Effects of Psychological Capital and Work Engagement on Adaptive Work Performance: The Moderating Effect of Employee Personality

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary organizations operate in environments characterized by technological change, shifting customer expectations, organizational restructuring, and increasing work uncertainty. These conditions require employees not only to perform established tasks effectively but also to adjust their behaviors, learn new methods, cope with unexpected events, and respond constructively to changing work demands. This conceptual paper develops an integrated framework explaining adaptive work performance through psychological capital and work engagement, while positioning employee personality as a moderating condition. Drawing on Positive Organizational Behavior, positive psychology, the Job Demands–Resources perspective, and individual-differences research, the paper proposes that employees' positive psychological resources are positively associated with work engagement and adaptive work performance. Work engagement is likewise expected to enhance adaptive work performance because vigor, dedication, and absorption can provide motivational energy for dealing with novel and demanding situations. Importantly, the paper proposes that employee personality does not necessarily transmit the effects of psychological capital and work engagement to adaptive performance; instead, relatively stable personality characteristics may strengthen or weaken these relationships. In particular, traits such as conscientiousness, openness to experience, and extraversion, and lower neuroticism, may influence the extent to which positive psychological resources and engagement are translated into adaptive behaviors. Five propositions are developed: psychological capital positively influences work engagement; psychological capital positively influences adaptive work performance; work engagement positively influences adaptive work performance; employee personality moderates the relationship between psychological capital and adaptive work performance; and employee personality moderates the relationship between work engagement and adaptive work performance. The resulting framework provides a theoretically coherent basis for future empirical testing using structural equation modeling or hierarchical regression with interaction effects.

Keywords: Positive Organizational Behavior, Psychological Capital, Work Engagement; Employee Personality, Adaptive Work Performance, Job Demands–Resources

INTRODUCTION

Organizations increasingly operate in work environments that are dynamic, complex, and uncertain. Digital transformation, artificial intelligence, changing customer expectations, new work arrangements, organizational restructuring, and unexpected disruptions require employees to modify established work behaviors and acquire new ways of performing their roles. Consequently, traditional indicators of employee performance that emphasize routine task completion may not fully capture the behaviors required in contemporary organizations. Adaptive work performance has therefore become an important performance domain because it concerns employees' ability to adjust effectively to changing, novel, or uncertain work situations [2], [9].

At the same time, positive approaches to organizational behavior have attracted considerable scholarly attention. Positive Organizational Behavior (POB) focuses on positive psychological capacities and strengths that can be developed, managed, and applied to improve workplace functioning and performance. Psychological capital, commonly represented by hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism, is a central resource within this perspective [7], [15]. Employees possessing these resources may be better equipped to interpret challenges constructively, persist when difficulties arise, and recover from setbacks. Such characteristics are theoretically relevant to adaptive work performance because adaptation often requires persistence, confidence, and constructive responses to uncertainty.

Work engagement represents another important positive state in organizational research. [10]. conceptualized engagement through vigor, dedication, and absorption. Engaged employees are energetic, psychologically invested in their work, and willing to devote sustained effort to work activities. The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model proposes that personal and job resources can foster work engagement, which in turn contributes to positive employee outcomes [3]. From this perspective, positive psychological resources can contribute to engagement, while engagement can provide motivational energy for adaptive performance.

Although psychological capital, work engagement, and adaptive performance have each received substantial attention, their integration remains theoretically useful. More specifically, it is important to consider whether individual differences in personality alter the strength of the relationships between psychological resources, engagement, and adaptive performance. This paper makes a theoretically contribution by proposing the employee personality as a moderator. This distinction is consequential because personality traits are generally understood as relatively stable individual differences. We proposed that personality conditions the extent to which psychological capital and engagement are translated into adaptive work behavior.

Accordingly, this paper proposes a conceptual framework in which psychological capital and work engagement are antecedents of adaptive work performance, while employee personality moderates the relationships between the antecedents and adaptive performance. Psychological capital is also proposed to have a positive relationship with work engagement. The framework responds to the need to integrate positive psychological resources, motivational states, individual differences, and adaptive performance within a single model. The paper develops the conceptual arguments, presents five propositions, discusses theoretical and practical implications, proposes measurement approaches, and identifies directions for future empirical research.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Psychological Capital

Positive Organizational Behavior (POB) is concerned with the study and application of positively oriented human strengths and psychological capacities that can be developed and managed to improve workplace performance [15]. The approach is rooted in positive psychology and shifts attention from an exclusive focus on employee deficits toward psychological resources that support effective functioning. A major construct associated with POB is psychological capital [14], [16] , comprising hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism [8].

Hope reflects goal-directed motivation and the perceived capacity to identify pathways toward desired goals. Efficacy refers to confidence in one's ability to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action necessary to perform successfully. Resilience represents the capacity to recover and adapt following adversity, while optimism involves positive expectations regarding present and future outcomes. These resources are conceptually relevant to changing work environments because employees facing uncertainty need confidence, persistence, alternative pathways, and psychological recovery.

