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Adaptive Performance in Contemporary Work Contexts: A Systematic Review and Conceptual Framework Development

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ABSTRACT

In an era of rapid technological advancement, organisational change, and evolving work environments, employee adaptive performance has emerged as a critical competency for maintaining both individual and organisational effectiveness. Despite its growing importance, research on adaptive performance remains fragmented, creating a need for a more integrated understanding of what drives adaptive performance and how it develops. Addressing this gap, this study systematically reviews 39 empirical studies published between 2020 and 2024 to identify and synthesise the underlying theories shaping adaptive performance. This study identifies three dominant theories to build the framework of adaptive performance, namely the Conservation of Resources Theory, Job Demand-Resources Theory, and Self-Determination Theory. This review highlights how personal and job-related resources (e.g., psychological capital, mentoring, leadership) function as enablers, how psychological states (e.g., engagement, meaningfulness, motivation) mediate their influence, and how individual and contextual moderators such as proactive personality, work ethics, and time pressure shape adaptive outcomes. By integrating resource-based and motivation-driven perspectives, the study contributes theoretical coherence to literature and offers practical implications for human resource management, providing evidence-based strategies for fostering a more adaptable workforce in dynamic organisational environments.

1. Introduction

In an era where artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping work and organisational practices, adaptive performance has become an increasingly important area of research [66]. Rapid technological advancements are transforming how tasks are performed and how organisations operate, requiring employees to adjust continuously, acquire new skills, and demonstrate resilience in navigating ongoing workplace changes [68].

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However, much of the literature on human resource management still focuses on traditional dimensions of job performance, namely task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behaviour [11,47,51]. As the labour market grows more complex and dynamic a more comprehensive framework is required to understand how employees respond to uncertainty and change. This shifting context has increased scholarly interest in adaptive performance studies.

Adaptive performance, which refers to individual's ability to respond effectively to emergencies, learn new tasks quickly, and solve unfamiliar problems, is now deemed essential for both individual and organisational success [12]. In practice, it reflects an employee's capacity to adapt to new technologies, evolving responsibilities, and unexpected challenges, and is increasingly recognised as a key component of overall job performance [20,22,41,45].

A growing number of empirical studies have shown that adaptive performance contributes to a wide range of positive outcomes at both the individual and organisational levels. It has been associated with higher job satisfaction, increased work engagement, enhanced task performance, project success, and greater creativity [13,65]. These findings have prompted growing interest in identifying the factors that shape adaptive performance, such as psychological resources, personality traits, job demands, and organisational support mechanisms [26,34,49,52,57,60,72].

Despite the growing attention to adaptive performance, the existing literature remains unfocused. Research in this field draws on a wide range of theoretical perspectives, including the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model [3,4,7,53,55,56] and Career Construction Theory [53,55]. However, these studies do not converge into a coherent and unified conceptual foundation. The diversity of constructs and variables examined across studies limits generalisability and constrains theoretical progress. This disintegration highlights a significant gap in the literature and calls for an integrative study that identifies the dominant theories and key variables influencing adaptive performance [32].

In response to this gap, this study conducts a systematic literature review to consolidate existing knowledge and propose a cohesive conceptual framework. The study has two key objectives. Firstly, to identify the predominant theoretical perspectives that have shaped research on adaptive performance. Secondly, to synthesise the key individual and contextual variables examined in the literature and integrate them into a comprehensive and actionable framework. By doing so, this review contributes to theoretical clarity and suggests practical insights for enhancing adaptability in the contemporary workplace.

Two primary research questions guide the study: (1) What are the major theoretical perspectives supporting research on adaptive performance? (2) What key variables are commonly associated with adaptive performance, and how can they be integrated into a cohesive conceptual framework?

This review makes two significant contributions to the existing body of knowledge on adaptation performance. First, it offers a structured synthesis of antecedents of adaptive performance, providing researchers and practitioners with a clearer understanding of the personal, contextual, and organisational factors involved. This framework serves as a foundation for future empirical work, including model development and hypothesis testing. Second, it examines the theoretical foundations of adaptive performance research. By analysing how theories such as the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory, and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) have been applied and adapted, the study enhances conceptual clarity and identifies opportunities for future theoretical advancement.

The remainder of this study is structured as follows. Section 2 outlines the research methodology used to address the research questions. Section 3 presents and discusses the key findings. Finally, Section 4 provides the conclusion, including a summary of contributions and suggestions for future research.

2. Method

This study followed the systematic literature review framework proposed by Torraco [61], which outlines procedures for searching, selecting, analysing, and synthesising relevant literature. Table 1 shows the review process. The first step involved a comprehensive search of the Scopus database using a set of keywords related to workplace performance and adaptability. The search strategy incorporated key terms and combined phrases such as “adaptive performance”, “job performance”, “adaptability”, “adaptive behaviour”, and “workplace”. This initial search generated a total of 528 results.

