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The Impact of coaching Leadership on Organizational Adaptation among SME Newcomers: The Mediating Role of Psychological Capital

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Abstract

Coaching leadership showed a significant direct association with organizational adaptation ($\beta = .546, p < .001$) and a significant indirect association through psychological capital ($\beta = .393, p < .001$), thereby supporting a partial mediation pattern (VAF = 41.8%). Given the cross-sectional design, these relationships reflect predictive associations rather than confirmed causal pathways. Subdimension analysis revealed that respect and goal-setting/feedback served as core factors, while perspective change and belief showed limited effects. LPA identified three distinct coaching profiles (high, medium, low), with significant and large between-group differences in psychological capital and organizational adaptation ($\eta^2 = .297-.528$; all $p < .001$). The findings demonstrate that specific feedback and respect-based coaching leadership are associated with newcomers' wellbeing and organizational adaptation, with psychological capital serving as a key mediating variable. This provides practical intervention strategies for SME managers to enhance newcomers' workplace wellbeing.

Keywords : Coaching leadership, Psychological capital, Organizational adaptation, SMEs, Newcomers

JEL Classification Code : M12, M54, D23, L25

1. Introduction¹

Recent employment statistics in Korea reveal persistent instability in youth employment compared to other

demographic groups. According to the National Statistics Office (2026), while the overall unemployment rate in February 2026 stood at 3.4%, the unemployment rate among youth aged 15-29 reached 7.7%, indicating relatively high

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employment instability among young adults. Under these challenging circumstances, there are continuous reports of young adults who, despite successfully entering the labor market, fail to establish stable organizational footing and subsequently resign from their positions (Hwang, Cho, Kim, & Kim, 2025).

Job mobility statistics further illuminate this pattern: employees with less than one year of tenure exhibit the highest turnover rate at 39.5%, with the 15-29 age group accounting for the largest proportion of job changers at 21.1%. Moreover, when examined by organizational size, SMEs demonstrate the highest mobility rate at 17.2% (National Statistics Office, 2025). These findings suggest that early departure among newcomers is concentrated particularly within youth demographics and SME contexts.

The frequent turnover of newcomers creates substantial costs beyond recruitment and training expenses at the organizational level (Kim, 2017). More critically, it severely undermines individuals' psychological wellbeing and intensifies job-related stress, thereby damaging overall workplace wellbeing. From this perspective, newcomers' organizational adaptation should be conceptualized not merely as the acquisition of job skills, but as a wellbeing-centered adaptation process wherein individuals maintain positive psychological states while engaging healthily with their organizational environment. During the initial adaptation phase, newcomers may experience role ambiguity, job uncertainty, and interpersonal relationship difficulties, all of which can negatively impact their adjustment process (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). Therefore, organizational adaptation must be understood as a dynamic process shaped through interactions between individual characteristics and organizational contexts (Jung & Lee, 2024).

1.1. Research Problem and Gap

Prior research on newcomers' organizational adaptation has examined diverse factors, including structural job conditions such as compensation and working hours, as well as organizational culture and person-environment fit (Kim & Park, 2023; Lee, 2021; Ok, 2020). However, existing studies tend to focus on the influence of specific factors in explaining relationships, thereby insufficiently considering the psychological states that emerge during early adaptation processes.

Concurrently, while extensive research has verified the impact of coaching leadership on various organizational effectiveness variables—including organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and innovative behavior (Choi, 2025; Mo, 2020; Park & Do, 2021)—studies explicitly focusing on newcomers' adaptation processes

remain relatively scarce. This gap is particularly pronounced in SME contexts, where systematic training and socialization systems are typically less developed compared to large corporations. Given this reality, there is a compelling need to explore leadership's role—specifically coaching leadership—as an alternative mechanism supporting newcomers' initial adaptation in SMEs.

