Research Article

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Redefining Workplace Integration: Socio-Economic Synergies in Adaptive Career Ecosystems and Stress Resilience – Institutional Innovation for Empowering Newcomers Through Social Capital and Human-Centric Automation

https://doi.org/10.1515/econ-2025-0164
received May 13, 2025; accepted July 30, 2025

Abstract: This study interrogates how adaptive career ecosystems can mitigate workplace stress for newcomers amidst accelerating automation, synthesizing sociological theories of career construction with economic paradigms of human capital resilience. The training and management of new employees is an important part of enterprise development, and also a manifestation of the enterprise's proactive social responsibility. In the process of managing new employees, the handling of work pressure is not only an issue that companies need to face when improving their management systems, but also an important issue that cannot be avoided during the career adaptation period of new employees. In order to explore how new employees can actively transform work pressure and achieve workplace adaptation through positive self-perception, this article uses career construction theory under the resource conservation of stressors to examine the career development of new employees using longitudinal data from 151 interns in a private enterprise. It was found that future work self-modulates the relationship between work stress and career adaptability, which in turn has a positive impact on adaptability performance. The results show that new employees who have a clearer understanding of their future careers have significant benefits in terms of work stress relief, career adaptability, and work performance.

Keywords: socio-economic institutionalism, career adaptability, adaptive performance, career construction theory, new employees, corporate management system

1 Introduction

While automation and AI promise unprecedented productivity gains, newcomers face escalating stress from algorithmic management systems that prioritize efficiency over human adaptability. The deep integration of emerging technologies has triggered a transformation in career patterns, requiring young adults to promptly adapt to great changes in the vocational environment through career crafting (Yang et al., 2024). In order to integrate into an unfamiliar environment and a new role, young people who have just graduated entering the workplace will face great stress, including the distress of inexperience, and the confusion of survival and development, which is almost unavoidable in their career adaptation period (Strauss et al., 2012). New employees' adaptation is an obvious challenge for the organization in the process of new employee orientation, which usually happens in the very early stages of employment (Raub et al., 2021). It is found that under the background of Chinese culture enterprise new employees will roughly experience confusion–adaptation–accept three gradual stages of development (Zhang & Li, 2016), and the mechanism and the effect are not only affected by organizational context, but also significantly depend on the individual differences of employees (Ellis et al., 2017).

With the rise of protean and boundaryless careers, the exploration of this new generation highlights more and more self-concept and personal growth needs (Chui et al., 2022). Career construction theory provides a powerful framework in both the environmental context and individuals within the

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interactive adaptation process, explaining how people integrate a series of interrelated cognition, behavior, and external conditions to promote the growth of individual career (Savickas, 2013). Adaptation is the core of individual career development. It is not only the starting point but also the pursuit of process and results, especially for those who are in the career transition stage, such as rookies. They are experiencing a complex transformation from campus to the workplace, from students to employees, namely a dynamic development process of "adaptation" (Savickas, 2013).

In traditional organizational studies, stress is often viewed as a workplace characteristic of a dysfunctional factor. Many studies confirm that work stress has a negative impact on the performance results of individuals, teams, and even the overall organization (Strauss et al., 2012), leading to such issues as physical and mental subhealth (Jackson & Frame, 2018), poor work performance (Wu et al., 2019), high turnover intention (Podsakoff et al., 2007), and counter-productive behavior against coworkers or organizations (Yu et al., 2019).

However, some scholars have testified positive behavior relationships, and found that work stress had significant positive effects with a broad theoretical basis. According to controlling theory, employees have a sense of motivation to future-oriented development, and correspond to inconsistent expectations caused by external stress by implementing positive behaviors to improve the situation (Edwards, 1992). Activation theory is putting forward a more detailed psychological mechanism, everyone has a specific activation level, high or low stress levels are unfavorable for stimulating positive emotion and work efficiency. Some studies on the work stress and performance present an inverted U relationship (Muse et al., 2003).

The theory of resource preservation is to analyze the stress response methods of employees from the perspective of key resource protection and additional favorable resource acquisition. However, there is some controversy in the explanation of the resource preservation process by employees' work stress and employee coping behavior. According to the loss-gain spiral framework, suffering from stress caused by psychological tension, individuals can immediately start up the protection mechanism by preventing the expansion of resource loss, as well as actively invest resources to strive for other valuable benefits which can offset the loss (Hobfoll et al., 2018). This may get two parallel logic understandings. The former is a conservative preventive response, which will hinder the positive behavior of employees, while the latter is an aggressive prevention intervention, which will promote the positive behavior of employees (Deng et al., 2019). It still needs to be further empirically tested.

The work stress that new rookies are exposed to is complicated. How to resolve the stress and even transform it into move-forward motivation is not only the concern of the organization, but also the key problem for new employees to adapt to their careers (Strauss et al., 2012). This article integrates the theory of career construction and resource preservation, exploring the mechanism of individual career construction under the power of career adaptability (Haynie et al., 2020; Liu & Yu, 2019).

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Career Construction Theory

The career construction theory responds to today's rapidly changing and uncertain career development issues. Closely related to the characteristics of self-oriented and flexible strain, this theory emphasizes that the essence of individual career development is the dynamic process of pursuing the mutual adaptation between the individual self and the external world (Savickas, 2013). Since it was proposed, it has attracted keen attention and shown its strong academic vitality (Rudolph et al., 2017).