The second step involved screening and selecting relevant articles. 77 articles were selected based on the following inclusion criteria: (i) peer-reviewed articles published between 2020 to 2024, (ii) quantitative research, and (iii) articles published in the English language. Conference proceedings and non-English publications were excluded. The review focused on publications from 2020 to 2024 to ensure that the literature reflected current developments and contemporary workplace conditions.

The third step involved reviewing and coding. Each article was coded according to the author, year, and theoretical framework used. All the information was recorded in a Microsoft Excel worksheet. The inclusion criteria for this step is that adaptive performance is employed as a core construct, either as an independent variable, dependent variable, mediator, or moderator in the research model. These 36 articles were used to identify the major theories applied in adaptive performance research. The review identified 31 theories. Three major theories emerged: (i) Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, (ii) Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory, and (iii) Self-Determination Theory (SDT).

The fourth step involved the synthesis studies using the three major theories identified in the third step. A total of 21 studies grounded in these three theories were subsequently synthesised to examine the associated variables and to develop a conceptual framework.

Table 1
 Literature review process by Torraco (2016)

Step 1: Searching	528 articles found using the search string below Search strings: <i>“Adaptive performance”, “Job performance”, “Adaptability”, “Adaptive behaviour”, and “Workplace”</i>
Step 2: Selection	77 articles meet the inclusion criteria below <u>Inclusion Criteria</u> (i) Peer-reviewed articles published between 2020 to 2024, (ii) Quantitative research (iii) Articles published in the English language
Step 3: Analysis	36 articles included for analysis <u>Inclusion Criteria</u> (i) Adaptive performance as a core construct, either as an independent variable, dependent variable, mediator, or moderator in the research model.
Step 4: Synthesis	21 articles included for synthesis <u>Inclusion Criteria</u> Using the three dominant theories in their studies (i) Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (ii) Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory (iii) Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

3. Findings and Discussion

Following the systematic literature review process detailed in Section 2, this section discussed the findings in detail. The results of the comprehensive theoretical analysis are summarised in Table 2, which lists the final set of 31 highly relevant empirical studies. This selection establishes a strong, evidence-based foundation for understanding the conceptualisation and investigation of adaptive performance, detailing the specific theoretical lens and variables employed in each study. A strong theoretical foundation is essential for deepening our understanding of adaptive performance. The analysis revealed that while a variety of theoretical perspectives have been employed, such as Social Exchange Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, Broaden and Build Theory, and the Cognitive–Affective System Theory of Personality, three theories appear most consistently across the literature. These dominant perspectives are the COR theory, JD-R theory, and SDT. The prominence of these three theories suggests that they provide the most robust and recurrent explanatory frameworks for understanding adaptive performance, and they therefore serve as the basis for the theoretical synthesis presented in the following sections.