Researchers [11] demonstrated that positive psychological capacities such as hope, optimism, and resilience are associated with work-related outcomes. Subsequent research has positioned psychological capital [14] as a valuable personal resource that can support employee attitudes, motivation, and performance. Within the present framework, POB is therefore conceptualized as a positive psychological resource orientation rather than as a

conventional organizational practice. This distinction is important because the proposed relationships concern employees' psychological capacities and behaviors.

The connection between psychological capital and adaptive performance is theoretically plausible. Adaptive performance requires employees to cope with emergencies, learn new tasks, manage stress, solve problems creatively, and adjust interpersonal behavior [2]. Resilience can support recovery from disruption, efficacy can strengthen confidence in handling unfamiliar tasks, hope can encourage the search for alternative pathways, and optimism can facilitate constructive expectations during change. Thus, employees with stronger positive psychological resources may be more willing and able to respond effectively to changing work requirements.

Work Engagement

Work engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work-related psychological state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption [10]. Vigor involves energy and persistence; dedication reflects enthusiasm, significance, and pride; and absorption refers to deep concentration and immersion in work. Engagement is conceptually distinct from job satisfaction and organizational commitment, although the constructs are related.

The JD-R model provides a useful theoretical foundation for understanding engagement. [3], proposed that job demands and job resources influence employee well-being and motivation. Personal resources can also contribute to motivational processes. In the present framework, POB-related resources such as hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism are expected to provide psychological resources that support engagement. Employees who believe that they can handle difficulties and recover from setbacks may be more likely to invest energy and persistence in their work.

Engagement is also expected to be associated with adaptive performance. Adaptive performance often requires employees to expend additional cognitive and behavioral effort when routines no longer provide adequate solutions. Vigor may provide the energy needed to address unexpected demands; dedication may encourage employees to remain committed when established procedures change; and absorption may support focused learning and problem solving. Consequently, engaged employees may be more prepared to invest effort in learning new tasks and adjusting to changing requirements.

Adaptive Work Performance

Adaptive work performance refers to an employee's capacity to modify behavior effectively in response to dynamic, novel, or uncertain work situations [2], developed a multidimensional measure of individual adaptive performance that includes dimensions associated with creativity, emergency or crisis management, interpersonal adaptability, learning, and stress management. This broader conceptualization distinguishes adaptive performance from routine task performance.

[9] emphasized that adaptation is particularly important where work conditions are changing and employees encounter novel situations. Adaptive performance can involve learning new technologies, changing procedures, responding to emergencies, managing stress, adjusting interpersonal approaches, and developing creative solutions. These behaviors are increasingly important in organizations facing technological and environmental change.

The present paper treats adaptive work performance as the dependent construct because it captures the employee behavior that positive psychological resources and motivational states are expected to support. Psychological capital and work engagement are therefore positioned as antecedents, while employee personality is proposed to condition the strength of their effects.

Employee Personality as a Moderator

Personality refers to relatively enduring patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that distinguish individuals. The Big Five framework commonly describes personality through openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism [4]. Personality research has long examined individual differences

in workplace behavior and performance, with conscientiousness demonstrating a particularly consistent association with job performance across occupational contexts [1].

A mediating variable explains a mechanism through which an antecedent produces an outcome, whereas a moderating variable changes the strength or direction of the relationship between an antecedent and an outcome. Because personality is generally conceptualized as a relatively stable disposition, the moderation perspective is theoretically more consistent with the proposition that different employees may respond differently to the same level of positive psychological resources or work engagement.

For example, employees high in openness to experience may be particularly receptive to learning unfamiliar approaches and experimenting with new solutions. Conscientiousness may support persistence, self-regulation, and systematic implementation when employees need to change work behaviors. Extraversion may be relevant where adaptation involves communication, collaboration, and interpersonal adjustment. Conversely, higher neuroticism may be associated with stronger negative emotional reactions to uncertainty, potentially weakening the translation of positive resources or engagement into adaptive behavior. These relationships should be tested empirically rather than assumed to apply uniformly across all employees.

Recent research has also examined relationships between personality and adaptive performance. [6], for example, investigated personality traits in relation to adaptive performance in a healthcare context. Such work supports the relevance of individual differences to adaptation while also highlighting the importance of examining context and specific traits. In the present conceptual framework, personality is therefore positioned as a boundary condition rather than as a causal pathway.

Conceptual Framework & Development Of Propositions

The conceptual framework proposes that psychological capital and work engagement have positive direct relationships with adaptive work performance. Psychological capital is also proposed to positively influence work engagement. Employee personality is positioned as a moderator of two relationships: (1) psychological capital and adaptive work performance, and (2) work engagement and adaptive work performance. The moderation proposition means that the relationship between each antecedent and adaptive performance is expected to differ according to employees' personality characteristics.