1.2. Research Questions and Objectives

Organizational socialization represents the process through which newcomers learn organizational values and norms, acquire job-related role expectations, and develop relationships with supervisors and colleagues (Bauer et al., 2007; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). When role expectations remain unclear or relationship formation proves inadequate during early socialization stages, newcomers experience uncertainty and difficulties in job performance, potentially leading to decreased organizational commitment and increased turnover intention (Saks & Ashforth, 1997). Against this backdrop, the present study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1. How does coaching leadership affect organizational adaptation among newcomers in SMEs?

RQ2. Does psychological capital mediate the relationship between coaching leadership and organizational adaptation?

Based on these questions, this study aims to analyze the impact of coaching leadership on SME newcomers' organizational adaptation and empirically verify the mediating effect of psychological capital in this process.

1.3. Research Contribution

This study seeks to explain newcomers' organizational adaptation not as the outcome of a single factor, but as the result of interactive mechanisms involving coaching leadership and psychological capital. Grounded in organizational socialization theory, the study simultaneously considers psychological states and environmental factors emerging during early adaptation processes, thereby contributing to a more process-oriented understanding of organizational adaptation among SME newcomers.

Furthermore, by empirically identifying coaching leadership's impact on psychological capital formation and elucidating how these psychological resources translate into organizational adaptation, the study provides theoretical foundations linking leadership behaviors with individual psychological resources. The integration of structural equation modeling with latent profile analysis offers

practical insights into qualitative differences in coaching leadership among SME supervisors and their implications for newcomers' adaptation and workplace wellbeing.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Relationship between Coaching Leadership and Psychological Capital

Coaching leadership is defined as a leadership behavior that utilizes interactions such as questioning, listening, and feedback to develop members' potential and facilitate voluntary performance (Ellinger, Ellinger, & Keller, 2003). This aligns with the philosophy of coaching, which supports individuals in setting goals, executing them, and reflecting on the process, thereby influencing continuous growth and intrinsic motivation (Whitmore, 2009). It is fundamentally distinct from traditional directive and control-oriented leadership. While sub-dimensions of coaching leadership vary among scholars, this study adopts the four dimensions proposed by Cho and Tak (2011)—respect, goal-setting and feedback, perspective change, and belief—to accurately reflect the Korean organizational context.

The effectiveness of coaching leadership can be explained through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT). According to SDT, individuals develop positive psychological states when their basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Coaching leadership can fulfill these needs by encouraging members to solve problems independently, helping them recognize their capabilities through feedback, and providing relational experiences based on respect and trust (Lee, 2018). The satisfaction of these basic psychological needs acts as a mechanism to strengthen positive psychological states (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and has been shown to significantly enhance psychological capital (Carmona-Halty, Schaufeli, Llorens, & Salanova, 2019; Song & Yan, 2025). Psychological capital is a positive psychological resource consisting of self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism, which plays a crucial role in goal achievement and overcoming difficulties (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007).

In summary, coaching leadership is theoretically proposed to be associated with members' positive psychological states through the fulfillment of basic psychological needs, and this process is conceptually linked to the development of psychological capital. Prior studies consistently confirm that coaching leadership acts as a significant antecedent enhancing members' psychological capital (Choi & Park, 2024; Lee & Lim, 2019; Yang & Park, 2023). Based on this theoretical and empirical evidence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Coaching leadership will have a positive effect on psychological capital.

2.2. The Relationship between Psychological Capital and Organizational Adaptation

Organizational adaptation is not a unidimensional concept; rather, it is a multidimensional outcome that emerges as individuals form a cognitive understanding of their organizational environment, experience emotional responses, and engage in behavioral adjustments such as role performance (Bauer et al., 2007; Feldman, 1981; Fisher, 1986; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). Building on prior research analyzing newcomer adaptation in Korea, this study conceptualizes organizational adaptation through three sub-dimensions: role clarity, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Lee, 2003). Role clarity represents cognitive understanding of one's job and role, job satisfaction reflects emotional evaluation of job experiences, and organizational commitment denotes attitudinal adaptation regarding attachment and intention to belong. This classification illustrates that adaptation is shaped through a continuous flow of cognition, emotion, behavior, and attitude (Fisher, 1986; Saks & Ashforth, 1997).