Table 2

Theories used in adaptive performance research for the period 2020 – 2024

No.	Theory	References
1	Conservation of Resources Theory ($n = 11$)	Bajaba <i>et al.</i> , [2]; Luo <i>et al.</i> , [36]; Rana, Ahmed, & Shahzadi [48]; Roshayati [50]; Song <i>et al.</i> [57]; Taskan, Junca-Silva and Caetano [60]; Vakola, Xanthopoulou, and Demerouti [63]; Van den Heuvel <i>et al.</i> , [64]; Zeng, Zhao and Ruan [69]; Zia <i>et al.</i> , [71]; Zia <i>et al.</i> , [72]
2	Job Demands-Resources Theory ($n = 6$)	Li and Yu [35]; Nandini, Gustomo, and Sushandoyo [40]; Ramdhan <i>et al.</i> , [46]; Tan <i>et al.</i> , [59]; Vakola, Xanthopoulou, and Demerouti [63]; Zia <i>et al.</i> , [70]
3	Self-Determination Theory ($n = 4$)	Gherman <i>et al.</i> , [19]; Li and Ding [33]; Luo <i>et al.</i> , [37]; Tabiu, Pangil, Siti Zubaidah Othman [58]
4	Social Exchange Theory ($n = 3$)	Li <i>et al.</i> , [35]; Katsaros [29]; Elshaer and Saad [18]
5	Social Cognitive Theory ($n = 3$)	Haris <i>et al.</i> , [21]; Joie-La Marle <i>et al.</i> , [27]; Bajaba <i>et al.</i> , [2]
6	Broaden and Build Theory ($n = 1$)	Vakola, Petrou, and Katsaros [62]
7	Cognitive-Affective System Theory of Personality ($n = 1$)	Li <i>et al.</i> , [34]
8	Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory ($n = 1$)	Wang and Chiu [67]
9	Disaster Resilience Framework ($n = 1$)	Elshaer and Saad [18]
10	Dual Tuning Theory ($n = 1$)	Vakola, Petrou, and Katsaros [62]
11	Ego-Depletion Theory ($n = 1$)	Rana, Ahmed, and Shahzadi [48]
12	Emotional Contagion Theory ($n = 1$)	Ren <i>et al.</i> , [49]
13	General Contingency Theory ($n = 1$)	Konadu <i>et al.</i> , [31]
14	Individual Adaptability Theory ($n = 1$)	Li and Yu [35]
15	Job Characteristics Theory ($n = 1$)	Budhiraja and Rathi [10]
16	Leader-Member Exchange Theory ($n = 1$)	Hwang, Hwang, and Jacob [26]
17	Media Naturalness Theory ($n = 1$)	Hui, Law, and Lau [24]
18	Migration Theory ($n = 1$)	Bravo and Ostos [8]
19	Organisational Support Theory ($n = 1$)	Deprez <i>et al.</i> , [17]
20	Paradox Perspective ($n = 1$)	Tan <i>et al.</i> , [59]
21	Path-Goal Theory ($n = 1$)	Ren <i>et al.</i> , [49]
22	Person-Environment Fit Theory ($n = 1$)	Ren <i>et al.</i> , [49]
23	Rational Choice Theory ($n = 1$)	Luo <i>et al.</i> , [37]
24	Social Capital Theory ($n = 1$)	Luo <i>et al.</i> , [37]
25	Social Contingency Theory ($n = 1$)	Haris <i>et al.</i> [21]
26	Social Information Processing Theory ($n = 1$)	Hui, Law, and Lau [24]
27	Structural and Psychological Empowerment Theory ($n = 1$)	Huntsman <i>et al.</i> , [25]
28	The Affective Event Theory ($n = 1$)	Junca-silva [28]
29	Theory of a Learning Organisation ($n = 1$)	Kim [30]
30	Theory of Planned Behaviour ($n = 1$)	Luo <i>et al.</i> , [36]
31	Transformative Learning Theory ($n = 1$)	Budhiraja and Rathi [10]

4.1 Adaptive Performance through the Lens of COR Theory

The systematic literature review revealed that the COR theory is the most frequently applied framework in recent adaptive performance research. Its dominance reflects the increasing emphasis placed on how employees manage, protect, and replenish their resources when navigating continuous organisational change. COR theory is central to understanding workplace stress. The theory emphasises that stress emerges not only from isolated events but from ongoing patterns of resource loss and accumulating demands. Rather than focusing solely on stressful events, COR theory highlights the importance of resource availability and depletion, which influences how individuals respond to long-term stressors in an organisational context [23].

In adaptive performance research, COR theory is pertinent as employees encountering continuous change, uncertainty, and rising job demands must efficiently manage and conserve their resources (e.g., energy, skills, and social support) [2,17,48,57,60,63,69,71,72]. Those with more significant personal and job-related resources (e.g., resilience and leadership support) are better positioned to adapt to workplace challenges.

Guided by the COR Theory, Zia *et al.*, [72] investigated the relationship between despotic leadership and adaptive performance, focusing on the mediating role of psychological distress and the moderating effects of Islamic work ethics (IWE). Their study involved a sample of 304 middle managers and their supervisors in Pakistan. The findings showed that despotic leadership significantly increases employees' psychological distress. This distress adversely affects their adaptive performance, indicating that a toxic leadership style can lead to diminished effectiveness in employees' work roles. Psychological distress serves as a mechanism of mediating the relationship between despotic leadership and adaptive performance, suggesting that the negative impacts of despotic leadership on performance are partly due to the psychological distress it induces in employees. Furthermore, their results emphasised that IWE play a vital role in moderating the negative effects of despotic leadership. Specifically, IWE assists in alleviating the detrimental impacts of psychological distress on adaptive performance, implying that robust ethical frameworks can confer resilience against poor leadership.

Taskan, Junca-Silva, and Caetano [60] investigated the relationship between teleworking perceptions, adaptive performance, and leadership effectiveness. Their findings indicate a significant indirect effect of perceived teleworking on adaptive performance. This suggests that employees' perceptions of their telework environment influence their emotional experiences, which subsequently shape their ability to adapt. Specifically, positive perceptions of teleworking experience were associated with lower levels of negative emotions, thereby supporting higher adaptive performance. Leadership effectiveness also plays a crucial moderating role in this relationship. The indirect effect of teleworking perceptions on adaptive performance was strongest among employees with ineffective or moderately effective leaders. Conversely, when leadership was perceived as highly effective, the negative consequences of unfavourable teleworking perceptions on adaptive performance were substantially reduced. This highlights effective leadership as a key resource that can buffer the emotional strain associated with teleworking and support employees' adaptability.

