Leadership Communication, Employee AI Readiness, and Adaptive Work Performance: A Conceptual Framework

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ABSTRACT

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into organizational workplaces is reshaping job responsibilities, information processing, and expectations of employee adaptability. Yet implementing AI technologies does not necessarily ensure that employees feel prepared to work with them or can adjust their performance to changing demands. This conceptual paper develops a framework explaining how leadership communication may shape employee AI readiness and adaptive work performance. Drawing on Social Cognitive Theory and the Job Demands–Resources Model, it distinguishes transparent leadership communication, which provides informational clarity, from developmental leadership communication, which supports learning and capability building. Employee AI readiness is conceptualized as a potential mediating construct encompassing AI self-efficacy, learning willingness, and change readiness. Adaptive work performance is treated as a distinct behavioral outcome reflected in task adaptability, learning adaptability, and work adjustment. Five propositions describe the expected relationships between the two communication dimensions, readiness, and performance, including two indirect pathways through readiness. The framework offers a resource–readiness–adaptation explanation of workplace transformation that moves beyond technology acceptance alone. It also highlights the relevance of communication, coaching, training access, and practical opportunities to develop new skills, especially for administrative and office-based employees. As the framework has not been empirically tested, the paper proposes future qualitative refinement, measurement validation, and longitudinal or multi-source quantitative studies. The contribution is a set of conceptually differentiated testable relationships rather than evidence of causal effects. The proposed model may guide research and organizational practices seeking to support employees as AI-enabled work evolves.

Keywords: Leadership Communication; Employee AI Readiness; Adaptive Work Performance; Artificial Intelligence; Organizational Transformation

INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming contemporary workplaces by reshaping organizational processes, employee responsibilities, and the competencies required to perform effectively. Organizations are adopting AI-enabled technologies to automate routine activities, support information processing, and assist decision-making. Nevertheless, effective integration requires more than technological investment: employees must develop the confidence, motivation, and capabilities needed to adapt their work practices to evolving demands.

Leadership communication can influence how employees interpret organizational change. During AI implementation, employees may face uncertainty about changing job requirements and the skills expected of them. Transparent communication may clarify the purpose, scope, and limitations of AI implementation, while developmental communication may offer feedback, coaching, and learning guidance. These practices represent potentially complementary resources for employee preparation. Research on implementation communication further suggests that employee interpretations of organizational change are associated with communication practices (Lewis, 2006).

The present conceptual paper focuses on office and administrative employees whose tasks include document preparation, scheduling, records management, information retrieval, correspondence, and reporting. In these settings, technology acceptance alone does not explain whether employees are psychologically prepared to use AI or can adapt their actual work practices. Employee AI readiness is therefore distinguished from adoption intention and adaptive work performance.

This paper proposes a framework linking transparent and developmental leadership communication with adaptive work performance through employee AI readiness. Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986, 1997) explains the formation of capability beliefs, while the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) positions leadership communication as a potential job resource. The following sections develop the theoretical foundations, outline the selective conceptual review approach, present five propositions (see Figure 1), and discuss implications for research and office management.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory explains behavior through reciprocal influences among individuals, their actions, and their environments (Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy refers to beliefs about the ability to organize and execute actions needed for outcomes (Bandura, 1997). In AI-enabled workplaces, leadership communication may be an environmental influence that helps employees interpret technological demands and build confidence through feedback, encouragement, and learning opportunities. AI self-efficacy is treated here as one component of readiness, not as equivalent to actual technological competence.

Job Demands–Resources Model

The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model distinguishes job demands, which require sustained effort, from job resources, which facilitate goal achievement, learning and motivation (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). This paper treats transparent and developmental leadership communication as proposed job resources. AI-enabled changes may create demands, such as increased task complexity and uncertainty, but these demands are contextual conditions rather than variables tested in the present framework. AI self-efficacy is a potential personal resource within the broader, provisionally specified employee AI readiness construct; the other dimensions, learning willingness and individual change readiness, require further conceptual and measurement validation. Communication cannot substitute for adequate training, appropriate tools or sufficient learning time.