Figure 1 show the visual representation of Psychological capital and Work Engagement on the left, Adaptive Work Performance on the right, and Employee Personality positioned above the two direct relationships as a moderator. Solid arrows should represent the hypothesized direct relationships, while dashed interaction arrows can represent the moderating role of personality. The model should not depict personality as an intervening variable between psychological capital/engagement and adaptive performance.

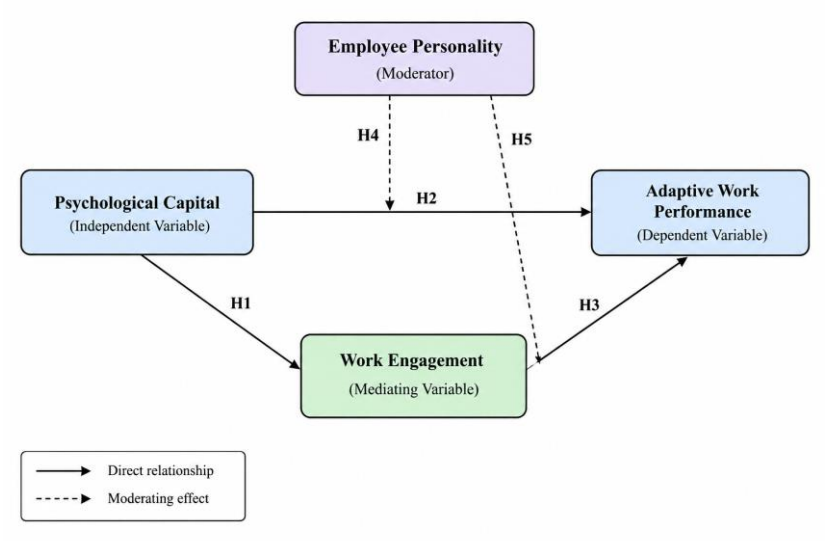

Figure 1. Proposed conceptual framework

Psychological Capital and Work Engagement

Positive psychological resources can provide employees with confidence, persistence, optimism, and resilience. Employees possessing these resources may be more willing to invest energy in their work and remain dedicated when facing difficulties. From the JD-R perspective, personal resources can contribute to motivational processes and engagement. Prior work has linked psychological capital with positive employee attitudes and engagement. Therefore, the present paper proposes:

H1: Psychological capital is positively associated with work engagement.

Psychological capital and Adaptive Work Performance

Adaptive performance requires employees to respond constructively to uncertainty, learn unfamiliar tasks, manage stress, and develop alternative solutions. POB resource are theoretically compatible with these demands. Resilience may facilitate recovery after setbacks; efficacy may strengthen confidence in handling novel requirements; hope may encourage alternative pathways; and optimism may support constructive expectations. Accordingly, employees with stronger positive psychological resources are expected to demonstrate higher adaptive work performance.

H2: Psychological capital is positively associated with adaptive work performance**.**

Work Engagement and Adaptive Work Performance

Engaged employees possess psychological energy and dedication that can be directed toward challenging and unfamiliar work demands. Adaptive performance frequently requires employees to go beyond established routines, learn, persist, and adjust behavior. Vigor, dedication, and absorption provide a motivational basis for such behavior. Therefore, higher work engagement is expected to be associated with higher adaptive work performance.

H3: Work engagement is positively associated with adaptive work performance.

Moderating Role of Employee Personality in the Psychological Capital –Adaptive Performance Relationship

The same level of positive psychological resources may not produce identical behavioral responses among all employees. Personality may influence how employees interpret challenges, approach novelty, regulate effort, and interact with others. For instance, openness may facilitate experimentation and learning, while conscientiousness may support persistent implementation. Conversely, higher neuroticism may be associated with greater sensitivity to uncertainty and stress. Therefore, personality is expected to moderate the relationship between psychological capital and adaptive performance.

H4: Employee personality significantly moderates the relationship between psychological capital and adaptive work performance.

Moderating Role of Employee Personality in the Work Engagement–Adaptive Performance Relationship

Work engagement provides energy and psychological investment, but employees may differ in how that energy is translated into adaptive behavior. Personality characteristics may influence whether an engaged employee experiments with new approaches, persists with difficult learning tasks, collaborates effectively, or becomes overwhelmed by uncertainty. Thus, personality may strengthen or weaken the positive relationship between engagement and adaptive performance.

H5: Employee personality significantly moderates the relationship between work engagement and adaptive work performance.