The relationship between psychological capital and organizational adaptation can be explained through Cognitive Appraisal Theory (Lazarus, 1991). Individuals exhibit different emotional and behavioral responses to the same environmental stimuli depending on their cognitive appraisal. Perceiving a situation as a threat leads to avoidance and negative responses, whereas perceiving it as a challenge facilitates proactive coping and positive experiences (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Empirical research supports that psychological capital positively impacts various outcome variables related to organizational adaptation (Choi & Lee, 2011; Luthans et al., 2007; Park & Baek, 2016). Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 2: Psychological capital will have a positive effect on organizational adaptation.

2.3. The Relationship between Coaching Leadership and Organizational Adaptation

The early socialization of newcomers is a gradual process achieved through interaction with the organizational environment. Supervisors, in particular, act as key agents significantly influencing how newcomers understand and adapt to the organization (Bauer et al., 2007; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

According to Social Exchange Theory, employees who experience respect, trust, continuous feedback, and support from their supervisors perceive that they are treated positively by the organization, leading to stronger attachment and commitment (Blau, 1964). In this context, coaching leadership can be understood as a leadership style that builds positive exchange relationships through interaction, thereby promoting emotional bonds and facilitating organizational adaptation.

Previous studies have reported that coaching leadership positively influences employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Kim & Moon, 2019; Kim, Lee, Yoo, & Yoon, 2011). It also contributes to reducing role ambiguity, enabling employees to perceive their roles and tasks more clearly (Huang, 2019; Stone, Nimon, & Ellinger, 2024). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3: Coaching leadership will have a positive effect on SME newcomers' organizational adaptation.

2.4. The Mediating Effect of Psychological Capital

Synthesizing the preceding discussions, coaching leadership may not only directly influence newcomers' organizational adaptation but also exert an indirect effect by transforming their psychological states (Avey, Reichard, Luthans, & Mhatre, 2011; Theeboom, Beersma, & van Vianen, 2014). This relationship can be comprehensively explained through the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). According to the S-O-R paradigm, stimuli provided by the external environment cause changes in an individual's internal state, which subsequently lead to specific behaviors and attitudes. Based on this framework, the current study conceptualizes coaching leadership as the stimulus, psychological capital as the organism, and organizational adaptation as the response.

From this perspective, coaching leadership serves as an environmental stimulus theoretically proposed to be associated with employees' internal psychological states. The psychological capital that may develop through this process is conceptualized as a psychological resource that shapes how individuals perceive and interpret their organizational environment (Kim, Yoon, & Hong, 2019), ultimately yielding positive effects on their attitudes and behaviors (Avey et al., 2011; Ha & Kang, 2011; Kim & Jin, 2018).

Empirical evidence corroborates that coaching leadership significantly impacts positive psychological capital (Cho, 2024; Park, 2021), and that this psychological capital, in turn, positively affects adaptation-related attitudes and behaviors such as organizational commitment

and job satisfaction (Kim & Kim, 2011; Lee, 2014). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 4: Psychological capital will mediate the relationship between coaching leadership and organizational adaptation.

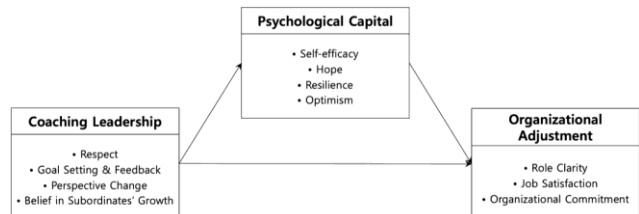


Figure 1: Research Model

3. Method

3.1. Data Collection and Sample Characteristics

This study was conducted with newcomers who had been employed for less than two years in Korean companies. To focus on the adaptation process of employees entering organizations for the first time, respondents with prior job-changing experience were excluded from the sample. Data were collected via an online survey administered to newcomers across various industries and job functions.