Transparent Leadership Communication

Transparent leadership communication refers to clear, relevant, accurate, and accessible information about organizational decisions and expectations. Transparency research emphasizes information disclosure and clarity (Rawlins, 2008). In an AI-enabled workplace, transparent communication may explain why tools are introduced, how responsibilities will change, and what remains uncertain. Such communication can support informed preparation, though clarity alone does not establish employee capability.

Developmental Leadership Communication

Developmental leadership communication comprises feedback, coaching, learning guidance, and encouragement that help employees improve their capabilities. Supervisory coaching research identifies developmental managerial behaviors as relevant to learning and performance-related outcomes (Ellinger et al., 2003). In AI-enabled work, supervisors may help employees identify skill gaps, practice new procedures, and interpret feedback. These practices may strengthen confidence and willingness to learn, especially when accompanied by concrete development opportunities.

Employee AI Readiness

Employee AI readiness is conceptualized as perceived preparedness and willingness to engage with AI-related work changes. The proposed construct has three dimensions. AI self-efficacy reflects confidence in learning

and using AI-enabled tools, extending the logic of computer self-efficacy research (Compeau & Higgins, 1995). Learning willingness reflects motivation and openness to acquire relevant competencies. Change readiness reflects perceived preparedness to respond to revised responsibilities and procedures; it is considered at the individual level, rather than equated with collective organizational readiness (Weiner, 2009). These dimensions form a provisional conceptual structure that requires further theoretical refinement and measurement validation.

Adaptive Work Performance

Adaptive work performance concerns demonstrated adjustment to changing tasks, technologies, and work conditions. Pulakos et al. (2000) identify learning new tasks and technologies and responding to changing situations as facets of adaptive performance. This paper highlights task adaptability (revising task procedures), learning adaptability (acquiring and applying new skills), and work adjustment (modifying routines and responsibilities). Unlike readiness, these dimensions refer to behavioral performance. An employee may be willing to learn AI but unable to adapt effectively without adequate resources and opportunities.

Construct Definitions, Conceptual Boundaries, and Measurement Considerations

The framework distinguishes informational and capability-building leadership resources, psychological preparedness, and enacted adaptive performance. Transparent leadership communication concerns clarity, openness and accountability regarding AI-related decisions, whereas developmental leadership communication concerns coaching, constructive feedback and learning guidance. Their potential correlation does not make them interchangeable. Employee AI readiness is provisionally specified through AI self-efficacy, learning willingness and individual change readiness; these dimensions are theoretically related but have not been validated as a single scale. Adaptive work performance instead concerns demonstrated behavioral adjustment (Compeau & Higgins, 1995; Pulakos et al., 2000).

Table 1. Construct definitions, boundaries, and illustrative indicators

Construct	Dimensions / focus	Boundary	Illustrative indicators
Transparent leadership communication	Clarity, openness, explanations	Not equivalent to technical AI explainability or general information volume	Explains AI purpose, limitations, roles and accountability
Developmental leadership communication	Coaching, feedback, learning guidance	Distinct from merely announcing decisions	Feedback on AI drafts; guided practice; coaching
AI readiness: AI self-efficacy	Perceived AI-specific capability	Not general computer confidence or actual competence	Confidence learning and applying AI tools
AI readiness: learning willingness	Motivation to learn AI-related skills	Not general learning orientation or completed training	Willingness to learn unfamiliar AI workflows
AI readiness: individual change readiness	Preparedness for AI-related role changes	Not organizational-level readiness or enacted performance	Preparedness for revised tasks and procedures
Adaptive work performance	Task, learning and work adjustment	Observed/reported behavior, not intention or readiness	Adapts procedures; applies skills; manages exceptions

Provisional Measurement Specification

Employee AI readiness is proposed provisionally as a multidimensional composite of three distinct first-order domains, not as an already validated reflective scale. A composite is conceptually plausible because confidence, learning willingness and preparedness for change can vary independently. Future research should compare correlated first-order factors, reflective higher-order models and theoretically defensible composite specifications. Reflective measures require reliability, convergent and discriminant validity assessment; a

composite specification additionally requires assessment of content coverage, collinearity and dimension contributions. Discriminant validity should be tested against general technology self-efficacy, learning orientation, individual readiness for change, AI adoption intention and adaptive work performance. Measurement choices should follow theory and evidence rather than fit indices alone.