Theoretical Contributions

The proposed framework offers several theoretical contributions. First, it connects psychological capital with adaptive performance rather than limiting the outcome to conventional job performance. This extends the logic of positive psychological resources into contexts where employees must respond to change.Second, the framework connects work engagement with adaptive performance. Engagement research has traditionally emphasized performance and well-being outcomes; the present model emphasizes adaptation as a distinct performance domain requiring energy, persistence, and learning.

Third, this framework conceptualizes personality as a moderator. This distinction provides a more theoretically appropriate treatment of personality as a relatively stable individual difference. Instead of proposing that psychological capital or engagement changes personality, the model proposes that personality influences the strength of the relationship between positive resources or engagement and adaptive performance. Fourth, the framework integrates positive psychological resources, motivational states, individual differences, and dynamic performance. It therefore provides a basis for empirical research examining both direct relationships and boundary conditions in the development of adaptive employee performance.

Practical Implications

The framework suggests that organizations may benefit from developing employees' positive psychological resources and creating conditions that support engagement. Interventions may include resilience development, goal-setting and pathway-building activities, efficacy-enhancing experiences, supportive feedback, and practices that help employees maintain constructive expectations during change. Organizations may also strengthen engagement through job resources such as autonomy, feedback, supportive leadership, learning opportunities, and appropriate recognition. Such practices may help employees sustain vigor and dedication when work requirements change.

The moderating role of personality has a different practical implication. Personality should not be treated as a simple mechanism that managers can change through short-term training. Rather, organizations may use awareness of individual differences to tailor development, coaching, job design, and support. For example, employees who experience greater difficulty with uncertainty may benefit from structured change communication and stress-management support, while employees who are highly open to experience may benefit from opportunities for experimentation and learning. These implications should be evaluated empirically and applied with appropriate attention to fairness and privacy.

PROPOSED METHODOLOGY FOR FUTURE EMPIRICAL TESTING

Research Design

The framework can be tested through a quantitative, time-lagged survey design. A multi-source design would be preferable because adaptive performance may be evaluated by supervisors rather than relying entirely on employees' self-reports. A time-lagged design can also reduce concerns associated with common-method variance and temporal ambiguity.

Population and Sampling

The target population may consist of employees working in organizations where job requirements change frequently. A diverse sample across business functions would improve the generalizability of findings. Where the study focuses on a particular country or industry, the sampling frame and inclusion criteria should be explicitly stated.

Measurement

Psychological Capital may be measured using the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ), subject to appropriate licensing and validation procedures [7]. Work engagement may be assessed using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed [10]. Adaptive work performance may be measured using the Individual

Adaptive Performance Scale developed [2]. Employee personality may be measured using an established Big Five Instrument, such as the BFI-2, or validated trait-specific scales where theoretically justified.

Data Analysis

Structural equation modeling or hierarchical regression can be used to test the direct effects and moderation hypotheses. For moderation, interaction terms should be created between centered or standardized antecedent variables and the relevant personality measure. Significant interaction effects should be followed by simple-slope analysis and, where appropriate, regions-of-significance analysis. If personality is modeled as a multidimensional Big Five construct, each trait should be theoretically justified rather than combining all traits into an undifferentiated composite.

A possible regression specification is:

Adaptive Performance = β0 + β1(Psychological Capital) + β2(Engagement) + β3(Personality) + β4(Psychological capital × Personality) + β5(Engagement × Personality) + Controls + ε.

Significant β4 and β5 interaction coefficients would provide evidence relevant to H4 and H5, respectively.

Limitations and Future Research

The proposed model is conceptual and therefore requires empirical validation. First, cross-sectional research would limit conclusions about temporal ordering. Longitudinal and experimental studies would provide stronger evidence regarding directionality. Second, the construct of personality is broad. Future studies should identify which specific traits are most relevant to adaptive performance and test whether different traits moderate different relationships. Third, the proposed relationships may vary across occupations, organizational cultures, countries, and levels of technological change. Fourth, the model emphasizes individual-level variables and does not explicitly include leadership, organizational climate, job design, team processes, or technology. Future research could develop multilevel models incorporating these contextual factors. Finally, common-method bias is a potential concern when all constructs are collected from the same respondent. Multi-source data, temporal separation, objective indicators, and supervisor ratings of adaptive performance can strengthen future empirical tests.

CONCLUSION

This conceptual paper proposes that psychological capital and work engagement are important antecedents of adaptive work performance in changing organizational environments. Psychological capital is expected to support work engagement and adaptive performance through positive psychological resources, while work engagement is expected to provide motivational energy for adaptation. The research framework is positioning employee personality as a moderator. This approach recognizes personality as a relatively stable individual difference that may strengthen or weaken how positive resources and engagement are translated into adaptive work behavior. The five propositions provide a basis for future empirical research using validated measures and interaction-based statistical analysis. By integrating positive psychological resources, work engagement, personality, and adaptive performance, the framework offers a structured platform for examining why employees may differ in their capacity to adapt effectively to changing work demands.

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