Song *et al.*, [57] examined how organisational polytonicity, characterised by multiple and competing organisational priorities (my understanding), affects individual adaptive performance, with particular attention to the mediating role of time pressure and the moderating role of trait regulatory focus. Their findings showed that organisational polytonicity is negatively associated with adaptive performance, and this relationship is mediated by increased time pressure. In other words, as competing organisational demands intensify, employees experience greater time pressure, which subsequently diminishes their ability to adapt. The study also found that employees who focused on

growth and advancement weakened the positive relationship between organisational polytonicity and time pressure. This means that those who are more focused on achieving positive outcomes are less affected by the negative impacts of polytonicity on their performance. Conversely, individuals with a prevention focus demonstrate an enhanced positive relationship between organisational polytonicity and time pressure. Thus, individuals who are more concerned with avoiding negative outcomes are more adversely affected by polytonicity, resulting in a greater impact on their adaptive performance.

Roshayati [50] investigated the relationship between technology readiness, job meaningfulness, and adaptive performance among employees. The study indicated that employees who are inclined to utilise technology in their jobs tend to demonstrate higher adaptive performance. This suggests that a positive attitude towards technology can enhance an employee's ability to adapt to changes in their work environment. Job meaningfulness was found to mediate the relationship between technology readiness and adaptive performance. This means that when employees perceive their jobs as meaningful, their readiness to adopt technology has a positive influence on their adaptive performance. The study also highlights that employees with a proactive personality can strengthen the relationship between job meaningfulness and adaptive performance. Hence, proactive individuals are more likely to view their work as meaningful, which, in turn, elevates their adaptive performance.

The COR Theory has been identified as the most frequently applied framework in recent adaptive performance research, emphasising that an employee's ability to navigate continuous organisational change depends on their capacity to manage, protect, and replenish personal and job-related resources (e.g., resilience, social support). This theoretical lens reveals that adaptive performance is significantly diminished by factors leading to resource loss, such as despotic leadership (which causes psychological distress) as demonstrated by Zia *et al.*, [72] and Song *et al.*, [57]. Conversely, the research confirms that strong resources, like effective leadership [60] a proactive personality and job meaningfulness derived from technology readiness [50], and a promotion focus [57], act as buffers or enhancers, positioning employees with a greater resource pool to maintain or elevate their adaptability in the face of workplace demands.

4.2 Adaptive Performance through the Lens of JD-R Theory

JD-R Theory categorises job characteristics into two primary groups: job demands and resources [5]. Job demands encompass elements that require ongoing physical or psychological effort and may lead to stress and strain, while job resources are elements that support employees in achieving job objectives, alleviate job demands, and foster motivation and well-being [4,16]. Leaders play a pivotal role in defining these job characteristics, thereby influencing employee well-being and performance.

JD-R theory is widely used to examine how job demands and resources affect employee motivation, engagement, and performance. The theory emphasises the importance of personal resources, such as self-efficacy and growth mindset, in strengthening employees' capacity to manage job demands and enhance adaptive performance [40,46,59,63,70].

Ramadhan *et al.*, [46], using a survey of 282 non-managerial employees, found that internal corporate social responsibility (CSR) functions as an important organisational resource that enhances employee well-being. Internal CSR promoted work engagement and reduced burnout, which subsequently improved job performance. Internal CSR (defined as a form of concern, attention and corporate responsibility) is identified as a crucial resource for employees, enabling them to focus on their work while fulfilling their personal and professional resource needs. Significant environmental changes (especially during the pandemic period) necessitate the development of an adaptive

performance management framework that supports the strengths of the company's structure. The role of internal CSR as a resource capable of addressing performance issues requires validation. It promotes work flexibility and work-life balance, while also reducing work-related pressures. These efforts influence job performance directly and indirectly, with work engagement and burnout serving as partial mediators. By prioritising employee welfare, organisations strengthen their internal structures and establish internal CSR as a foundational element of organisational sustainability. When integrated with ethically grounded HR governance, internal CSR enhances performance outcomes. The psychological factors, shaped through employee well-being, play an important role in how internal CSR initiatives are perceived and enacted.

In a survey of 185 employees, Nandini, Gustomo, and Sushandoyo [40] found that work engagement fully mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and a growth mindset towards active learning. This suggests that employees with strong personal resources, such as confidence in their abilities and a mindset oriented toward growth, were more engaged in their work, which in turn enhanced active learning behaviours. At the same time, active learning partially mediates the relationship between work engagement and adaptive performance, suggesting that while work engagement directly influences adaptive performance, active learning strengthens this effect through an additional pathway.