Contemporary Research and the Conceptual Gap

Recent Scopus-indexed research provides a more specific foundation for examining leadership and employee responses to AI. He et al. (2026) report that supervisors' direction-giving and empathetic language are associated with employee openness and support for AI adoption, with reduced uncertainty acting as a mediator. Zhang et al. (2026) find that AI transparency improves employees' change readiness through job-role clarity and reduced discomfort. However, AI transparency concerns information about the technology and is not necessarily equivalent to transparent leadership communication. Together, these studies inform the informational-resource argument without directly testing P1.

Developmental pathways are also suggested by recent evidence. Lim and Kim (2026) report positive associations between transformational leadership, AI literacy, AI usage self-efficacy and AI usage intentions among South Korean office employees. Pu et al. (2026) identify AI self-efficacy as a mechanism linking leader AI crafting with innovative behavior. Yin and Hoang (2026) report relationships among AI usage, unlearning, leadership attitudes and creative performance. These outcomes differ from adaptive work performance, but support closer examination of learning-oriented leadership resources and employee capability beliefs.

Hassanein et al. (2026) provide a related mediation precedent involving human-centered leadership, AI readiness, employee engagement and sustained service performance in hospitality. The present framework instead distinguishes informational and developmental leadership communication, specifies employee AI readiness in three provisional dimensions, and focuses on adaptive work performance in office and administrative settings. Ndone (2025) reports a non-significant buffering role of authentic leadership for AI-induced uncertainty, suggesting that leadership-related effects warrant careful specification and empirical testing.

Office and Administrative Work in AI-Enabled Organizations

Office and administrative work provides a distinct context for examining employee adaptation to AI-enabled technologies. Administrative employees commonly coordinate information, prepare documents, manage records, communicate across organizational units, and support routine decisions. As AI-enabled systems are introduced into these activities, employees may need to evaluate machine-generated outputs, revise established procedures, and exercise judgment about accuracy, confidentiality, and accountability. These examples define the intended application of the framework; they are not presented as empirical findings.

This context makes the distinction between transparent and developmental leadership communication especially relevant. Transparent communication can clarify why an AI tool is introduced, what information employees may enter, who remains accountable for decisions, and how work expectations may change. Developmental communication, in contrast, can guide employees through practice, feedback, and skill acquisition. Drawing on the Social Cognitive Theory and Job Demands–Resources Model, the present study proposes that these communication resources may strengthen AI self-efficacy, learning willingness, and change readiness, which may subsequently facilitate task adaptability, learning adaptability, and work adjustment (Bandura, 1997; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). These proposed links remain hypotheses rather than established causal effects.

Evidence from office employees (Lim & Kim, 2026) and broader workplace samples (He et al., 2026; Pu et al., 2026) indicates the relevance of leadership-related AI confidence, learning and adoption responses. These studies provide complementary theoretical context for examining administrative work, while the proposed relationships remain to be evaluated in that occupational setting.

Accordingly, the framework is intended for office and administrative workplaces, including corporate administration, business support and organizational service functions. Future studies can investigate whether

the proposed constructs and relationships operate consistently across organizations and occupational groups.

RESEARCH APPROACH

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a selective, theory-integrative conceptual review to clarify construct boundaries and develop theoretically grounded propositions rather than to estimate pooled empirical effects or provide exhaustive systematic coverage (Torraco, 2005; Snyder, 2019). Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986, 1997) and the Job Demands–Resources model (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) provide complementary explanatory perspectives. The framework is conceptual; no primary data were collected and no relationships were empirically tested.

3.2 Literature Search and Selection

A Scopus-based literature search was conducted on 19 October 2026 to identify publications concerning leadership communication, artificial intelligence, employee readiness, and work-related outcomes. The exported records cover 2020–2026. Leadership-related search terms documented in the earlier manuscript included “leadership communication”, “leadership”, “supervisor communication”, “leader support”, and “digital leadership”; AI-related terms included “artificial intelligence”, “generative AI”, “AI adoption”, “AI readiness”, and “AI self-efficacy”. These terms were used to describe the search focus; the exact executed Boolean search string could not be independently reconstructed from the available exports. Foundational theoretical works predating 2020 were considered separately.