Before the survey commenced, all participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time. Informed consent was obtained from all participants in accordance with ethical research guidelines. After excluding insincere responses and cases with missing data, a total of 300 valid questionnaires were retained for analysis.

Regarding demographic characteristics, 180 respondents (60.0%) were female and 120 (40.0%) were male. In terms of age, the largest proportion of respondents fell in the 30-34 age group (45.3%). With respect to tenure, 55.3% had between 1 year and 6 months to less than 2 years of work experience. In terms of organizational size, 55.0% were employed in firms with 50 to fewer than 100 employees.

3.2. Measures

All variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree," 5 = "strongly agree"). Measurement items were derived from scales whose reliability and validity had been verified in previous research, and some items were adapted to fit the context of this study.

3.2.1. Coaching Leadership

Coaching leadership was measured using the scale developed by Cho and Tak (2011). The original scale consists of 24 items across four subdimensions: respect (10 items), goal-setting and feedback (6 items), perspective change (3 items), and belief (5 items).

3.2.2. Psychological Capital

Psychological capital was measured based on the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) developed by Luthans et al. (2007). Drawing on Seok (2023), items were adapted to the present research context. The final scale comprised 12 items, with three items for each subdimension.

3.2.3. Organizational Adaptation

Organizational adaptation was measured using three subdimensions: role clarity, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Role clarity was measured using items from the scale developed by Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970). Job satisfaction was measured using items from Brayfield and Rothe's (1951) scale. Organizational commitment was assessed using items from the scale developed by Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979). Each subdimension was measured with four items, for a total of 12 items.

3.2.4. Demographic Variables

Six demographic variables were included: rank, age, tenure, organizational size, job type, and industry.

3.3. Analytical Strategy

All analyses were conducted using R 4.5 and RStudio. The analytical procedure consisted of preliminary analyses, main analyses, mediation testing, supplementary analyses, and additional analyses.

3.3.1. Preliminary Analyses

Preliminary analyses were performed to examine the reliability and suitability of the data. To test for common method bias, Harman's single-factor test and a Common Latent Factor (CLF) analysis were conducted. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's α , with values of .70 or higher regarded as acceptable (Nunnally, 1978). For subdimensions with two items, the Spearman-Brown formula was applied. Normality was assessed using skewness and kurtosis criteria (Kline, 2015).

3.3.2. Main Analysis: PLS-SEM

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed using the *sempr* package in R. PLS-SEM was selected over covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) for three methodological reasons. First, the study

includes formatively conceptualized higher-order constructs (e.g., coaching leadership as a composite of four subdimensions), for which PLS-SEM is particularly well-suited (Hair et al., 2017). Second, the sample size of 300, while adequate, is moderate relative to the complexity of the supplementary subdimension model; PLS-SEM imposes fewer distributional assumptions and performs robustly under such conditions (Hair et al., 2017; Ringle, Sarstedt, & Straub, 2012). Third, the study's primary goal is predictive and exploratory in part (particularly the LPA and subdimension analyses), aligning with PLS-SEM's prediction-oriented framework (Shmueli et al., 2019). The measurement model was evaluated using outer loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). Discriminant validity was examined using the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT) and the Fornell–Larcker criterion (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017; Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). Path coefficients were tested using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples.

3.3.3. Mediation Analysis

Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was conducted to examine the mediating role of psychological capital. The Variance Accounted For (VAF) index was calculated to determine the type of mediation (Hair et al., 2017).