Vakola, Xanthopoulou, and Demerouti [63] investigated how daily job crafting behaviours, including seeking resources, seeking challenges, and reducing demands, enhance adaptive performance during organisational change, with particular attention to managers' influence tactics. The study found that daily job crafting behaviours are essential for enhancing adaptive performance among employees during periods of organisational change. This suggests that employees actively modify their work roles to better adapt to changes in their environment. Managers' influence tactics play a significant role in shaping this dynamic. When managerial influence tactics were perceived as weak, employees compensated for limited managerial support by proactively seeking the resources necessary to adapt.

In another study, Zia *et al.*, [70] examined how servant leadership affects adaptive performance through two mediating mechanisms: job embeddedness and burnout. The primary goal of the leader is to serve the highest needs of their employees. Their findings showed that servant leadership strengthens job embeddedness and reduces burnout, both of which influence adaptive performance in opposite directions, i.e. job embeddedness enhances it, while burnout diminishes it. This highlights the importance of leadership behaviours in shaping the psychological conditions to support employee adaptability

Tan *et al.*, [59] investigated the effects of paradoxical leadership behaviour (PLB) on employee adaptive performance using a sample of 64 leaders and 224 subordinates. Paradoxical leadership behaviour is defined as a leader's ability to exhibit competing, yet mutually reinforcing, behaviours simultaneously or over time to meet the complex and contradictory demands of the organisation and its followers effectively. They found that PLB positively influences employees' paradoxical mindset, which in turn enhances adaptive performance. The paradoxical mindset acted as a mediator in this relationship. The study also revealed that employees exposed to high-PLB leadership demonstrated higher levels of paradoxical mindset, which subsequently enhanced their adaptive performance. However, role stress negatively affects adaptive performance, consistent with the JD-R model's assertion that high demands undermine employee outcomes.

JD-R Theory frames job characteristics as either demands (causing strain, like role stress) or resources (fostering motivation and goal attainment, like support or self-efficacy), with leaders playing a key role in their definition. Literature confirms the JD-R theory's dual-process model: adaptive performance is enhanced by organisational resources (e.g., Internal CSR, servant leadership,

or a leader exhibiting paradoxical leadership behaviour, which fosters a paradoxical mindset) and personal resources (e.g., self-efficacy and a growth mindset that boosts work engagement and active learning). Furthermore, studies highlight that employees actively engage in job crafting to seek resources and manage demands, underscoring the importance of both leadership and proactive employee behaviour in mitigating demands and leveraging resources to support effective adaptation during change.

4.3 Adaptive Performance through the Lens of SDT

Self-determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan [14], suggests that people are inherently motivated to engage in activities that satisfy three core psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness [1,54]. Autonomy signifies the desire for self-governance and the ability to control one's actions; competence relates to feeling capable and compelling in various tasks, and relatedness highlights the importance of forming meaningful social connections. When these needs are fulfilled, individuals experience increased intrinsic motivation, engagement, and overall well-being, contributing to enhanced personal growth and performance [9].

SDT has been widely applied in research examining motivation and adaptive behaviour. The theory suggests that when an activity becomes highly valued and integrated into a person's identity, it develops into a sustained passion that maintains long-term motivation and positive behaviours [19,33,37,58,65].

Aligned with SDT's emphasis on psychological resources, Luo *et al.*, [37] studied the relationships between psychological capital, social capital, and adaptive performance among hotel employees in China. Their findings showed that psychological capital significantly enhances adaptive performance, suggesting that employees with higher psychological capital tend to perform better in adaptive situations. The study reveals that social capital has a positive influence on adaptive performance, except in the context of creative problem-solving. This indicated that while social capital is beneficial, its effects may vary depending on the specific adaptive performance factors being considered. A key finding was that social capital partially mediates the relationship between psychological capital and adaptive performance. This indicates that psychological capital operates both directly on adaptive performance and indirectly, highlighting that psychologically resourceful employees tend to build stronger social networks, which in turn support their adaptability.

Gherman *et al.*, [19] explored the moral impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on nurses, focusing on their burnout, job satisfaction, and adaptive work performance. The study found that memories of Potentially Moral Injurious Events (PMIEs) were associated with higher burnout, lower job satisfaction, and diminished adaptive performance compared to severe moral transgressions (SMTs). This indicates that the nature of recalled experiences significantly influences nurses' psychological well-being and adaptive performance. Burnout, moral learning, and job satisfaction were identified as key mediators in the relationship between the recall of PMIEs and SMTs and adaptive performance. These findings suggest that interventions targeting these mediating factors could be instrumental in enhancing nurses' work experience and performance outcomes during and after organisational crises.