The initial Scopus export contained 1,533 records. After further refinement, a second export contained 1,474 records, a reduction of 59. The precise criteria responsible for this reduction could not be recovered from the export files and are therefore not attributed to any specific filter. These figures describe the documented export and refinement stages, not the number of articles individually screened, critically appraised, or included in a systematic synthesis. The retrieved records formed a source pool for selective conceptual engagement.

3.3 Literature Review and Synthesis Process

The conceptual synthesis is organized around four analytical considerations. First, conceptual differentiation distinguishes transparent leadership communication, which emphasizes informational clarity and openness concerning AI-related workplace changes, from developmental leadership communication, which emphasizes coaching, feedback, and learning guidance. It also separates employees’ AI-related preparedness from observed adaptive work behavior.

Second, theoretical alignment considers how Social Cognitive Theory can explain capability beliefs and learning-related responses, while the Job Demands–Resources model positions informational and developmental communication as potential resources for managing AI-related work demands. Third, evidence relevance considers literature on leadership communication, AI-related self-efficacy, organizational change, and adaptive performance, while recognizing that evidence from adjacent constructs or sectors does not directly validate the proposed framework. Fourth, contextual applicability considers administrative work such as correspondence, records management, scheduling, information processing, and AI-assisted workflow coordination.

These four considerations describe the analytical organization of the conceptual argument, not a formal coding protocol applied to all 1,474 records. No exhaustive screening, PRISMA-based selection process, or quantitative evidence synthesis is claimed.

3.4 Development of the Conceptual Framework and Propositions

The framework integrates the two leadership communication dimensions as distinct but complementary organizational resources. Transparent leadership communication may clarify AI implementation decisions, responsibilities, limitations, and changing expectations; developmental leadership communication may support

practice, feedback, and skill development. The proposed intervening construct, employee AI readiness, comprises AI self-efficacy, learning willingness, and individual change readiness. Its dimensional structure and measurement specification require future validation.

Employee AI readiness is proposed to support adaptive work performance through task adaptability, learning adaptability, and work adjustment. The distinction between psychological preparedness and adaptive behavior is maintained to avoid conflating mediator and outcome. On this basis, P1 and P2 propose positive associations between the two communication dimensions and employee AI readiness; P3 proposes a positive association between readiness and adaptive performance; and P4 and P5 propose readiness as an intervening mechanism for each respective communication–performance relationship. Figure 1 and Section 4.0 elaborate these relationships. The propositions remain untested theoretical expectations, not established causal or mediating effects.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND PROPOSITION DEVELOPMENT

The proposed resource–readiness–adaptation framework treats transparent and developmental leadership communication as distinct job resources, employee AI readiness as a proposed intervening preparedness construct, and adaptive work performance as a behavioral outcome. Figure 1 displays the three directional paths (P1–P3) and the two proposed indirect pathways (P4–P5). No full-versus-partial mediation claim is made at this conceptual stage.