3.3.4. Supplementary Analysis

A supplementary path analysis was conducted at the subdimension level, treating the 11 subdimensions as observed variables and estimating 88 paths including direct and mediating relationships. Given that 88 paths were estimated simultaneously, the risk of inflated Type I error due to multiple testing warrants consideration. To address this concern, the Benjamini–Hochberg false discovery rate (FDR) correction was applied to all path-level significance tests (Benjamini & Hochberg, 1995), and only paths surviving FDR correction at $q < .05$ are interpreted as meaningful. Additionally, the subdimension model estimates 88 paths from 300 observations (approximately 3.4 observations per estimated parameter), which raises concerns about potential overfitting. Accordingly, the supplementary analysis is treated as strictly exploratory, and no confirmatory conclusions are drawn from individual subdimension paths without convergent support from the main PLS-SEM results.

3.3.5. Additional Analysis

Latent Profile Analysis (LPA) was performed based on the four subdimensions of coaching leadership (respect, goal-setting/feedback, perspective change, and belief) using the *tidyLPA* package (*mclust* engine) in R, specifying an equal-variance, zero-covariance model structure. Models with two through five profiles were estimated and

systematically compared. The optimal number of profiles was determined by jointly considering the following criteria: (a) the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC), with lower values indicating better fit relative to model complexity; (b) Entropy, with values above .80 indicating adequate classification accuracy (Muthén & Muthén, 2000; Nylund et al., 2007); (c) the Bootstrap Likelihood Ratio Test (BLRT), with a significant p-value indicating that adding a profile significantly improves fit; and (d) minimum profile size, with profiles containing fewer than 5% of the total sample ($n < 15$) flagged as potentially unstable and difficult to interpret meaningfully in applied research contexts.

4. Results

4.1. Preliminary Analyses

Harman's single-factor test indicated that a single factor extracted from all 48 items explained 33.26% of the total variance, below the 50% threshold, suggesting that common method bias is not a serious concern. The CLF analysis yielded a ΔCFI of .040, below the .05 criterion, further supporting this conclusion (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).

Reliability analyses revealed that certain items decreased internal consistency and were subsequently removed. However, it is acknowledged that two subdimensions remained below the conventional threshold of .70 even after item deletion: the perspective change subdimension of coaching leadership (Spearman–Brown = .573, 2 items) and the organizational commitment subdimension of organizational adaptation ($\alpha = .623$, 3 items). These values fall short of the commonly recommended criterion, which

constitutes a limitation of the present study. To address this concern, interpretations involving these two subdimensions are treated with caution throughout the supplementary analysis, and findings pertaining to them should be regarded as preliminary and exploratory rather than confirmatory. Remaining subdimensions and composite scales met or exceeded the .70 threshold. **Table 1** compares reliability indices before and after item deletion.

Table 1: Comparison of Reliability Before and After Item Deletion

Subscale	Before deletion	After deletion	Change
Perspective change	$\alpha = .527$ (3 items)	SB = .573 (2 items)	+.046
Organizational commitment	$\alpha = .585$ (4 items)	$\alpha = .623$ (3 items)	+.038
Coaching leadership (total)	$\alpha = .919$ (24 items)	$\alpha = .916$ (23 items)	-.003
Organizational adaptation (total)	$\alpha = .850$ (12 items)	$\alpha = .855$ (11 items)	+.005

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics and correlations for the main variables. All means exceeded the scale midpoint, and all correlations between key variables were significantly positive. With the exception of the perspective change (SB = .573) and organizational commitment ($\alpha = .623$) subdimensions, reliability coefficients met or approached conventional thresholds. These two subdimensions are retained in supplementary analyses for exploratory purposes, and their results are interpreted with appropriate caution. Normality assumptions were satisfied across all variables.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Main Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	α
1. Coaching leadership	3.423	0.454	1			.916
2. Psychological capital	3.566	0.755	.730***	1		.918
3. Organizational adaptation	3.393	0.609	.761***	.796***	1	.855