Vergauwe *et al.*, [65] extended the SDT's framework to examine the relationship between work passion and various personality traits, as well as work-related outcomes. An extensive set of both general (Big Five) and maladaptive (PID-5) personality traits was investigated in relation to harmonious passion (HP) and obsessive passion (OP) for work. Harmonious passion is a more adaptive and positive form of passion while obsessive passion is a less adaptive form of passion that can lead to negative outcomes. A distinctive pattern of relationships was observed, indicating that

HP and OP have different correlations with personality traits. However, the significance of maladaptive traits was not substantially greater for OP compared to HP. Moreover, it was confirmed that employees with high HP are more satisfied with their jobs. This relationship remained significant even after controlling OP. HP was also positively associated with supervisor performance ratings, particularly for contextual and adaptive performance. Although employees with higher OP also tended to report greater job satisfaction, the relationship was weaker compared to HP, indicating that HP is a stronger driver of both satisfaction and performance outcomes.

Li and Ding [33] examined the influence of paradoxical leadership on the adaptive performance among new-generation employees. Paradoxical leadership is defined as a leader's practice of engaging in seemingly competing, yet interrelated behaviours simultaneously and over time to meet the complex and often contradictory demands of the workplace. The study found a significant positive correlation between paradoxical leadership and the adaptive performance of new-generation employees. This suggests that effective paradoxical leadership can enhance employees' ability to adapt to changing work environments. The relationship between paradoxical leadership and adaptive performance is partially mediated by harmonious work passion. This means that paradoxical leadership not only directly influences adaptive performance but also does so indirectly by fostering a harmonious passion for work among employees. Core self-evaluation refers to a broad, personality-based trait representing the fundamental, bottom-line evaluations that people hold about themselves plays a crucial role in moderating the relationship between paradoxical leadership and harmonious work passion. Specifically, the study indicates that higher levels of core self-evaluation among new-generation employees strengthen the mediating effect of harmonious work passion on adaptive performance.

The core findings of this literature review, grounded in SDT, highlight that Adaptive performance is crucially enhanced by psychological resources and adaptive behaviours. Specifically, high psychological capital directly and indirectly, through the building of Social Capital, improves adaptability. Furthermore, the adaptive leadership style of Paradoxical Leadership significantly boosts adaptive performance by fostering HP; conversely, exposure to negative moral events, like those experienced by nurses during the pandemic, diminishes adaptive performance by increasing burnout. Ultimately, the research confirms that satisfying core SDT needs translates into the development of HP, which, unlike OP, serves as a strong, positive mediator driving both job satisfaction and successful adaptation in complex work environments.

4.4 Variables Across COR theory, JD-R theory, SDT and Framework Development

This study synthesises key variables used in recent studies on adaptive performance, grounded in three dominant theoretical lenses: the COR theory, JD-R theory, and SDT. Table 3 presents the theories and variables used in each theory. Each theory offers unique insights into how individuals adapt at work, particularly under pressure, during times of change, or in the face of uncertainty. Understanding how these variables interrelate enables the construction of an integrative conceptual framework that advances the theoretical and empirical understanding of adaptive performance.

Table 3

Summary of studies using the COR Theory, JD-R Theory, and SDT

Authors (Year)	Theory	Dependent Variable	Independent Variables	Mediator	Moderator
Song <i>et al.</i> , [57]	COR	Individual adaptive performance	Organisational polychronicity	Time pressure	Trait regulatory focus
Taskan, Junca-Silva, and Caetano [60]	COR	Adaptive performance	Perceived effect of telework	Negative affect	Perceived leadership effectiveness
Zia <i>et al.</i> , [72]	COR	Adaptive performance	Despotic leadership	Psychological distress	Islamic work ethnics
Vakola, Xanthopoulou, and Demerouti [63]	COR	Adaptive performance	Daily job crafting		Influence tactics
Roshayati [50]	COR	Adaptive performance	Technology readiness	Job meaningfulness	Proactive personality
Luo <i>et al.</i> , [36]	COR	Adaptive performance	Psychological capital	Change readiness	
Zia <i>et al.</i> , [71]	COR	Adaptive performance Workplace deviance behaviour	Leader member exchange		Islamic work ethnics
Rana, Ahmed, and Shahzadi [48]	COR	Adaptive performance	Workplace spirituality	Job satisfaction Deep acting Surface acting	
Bajaba <i>et al.</i> , [2]	COR	Adaptive performance	Adaptive personality	Crisis leader self-efficacy Motivation to lead	
Zeng, Zhao and Ruan [69]	COR	Adaptive performance	Mentoring	Thriving at work	Promotion focus
Van den Heuvel <i>et al.</i> , [64]	COR	Adaptive performance	Work engagement	Attitude to change	
Tan <i>et al.</i> , [59]	JD-R	Adaptive performance	Paradox mindset Role stress		
Li and Yu [35]	JD-R	Work engagement	Adaptive performance	Ganqing Renqing Xinren	
Zia <i>et al.</i> , [70]	JD-R	Adaptive performance	Servant leadership	Job embeddedness Burnout	
Vakola, Xanthopoulou, and Demerouti [63]	JD-R	Adaptive performance	Daily job crafting		Influence tactics
Nandini, Gustomo, and Sushandoyo [40]	JD-R	Adaptive performance	Self-efficacy Growth mindset	Work engagement Active learning	
Ramdhan <i>et al.</i> , [46]	JD-R	Adaptive performance	Corporate social responsibility	Work engagement	