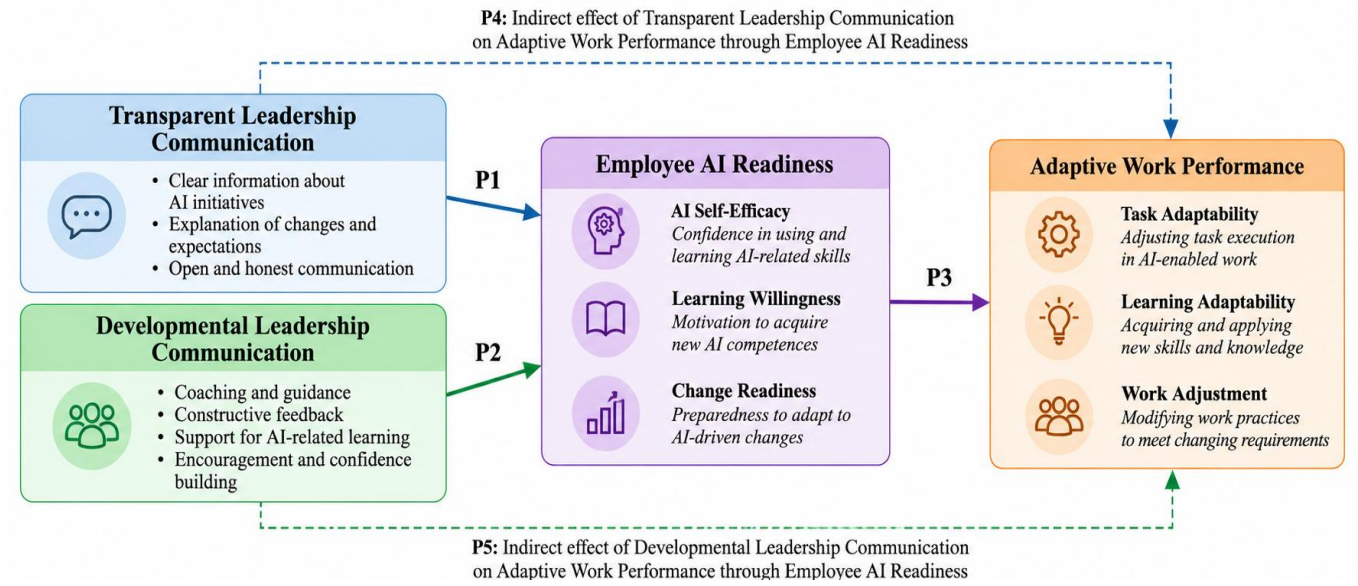

Figure 1

Proposed Conceptual Framework Linking Leadership Communication, Employee AI Readiness, and Adaptive Work Performance

Transparent Communication and AI Readiness (P1)

Transparent leadership communication refers here to clear, timely, candid, and sufficiently explanatory messages about AI-related decisions, workplace expectations, and limits of new systems. In office administration, ambiguity may concern responsibility for AI-generated correspondence, checking document accuracy, records confidentiality, and revised approval procedures. From a JD-R perspective, credible information may function as a job resource that reduces avoidable ambiguity and makes learning requirements more interpretable (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001). Lewis (2006) highlights the relevance of implementation communication to employees' perceptions of organizational change, while He et al. (2026) link supervisors' direction-giving and empathetic language with AI-adoption responses. These studies do not directly establish the present construct-to-construct relationship. Transparent communication may nevertheless

help employees judge what they need to learn, feel more prepared to experiment responsibly, and anticipate changes in administrative workflows.

P1: Transparent leadership communication is expected to be positively associated with employee AI readiness in AI-enabled office and administrative workplaces.

Developmental Communication and AI Readiness (P2)

Developmental leadership communication emphasizes coaching, actionable feedback, encouragement to learn, and dialogue about improving task performance. Its distinguishing feature is not merely explaining why AI is introduced, but helping employees develop the capability to work with it. Social Cognitive Theory suggests that feedback, verbal persuasion, and mastery experiences can shape efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1986, 1997); supervisory coaching also has an established organizational-development foundation (Ellinger et al., 2003). In AI-enabled offices, leaders might review a draft report with an administrative officer, discuss errors in AI-generated summaries, or provide feedback on appropriate human verification. Related evidence connects transformational leadership with AI literacy and self-efficacy (Lim & Kim, 2026), and leader AI crafting with self-efficacy and innovative behavior (Pu et al., 2026). Because those studies operationalize leadership differently, they provide adjacent rather than direct tests of developmental communication.

P2: Developmental leadership communication is expected to be positively associated with employee AI readiness in AI-enabled office and administrative workplaces.

AI Readiness and Adaptive Performance (P3)

Employee AI readiness is conceptualized as preparedness to engage with AI-enabled changes, comprising AI self-efficacy, willingness to learn, and individual change readiness. These dimensions describe perceived capability and motivation rather than actual work output. In contrast, adaptive work performance concerns enacted adjustment, such as revising a scheduling workflow, learning a new document-management process, or responding appropriately when an AI-generated answer is unreliable (Pulakos et al., 2000). Employees who believe they can learn AI tools and who are willing to adjust established routines may be more likely to undertake such adaptations. Yet access to suitable systems, workload, supervisory support, and information governance may constrain this transition. Evidence linking AI transparency to change readiness (Zhang et al., 2026) and leadership to AI-use intentions (Lim & Kim, 2026) should not be mistaken for direct evidence of adaptive performance.