*** $p < .001$

4.2. Main Analysis: PLS-SEM

4.2.1. Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model exhibited satisfactory reliability and validity. In the PLS-SEM measurement model, Cronbach's α values were .850 for coaching leadership, .905 for psychological capital, and .803 for

organizational adaptation, all exceeding the .70 criterion. It should be noted that these values reflect the composite-level reliability of the three latent constructs as operationalized in the structural model, and thus differ from the full-scale reliability estimates reported in Table 1 ($\alpha = .916$, .918, and .855, respectively), which were computed across all items prior to structural modeling. The discrepancy arises

because the PLS-SEM model treats each construct as a composite of its subdimension indicators rather than all individual items. Composite reliability (CR) values were .858, .905, and .802, respectively. Average variance extracted (AVE) values were .608, .705, and .575, all above the .50 threshold, supporting convergent validity (Hair et al., 2017).

4.2.2. Structural Model Results and Hypothesis Testing

Table 3 summarizes the structural model results. Coaching leadership showed a significant positive association with psychological capital. Psychological capital positively predicted organizational adaptation.

Table 3: PLS-SEM Structural Model Results

Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
Coaching leadership → Psychological capital	.807	26.573	$p < .001$	Supported
Coaching leadership → Organizational adaptation	.546	7.593	$p < .001$	Supported
Psychological capital → Organizational adaptation	.487	6.869	$p < .001$	Supported

4.3. Mediation Analysis

Table 4 presents the mediation analysis results. The indirect effect of coaching leadership on organizational

Coaching leadership also exerted a significant direct effect on organizational adaptation. All hypotheses (H1, H2, H3) were supported.

The high explanatory power for organizational adaptation ($R^2 = .964$) suggests that coaching leadership and psychological capital are core variables predicting newcomers' adaptation in the present sample. However, given the cross-sectional design and single-source data, common method variance may have contributed to this result. The subdimension-level analysis yielded more moderate R^2 values (.607–.683), providing a more realistic perspective on the relationships.

adaptation via psychological capital was significant ($\beta = .393$, $t = 6.718$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.279, .508]), with a 95% confidence interval not including zero. The VAF index of 41.8% indicated partial mediation (Hair et al., 2017). Hypothesis 4 was supported.

Table 4: Mediation Analysis Results

Effect type	Coefficient	t-value	p-value	95% CI	Result
Direct effect (c')	.546	7.593	$< .001$	[.404, .686]	Significant
Indirect effect (a×b)	.393	6.718	$< .001$	[.279, .508]	Significant
Total effect	.939	–	–	–	–

4.4. Supplementary Analysis: Subdimension-Level Path Analysis

The subdimension-level analysis revealed that respect and goal-setting/feedback consistently positively affected all subdimensions of psychological capital, while perspective change and belief showed limited or negative effects in some cases. Among psychological capital subdimensions, optimism demonstrated the broadest positive influence on all aspects of organizational adaptation. For role clarity, no significant direct effects of coaching leadership were found, indicating full mediation through

psychological capital. Of the 48 mediating paths estimated, 25 survived FDR correction and were statistically significant, and of the 40 direct paths, 17 were significant after correction. These results should be interpreted with appropriate caution given the exploratory nature of the subdimension-level analysis and the potential for overfitting in moderate-sized samples; findings are considered meaningful only where convergent support is available from the main PLS-SEM model. **Table 5** compares the main and supplementary analyses, showing that subdimension-level analysis provides more nuanced insights into the mechanisms underlying the relationships.

Table 5. Comparison of Main and Supplementary Analyses

Aspect	Main analysis (PLS-SEM)	Supplementary analysis (subdimension paths)
Level of analysis	Latent variables (3 constructs)	Observed variables (11 subdimensions)
Number of paths	3	40 direct + 48 mediating paths
Coaching leadership → Psychological capital	$\beta = .807^{***}$	Respect and goal-setting/feedback as core drivers
Psychological capital → Organizational adaptation	$\beta = .487^{***}$	Optimism shows broadest positive impact
Coaching leadership → Organizational adaptation	$\beta = .546^{***}$	Full mediation for role clarity; partial for others
Mediation effects	VAF 41.8% (partial mediation)	25 of 48 paths significant; full mediation for role clarity
R ² (organizational adaptation)	.964	.607–.683