				Burnout	
Li and Ding [33]	SDT	Adaptive performance	Paradoxical leadership	Harmonious work passion	Core self-evaluation
Luo <i>et al.</i> , [37]	SDT	Adaptive performance	Psychological capital	Social capital	
Gherman <i>et al.</i> , [19]	SDT	Adaptive performance	Recall of episodic memories	Autonomy thwarting Work motivation Moral learning Burnout Work satisfaction	
Tabiu, Pangil, and Othman [58]	SDT	Adaptive performance	Training Job autonomy Career planning		

To develop this integrated framework, the study analyses the dependent, independent, mediating, and moderating variables used across studies grounded in COR theory, JD-R theory, and SDT. Examining how these variables relate to one another reveals points of intersection and complementarity that can guide future empirical research. Figure 3 presents the resulting conceptual framework, which combines these three theoretical perspectives to illustrate how various antecedents, mediators, and moderators influence adaptive performance.

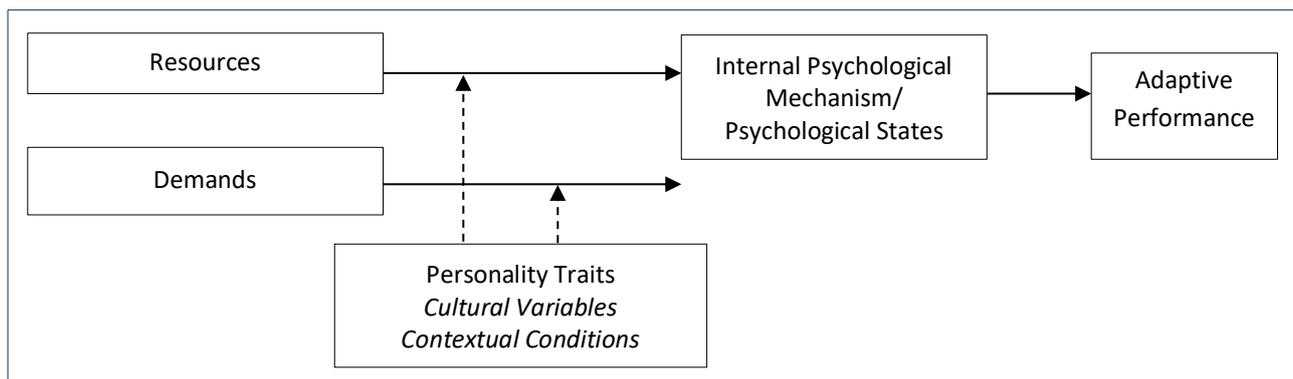


Fig. 3 Conceptual framework based on COR theory, JD-R theory, and SDT

Adaptive performance is the dependent variable. A dynamic and multidimensional construct that captures an individual’s ability to adjust behaviour in response to changing work demands, novel tasks, and unpredictable situations. In today’s fluid organisational environments, adaptive performance is no longer optional but essential [2]. It encompasses behaviours such as creative problem-solving, learning agility, emotional regulation, and tolerance for ambiguity. Studies have linked adaptive performance to various antecedents across COR, JD-R, and SDT frameworks. For instance, positive experiences with telework [60], strong leader–member exchange [71], or the presence of spirituality in the workplace [48] all positively contribute to adaptive behaviour when appropriately mediated and moderated. The integration of multiple theoretical perspectives provides a holistic view of how personal resources, job context, psychological processes, and individual differences collectively shape adaptive work behaviours.

Firstly, COR theory offers a lens for understanding how individuals respond to resource gains and losses. For instance, psychological capital [36], mentoring [69], and organisational polychronicity [57] are viewed as resources that enhance adaptive capacity. Conversely, despotic leadership [72] and workplace deviance [71] are resource-depleting factors that can impair adaptive performance unless

mitigated. Secondly, the JD-R theory distinguishes between job demands (e.g., role stress and burnout) and job resources (e.g., servant leadership and self-efficacy), and links them to motivational outcomes such as engagement and embeddedness [40,70]. When resources outweigh demands, individuals are more likely to perform adaptively [46]. Thirdly, SDT introduces the psychological mechanism of motivation as a driving force behind adaptation. It emphasises how factors such as job autonomy, training [58], and paradoxical leadership [33] support the satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, leading to intrinsic motivation and harmonious work passion [33].