P3: Employee AI readiness is expected to be positively associated with adaptive work performance in AI-enabled office and administrative workplaces.

Mediating Role of AI Readiness (P4 and P5)

The model proposes two conceptually distinct indirect pathways. In the first, transparent communication supplies interpretive clarity about AI implementation; employees may then develop stronger readiness to adjust administrative routines. In the second, developmental communication supports capability-building and learning confidence, which may subsequently enable behavioral adaptation. JD-R theory frames these forms of communication as potentially complementary resources, while Social Cognitive Theory explains the role of efficacy beliefs in translating guidance into action (Bandura, 1997; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Hassanein et al. (2026) provide an important precedent for AI-readiness mediation in a different leadership and service-performance model; their findings do not establish either proposed office-management pathway. The present propositions therefore specify relationships for future empirical testing, rather than reporting observed indirect effects.

P4: Employee AI readiness is proposed to mediate the relationship between transparent leadership communication and adaptive work performance.

P5: Employee AI readiness is proposed to mediate the relationship between developmental leadership communication and adaptive work performance.

Table 2. Summary of theoretical foundations and proposed relationships

Proposition	Theoretical basis	Expected relationship
P1	JD-R; informational resource	Transparent leadership communication → AI readiness (+)
P2	SCT and JD-R; coaching and efficacy	Developmental leadership communication → AI readiness (+)
P3	SCT; preparedness and action	AI readiness → adaptive work performance (+)
P4	JD-R and SCT; indirect pathway	Transparent communication → readiness → performance (+ indirect)
P5	JD-R and SCT; indirect pathway	Developmental communication → readiness → performance (+ indirect)

Boundary Conditions and Moderating Factors

Training access may strengthen the developmental communication–readiness association by allowing employees to apply coaching through practice. Psychological safety may facilitate questions, experimentation and discussion of AI-related errors. Organizational AI governance may strengthen the credibility of transparent communication by providing clear rules for confidentiality, human oversight and accountability. Task complexity may condition whether readiness translates into adaptive performance: high-stakes or judgment-intensive work requires resources beyond confidence alone. These are candidate moderators for future tests, not additional propositions or established effects.

The model may also vary across generative AI (drafting, summarization and verification), workflow automation (routing, scheduling and exception handling) and AI-assisted decision support (interpretation, explainability and human accountability). Routine versus complex administrative tasks create different adaptation demands; future research should examine tool–task fit explicitly.

DISCUSSION

The proposed model addresses a practical and theoretical distinction: explaining AI implementation to employees is not equivalent to equipping them to learn and adapt. Transparent communication can reduce uncertainty about objectives, governance, and role expectations, whereas developmental communication can encourage skill acquisition through feedback and coaching. In office-management settings, the two functions may operate together when employees must draft correspondence, manage records, coordinate schedules, and verify AI-assisted outputs. However, these links remain propositions; the conceptual paper does not report primary data from administrative employees.

The Job Demands–Resources Model and Social Cognitive Theory offer complementary explanatory lenses. JD-R describes how communication resources may help employees navigate changing task demands (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). SCT emphasizes the formation of efficacy beliefs and learning-related behavior (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Their integration supports a resource–readiness–adaptation explanation without implying that information and coaching alone determine performance. Rival explanations include training quality, organizational AI policy, digital experience, task complexity, psychological safety, and perceived job insecurity. Future empirical work should measure these factors rather than attributing all adaptive outcomes to communication.

Office and administrative occupations provide a useful context because their work is information-intensive and often involves documentation, correspondence, scheduling, records administration, and cross-department coordination. AI-assisted tools may change how such tasks are completed, but employees remain responsible for judgment, verification, confidentiality, and service quality. The framework could be evaluated among administrative officers, executive assistants, office managers, and corporate support personnel, with adaptive performance measured separately from self-reported readiness.