4.5. Additional Analyses

4.5.1. Latent Profile Analysis (LPA)

To determine the optimal number of latent profiles, models with two through five profiles were estimated and

compared using multiple fit criteria. **Table 6** presents the model fit indices across candidate solutions. The high-coaching group reported higher psychological capital ($M = 3.98$) and organizational adaptation ($M = 3.75$), while the low-coaching group showed lower levels ($M = 2.67$ and $M = 2.56$, respectively).

Table 6: Fit Index Comparison Across Candidate LPA Solutions

Number of Profiles	AIC	BIC	Entropy	BLRT p -value	Minimum Profile n (%)
2	1361	1409	.897	.010	105 (35.0%)
3	1277	1343	.849	.010	40 (13.3%)
4	1254	1340	.858	.010	14 (4.7%)
5	1210	1314	.828	.010	14 (4.7%)

Note. Bold row indicates the selected solution. AIC = Akaike Information Criterion; BIC = Bayesian Information Criterion. BLRT = Bootstrap Likelihood Ratio Test. Minimum profile n refers to the smallest profile in each solution.

The three-profile solution was selected as optimal based on a convergence of multiple criteria. First, both AIC and BIC decreased substantially from the two-profile to the three-profile solution ($\Delta AIC = 84$; $\Delta BIC = 66$), indicating meaningful improvement in fit. Although AIC and BIC continued to decrease for four- and five-profile solutions, these improvements were marginal relative to the loss in interpretability and profile stability. Second, the three-profile solution maintained an Entropy value of .849, which exceeds the recommended threshold of .80 for acceptable classification accuracy (Muthén & Muthén, 2000; Nylund et al., 2007), indicating that the three profiles were sufficiently distinct and that individual profile assignments were reliable. Third, although the BLRT was statistically significant across all candidate models (all $p = .010$), the four- and five-profile solutions each produced a minimum profile containing only 14 respondents (4.7%), falling below the

commonly recommended minimum of 5% of the total sample (Marsh et al., 2009). Profiles of this size raise serious concerns regarding interpretive stability and substantive meaningfulness in applied organizational research. By contrast, the three-profile solution yielded a minimum profile size of 40 respondents (13.3%), which was deemed sufficiently stable. Finally, the three profiles exhibited a theoretically coherent and interpretable level-type pattern across all four coaching leadership subdimensions, facilitating meaningful labeling and practical application. Taken together, the convergence of these criteria — substantial BIC improvement, acceptable entropy, adequate minimum profile size, and theoretical interpretability — supports the selection of the three-profile solution as optimal (Nylund et al., 2007).

The three identified profiles were labeled as follows: Profile 2, comprising 172 respondents (57.3%), was labeled High-Coaching, as all four subdimensions ranged

uniformly from 3.70 to 3.83. Profile 1, comprising 88 respondents (29.3%), was labeled Medium-Coaching, characterized by relatively lower respect ($M = 3.03$) and goal-setting/feedback ($M = 3.15$) alongside comparatively higher perspective change ($M = 3.40$). Profile 3, comprising 40 respondents (13.3%), was labeled Low-Coaching, with all subdimensions uniformly low, ranging from 2.57 to 2.80. The high-coaching group reported substantially higher psychological capital ($M = 3.98$) and organizational adaptation ($M = 3.75$), while the low-coaching group showed notably lower levels on both outcomes ($M = 2.67$ and $M = 2.56$, respectively), with all between-group differences statistically significant and of large effect size ($\eta^2 = .297-.528$; all $p < .001$).

4.5.2. Differences by Demographic Variables

Gender differences were limited, appearing only for optimism and organizational commitment. Age-related analysis showed that psychological capital and role clarity were relatively lower in the 30-34 age group. Coaching leadership, psychological capital, and organizational adaptation were lowest among those with 6-12 months of tenure, then increased thereafter.