The independent variables include resources and demand. This group of independent variables indicates the initial conditions that facilitate or impede adaptive performance. Resources encompass the physical, psychological, and social assets individuals can leverage to tackle challenges effectively. For example, psychological capital, including hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy, has been consistently linked to enhanced adaptive behaviours [36,37]. Other essential resources include mentoring networks [69], organisational support such as training and job autonomy [58], and job-related attributes like a paradox mindset or an adaptive personality [2,59]. In contrast, demands such as role stress, burnout, and time pressure can reduce individuals' adaptive capacity unless offset by sufficient resources [59,70]. These demands represent cognitive, emotional, or workload pressures that challenge individual capacity. The JD-R theory shows this relationship by suggesting that resource availability can mitigate the negative impacts of high demands, enabling individuals to remain engaged and adaptive even in challenging circumstances [40].

The mediating layer of the framework describes the internal psychological mechanisms through which inputs influence adaptive performance. Drawing from JD-R and SDT, work engagement is one of the most frequently identified mediators. It reflects an energetic, focused, and committed state that channels job resources into effective adaptive behaviour [35,63]. Similarly, psychological states, such as job satisfaction [48], job meaningfulness [50], and psychological distress [72] serve as mediators in COR-based models. These states influence whether individuals feel empowered or depleted when facing resource threats or gains. Motivational processes, as emphasised in SDT, also play a central role. When individuals experience need satisfaction through autonomy, competence, and relatedness, they are more likely to develop harmonious work passion and intrinsic motivation, which facilitate adaptive functioning [19,33]. These mediators act as the engine of the framework, translating external conditions into behavioural outcomes.

Moderators are variables that influence the strength or direction of relationships among inputs, mediators, and outcomes. They are essential in explaining when or for whom adaptive performance is most likely to occur. Several studies highlight the importance of personality traits, such as proactive personality [50] and core self-evaluation [33], which can enhance an individual's responsiveness to job resources and mitigate the effects of stress. Cultural variables also emerge as important moderators, particularly in collectivist contexts. For instance, Islamic work ethics have been shown to moderate the negative impacts of despotic leadership and workplace deviance on adaptive behaviour [71,72]. Moreover, relationship-based values such as Ganqing, Renqing, and Xinren influence the engagement process within Chinese cultural settings [35]. Contextual factors, such as time pressure and trait regulatory focus, further influence whether resources are mobilised effectively [57]. These moderators highlight the conditional nature of adaptation, emphasising that not all individuals respond to resources or stressors in the same manner.

4. Conclusion

This study systematically reviews and synthesises existing literature on adaptive performance through the lens of three prominent theories: COR theory, JD-R theory, and SDT. By analysing the key variables, mechanisms, and moderating conditions utilised in recent empirical studies, this review develops an integrative conceptual framework that captures the complex interplay between resource availability, psychological processes, and motivational forces in shaping adaptive performance.

The review highlights that adaptive performance is not merely a product of individual capability but is significantly influenced by organisational and contextual conditions. COR theory emphasises the importance of resource preservation and recovery in managing stress and fostering adaptation. JD-R theory provides insight into how job demands and resources interact to influence engagement and well-being. SDT, on the other hand, explains how internalised motivation and psychological need satisfaction drive sustained adaptive behaviour. Together, these theories provide a robust and multidimensional foundation for explaining adaptive performance in modern workplaces.

The findings of this review have several important implications. Theoretically, the integration of COR, JD-R, and SDT offers a comprehensive model that bridges structural, psychological, and motivational factors. It advances the understanding of adaptive performance by incorporating multiple levels of influence, from personal traits to job design and leadership style. Practically, the review highlights the need for organisations to invest in psychological resources (e.g., training, mentoring, autonomy), minimise stressors (e.g., role ambiguity, toxic leadership), and foster a supportive culture that aligns with employees' values and motivational drivers. Leaders and human resource practitioners can enhance adaptive performance by creating environments that support work engagement, meaningfulness, and intrinsic motivation.

Despite its contributions, this review is not without limitations. Firstly, the analysis concentrated solely on studies based on COR, JD-R, and SDT, which may exclude pertinent insights from other theoretical perspectives, such as social cognitive theory or goal-setting theory. Secondly, most of the reviewed studies were conducted in specific cultural or occupational settings (e.g., education, healthcare, Asia), which limits the generalisability of the findings to broader contexts. Furthermore, most research employed cross-sectional designs, making it challenging to establish causal relationships among variables.

To address these limitations, future research is encouraged to integrate additional theoretical perspectives that consider external factors such as organisational change, technological disruption, or industry-specific dynamics. More studies are also required in diverse cultural and occupational contexts, particularly in underrepresented regions, to validate the framework's generalisability. Furthermore, examining the interaction effects between various types of resources and motivation could provide deeper insights into the boundary conditions of adaptive behaviour. Lastly, future research is recommended to investigate team-level and organisational-level adaptive performance to grasp how group dynamics and systems contribute to collective adaptability.

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