Competing Explanations and Contextual Variation

SCT and JD-R are complementary rather than exclusive explanations. Technology acceptance, prior AI experience, training quality, perceived organizational support and job insecurity may explain readiness independently of leadership communication. Likewise, high readiness may not produce adaptive performance if workloads, unreliable systems or restrictive procedures prevent practice. Future studies should compare alternative models and test the incremental contribution of AI readiness rather than attributing all variation to communication.

Generative AI may demand verification of drafted correspondence and summaries; automated workflows may require monitoring and exception management; decision-support tools may demand professional judgment and auditability. Such differences suggest that AI tool type, task complexity and human oversight should be measured rather than assumed uniform across administrative roles.

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Theoretical Implications

The framework advances three provisional theoretical contributions. First, it distinguishes transparent leadership communication (informational clarity and candor) from developmental leadership communication (coaching, feedback, and learning guidance), permitting their contributions to be examined separately. Second, it proposes employee AI readiness as a multidimensional explanatory mechanism involving AI self-efficacy, learning willingness, and individual change readiness; this is a conceptual specification, not a newly validated measurement scale. Third, it differentiates psychological preparedness from enacted adaptive work performance, thus connecting JD-R communication resources with SCT-informed capability beliefs. The contribution is construct differentiation and occupational application rather than a claim to have discovered the first leadership–AI-readiness–performance mediation.

Practical Implications

For office managers, the framework suggests a two-part communication approach. Leaders can communicate clearly about the purposes and limitations of AI tools, revised administrative procedures, responsibility for checking outputs, and data-protection expectations. They can also provide demonstrations, feedback on AI-assisted documents, opportunities for supervised practice, and realistic time to learn. Human-resource and administrative-development teams may use AI self-efficacy, learning willingness, and change readiness as qualitative prompts when planning support, but these dimensions should not be used as a validated employee assessment instrument without psychometric testing. Such recommendations are theory-informed and have not been tested as interventions in this study.

Ethical and Fairness Implications

AI-enabled administration raises concerns about privacy, confidentiality, algorithmic bias, accountability and equitable access to skill development. Managers should communicate which records may be processed with AI, who checks generated outputs, when exceptions must be escalated and who remains accountable for consequential decisions. Communication alone cannot replace effective safeguards and governance. Employees with unequal training access or digital resources may face uneven opportunities to adapt; developmental support should therefore be paired with fair access to training and realistic learning time. These recommendations are theory-informed, not tested interventions.

Task-Specific Managerial Applications

For correspondence and reports, supervisors can demonstrate checking AI-generated statements for accuracy, tone and confidentiality. For automated scheduling or records routing, they can clarify approval responsibilities and exception procedures. For decision-support tools, they can emphasize independent review, documentation and escalation. Organizations should not use the proposed readiness dimensions as a personnel screening instrument before measurement validation.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

7.1 Limitations of the Proposed Framework

This study develops a conceptual framework rather than empirically testing the proposed relationships among leadership communication, employee AI readiness and adaptive work performance. The five propositions are theoretically grounded expectations, not established causal relationships. In particular, the proposed mediating role of employee AI readiness requires empirical testing.

The selective theory-integrative review is not an exhaustive systematic synthesis. Although the documented Scopus exports provide a search source pool, the precise criteria for the final refinement from 1,533 to 1,474 records cannot be reconstructed, and the latter figure must not be interpreted as the number of studies systematically screened or included. The reviewed studies also differ in occupation, AI technology, leadership construct and outcome.

Employee AI readiness has not yet been validated as a multidimensional construct. Its proposed dimensions may overlap with technology self-efficacy, general learning orientation and readiness for organizational change. The framework also does not establish whether the proposed relationships are equivalent across generative AI, workflow automation and AI-assisted decision-support systems.

7.2 Construct Refinement and Measurement Validation

Future research should begin with interviews involving office and administrative employees, supervisors and AI implementation personnel, supplemented by expert review, to clarify the meaning and content of employee AI readiness. Researchers should develop or adapt items for transparent leadership communication (clarity, openness and explanations of AI-related responsibilities), developmental leadership communication (coaching, feedback and learning guidance), and the three proposed readiness dimensions.