5. Discussion

This study examined the effects of coaching leadership on organizational adaptation among SME newcomers and investigated the mediating role of psychological capital. The analysis confirmed that coaching leadership was positively associated with psychological capital, which in turn was positively associated with organizational adaptation. These findings are consistent with a mediation model, though causal directionality cannot be confirmed given the cross-sectional design. Moreover, coaching leadership exerts both direct and indirect effects on organizational adaptation through psychological capital, establishing a partial mediation structure.

Subdimension-level analyses revealed that respect and goal-setting/feedback consistently contribute to psychological capital formation, whereas perspective change and belief show limited or negative effects. These findings suggest that concrete and direct supervisory interactions, such as providing clear direction, specific feedback, and respect, play a more central role than abstract coaching behaviors during newcomers' early adaptation stages.

The results also indicate that organizational adaptation follows distinct pathways across its subdimensions. Role clarity exhibited full mediation through psychological capital, while job satisfaction and organizational commitment demonstrated partial mediation structures. Additionally, the temporal analysis revealed that coaching

leadership and psychological capital were lowest among newcomers with 6-12 months of tenure, confirming that organizational adaptation is a dynamic process that changes over time.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

This study offers several theoretical contributions. First, it provides empirical evidence that psychological capital serves as a key mediating mechanism in the relationship between coaching leadership and organizational adaptation.

Second, coaching leadership is shown to be a contextual leadership style whose effects vary across subdimensions, with direct interactions being particularly critical for newcomers. Third, organizational adaptation is confirmed as a multidimensional process with distinct formation pathways for each subdimension.

5.2. Practical Implications

From a practical standpoint, this study provides actionable insights for SME management. First, organizations should adopt differentiated approaches to coaching leadership by emphasizing specific direction, clear feedback, and mutual respect during newcomers' initial adaptation stages.

Second, psychological capital development should be regarded as a key management priority for facilitating adaptation. Third, the LPA results suggest that leadership development programs should focus on qualitative differences in coaching behaviors rather than mere quantitative increases.

The qualitative differences in coaching leadership identified through LPA provide crucial insights for SME management. The substantial disparities between high- and low-coaching groups in terms of psychological capital and organizational adaptation outcomes underscore the importance of quality-focused leadership development. Rather than simply increasing the frequency of coaching behaviors, managers should be trained to consistently and effectively implement core components such as respect, goal-setting, and feedback.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that present opportunities for future research. First, the cross-sectional design, reliance on self-reported data, and single-source measurement restrict the ability to draw definitive causal inferences. All observed relationships reflect predictive associations at a single point in time, and the direction of causality cannot be established without longitudinal or experimental designs. Moreover, common

method variance—though assessed via Harman's test and CLF analysis—may still inflate observed correlations to some degree in single-source survey research (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Future studies should employ multi-wave, multi-source designs to more rigorously test the proposed causal sequence.

Second, the focus on coaching leadership and psychological capital may have overlooked other important factors such as job characteristics, organizational culture, and personality traits. Third, the study did not employ a longitudinal design to capture the dynamic nature of organizational adaptation over time. Future research should address these limitations through multi-wave, multi-source designs and the incorporation of additional contextual variables.

6. Conclusion and Implications

This study analyzed the impact of coaching leadership on the organizational adaptation of newcomers in SMEs, focusing on psychological capital as a mediating mechanism. The integration of structural equation modeling with latent profile analysis provided both structural insights into variable relationships and practical understanding of coaching leadership heterogeneity.

The findings offer valuable implications for future leadership and organizational adaptation research, particularly highlighting the importance of considering both contextual factors and structural mechanisms when investigating how leadership behaviors influence employees' wellbeing and adaptation in organizational settings. The multidimensional and process-oriented approach adopted in this study provides a foundation for future research examining the complex dynamics of newcomer adaptation in contemporary organizational contexts.

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