Pilot testing and exploratory factor analysis may be followed by confirmatory factor analysis in an independent sample where appropriate. For reflective factors, researchers should examine indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity and discriminant validity. Alternative specifications of AI readiness—as correlated first-order dimensions, a reflective higher-order construct or a theoretically justified composite—should be compared on substantive and measurement grounds. Composite specifications require evaluation criteria suited to their measurement logic, including collinearity and indicator contributions where relevant.

Adaptive work performance should be measured through task adaptability, learning adaptability and work adjustment, with attention to observable behavior rather than simply perceived readiness.

7.3 Discriminant Validity and Nomological Network

AI self-efficacy should be differentiated from general computer self-efficacy by emphasizing confidence in AI-specific tasks. Learning willingness should refer to motivation to develop AI-related competencies rather than broad learning orientation. Individual change readiness should be distinguished from organizational readiness and from enacted adaptive work performance. Confirmatory factor analysis and the heterotrait–monotrait ratio may be used where appropriate to evaluate discriminant validity.

The nomological network should examine the two communication dimensions as antecedents, AI readiness as the proposed intervening construct and adaptive work performance as a distinct behavioral outcome. Prior AI experience, technology acceptance, perceived organizational support, training access and job insecurity are plausible rival explanations or covariates. Incremental validity should be examined to determine whether AI readiness contributes beyond established related constructs.

7.4 Empirical Testing of the Proposed Relationships

Future quantitative studies could recruit office and administrative employees who perform AI-supported tasks, including administrative officers, executive assistants and corporate support personnel. Structural equation

modeling could evaluate P1–P5, including bootstrapped confidence intervals for the proposed indirect effects, provided that the sample and measurement model are appropriate.

A multi-wave design could assess leadership communication at an initial time point, AI readiness subsequently and adaptive work performance later. Where feasible, supervisor assessments or documented behavioral indicators should complement employee self-reports to mitigate common-method concerns. Temporal ordering would strengthen interpretation but would not, by itself, demonstrate causality. Researchers should also compare direct-effect, alternative mediation and plausible reverse-direction models.

7.5 Moderating Conditions and Contextual Comparisons

Training access may strengthen the developmental communication–AI readiness association, while psychological safety may facilitate employees' willingness to seek guidance and discuss AI-related errors. AI governance may shape the usefulness and credibility of transparent communication, particularly for confidentiality, accountability and acceptable AI use. Task complexity may affect whether readiness translates into adaptive performance.

Comparisons across generative AI, workflow automation and decision-support applications could reveal different demands for verification, exception handling and human judgment. Cross-sector and cross-national studies may further clarify the conditions under which the proposed framework applies. These are future research directions rather than additional propositions tested in this paper.

7.6 Future Research Agenda

A staged program of research is recommended. First, qualitative inquiry and expert assessment should refine construct definitions and establish content validity. Second, pilot and independent-sample measurement studies should evaluate dimensionality, reliability, discriminant validity and the broader nomological network. Third, longitudinal or multi-source studies should test P1–P5, compare competing explanations and examine theoretically justified moderators.

Until such studies are conducted, the framework should be regarded as an empirically testable conceptual explanation rather than a validated model.

Table 3. Proposed future research agenda

Stage	Recommended design	Primary contribution
1. Construct refinement	Administrative employee interviews; expert review	Clarify boundaries and content validity
2. Measurement development	Pilot survey; EFA if needed; independent-sample CFA	Evaluate dimensionality and measurement quality
3. Nomological validation	Competing construct measures; alternative specifications	Assess discriminant and incremental validity
4. Proposition testing	Multi-wave, multi-source SEM; bootstrap indirect effects	Evaluate P1–P5 without overclaiming causality
5. Contextual comparison	Moderation and multi-group tests by AI tool and task	Evaluate training, safety, governance and complexity

CONCLUSION

AI implementation does not automatically yield employee preparedness or effective workplace adaptation. Focusing on office and administrative employees, this paper proposes that transparent and developmental leadership communication provide complementary informational and learning-related resources that may shape employee AI readiness and, indirectly, adaptive work performance. The resource–readiness–adaptation framework advances a testable explanation beyond technology adoption intentions, while acknowledging that its five propositions require construct validation and empirical testing.

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