According to the theory of career construction, emphasizing the interaction and integration of people and the environment in their surroundings, adaptation is the optimal path for individual career development. Career environment differs from individual to individual, so does their perception of the external situation. Therefore, one's career development is more like an interpretive story with the nature of personal biography, and different people have completely different specific construction content and construction results. The career adaptation model proposed by Savickas (2013) reveals that the individual achieves a career adaptation cross four factors: to prepare with internal motivation (adaptivity), to self-adjustment using psychological capital (adaptability), the implementation of active coping behavior (adapting), and finally realize the individual interaction with the environment (adaptation). Among these above, career adaptability is the core variable that links the orientation, behavior, and outcome of the adaptation process, and simultaneously, it is affected by external situational factors.

When new employees come up against work stress, they will be in a state of psychological tension (Strauss et al., 2012). Whether they can properly understand and resolve this stress is the most critical career development problem for these young rookies in the career transition stage (Chui et al., 2022).

2.2 Resource Conservation Theory

Resource conservation is one of the most cited theories in organizational behavior research for the past decades. It offers a reasonable and sufficient framework for individuals in the workplace, explaining cognitive behavior under the mechanism between stress and stressors correspondence (Halbesleben et al., 2014). The generation of stress is the result of individual cognition under the situational interaction. Stressor perception reflects the dynamic process of resource loss or gain. People's coping behavior with stressors can be divided into defensive and preventive behavior (Hobfoll et al., 2018), which corresponds to the resource loss and resource gain mechanisms, respectively.

The conservation of resources suggests that individuals aim to acquire, protect, and maximize resources to reduce psychological distress and prevent burnout (Demerouti, 2025). Employees under the resource loss mechanism attributed work stress from work requirements or difficulty to resource consumption. Stress-driven people tend to protect their own resources and limit further loss by reducing positive behavior. However, the relation between loss and gain of the individual resource is a dynamic conversion, rather than a contradictory competition. The early resource gain or loss in work experience may affect people's subsequent behavioral tendencies (Childs et al., 2024). Obviously, positive behavior requires additional resources, such as allocating energy and time to seek better solutions and solve problems (Liu & Yu, 2019). Individuals under the resource gain mechanism maintain an effective way of resource investment and accumulation, by searching for extra resources. On the one hand, it can make up for the current work demand-supply, preventing greater resource loss; on the other hand, it can buffer the future uncertainty, which may cause more stressors, and then build a more favorable future. The resource gain motivates people to implement more positive behaviors (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Therefore, the complex relationship between stress and positive behavior in the workplace still needs to be further tested by the dynamic diversification.

3 Research Hypothesis and Model

3.1 Work Stress and Career Adaptation of New Employees

Some scholars have carefully reviewed past studies and found that there are three relationships between work stress and performance: negative linear, positive linear, and inverted U nonlinear (Muse et al., 2003). The theoretical premise for the negative effect is that stress of any level leading to consumption of an individual's time, energy and attention further hinders the actual work performance (Hon, 2013; Nurcholidah et al., 2023). A positive linear relation is exactly the opposite. Individuals have extra power to take the challenge and achieve better work performance (Hatton et al., 1995). The inverted U curve resembles the integration of the above two interpretations, because some stress is relatively "good" (positive linear), and the other stress is relatively "bad" (negative linear). Stress in the workplace will cause both physical and mental results (Deng et al., 2019; Podsakoff et al., 2007). Stressful work tasks are beneficial to personal value realization and ability improvement. But it varied across the strength and intensity level of the stressors (Demerouti, 2025). Some individuals may suffer from a certain critical stress (such as the performance criteria over the optimal incentive), and be defeated, ending up by inferior job performance (Liu & Yu, 2019). Some scholars have found that in the situation of Chinese enterprises, the stress caused by role ambiguity is negatively correlated with work performance, while the stress of role conflict has no significant impact on work performance (Wu et al., 2019).

Stressful individual in the workplace usually leads to anxiety, tension, fatigue and other feelings induced by the physical and mental stressors. Hindrance stressors such as role ambiguity and role conflict predict a range of negative attitudinal outcomes in the workplace, which is quite common in the context of young and new employees (Raub et al., 2021). According to the causal relationship of stressors-tension, there are challenge-related stressors and hindrance-related stressors on the basis of stressors attribute (Podsakoff et al., 2007). Challenge stressors may refer to high-intensity workload, time limit, work range, and responsibilities, which tend to be treated as development opportunities; hindering stressors are concerns about role ambiguity, organizational politics, and work safety, which tend to be viewed as barriers to personal growth and task completion (Wu et al., 2019). These two stressors significantly correlated with each other, but their effects are not equal. A study of public hospitals in China found that challenge stress was positively correlated with the performance of healthcare workers, and hindering stress was negatively correlated with performance (Deng et al., 2019).

However, successfully dealing with work stress is good for career growth momentum, such as effective treatment towards resource disposal, achieving the transition from the "outsider" to "insider" (Demerouti, 2025; Zhang & Li, 2016). To have a recognized performance is the first adaptation problem for each young rookie, so does human

resource managers' general concerning topic (Ellis et al., 2017). The work stress that new employees face is complex, including both challenges and obstacles for personal growth (Deng et al., 2019), which may disturb for quite some time (Wu et al., 2019). Based on the conclusions of the existing literature and the characteristics of the stressors, the hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H1: Work stress is negatively predicted by the performance of the new employees.

3.2 Career Adaptability of New Rookies

Up to now, career adaptability has been fully verified as an indirect integrating mechanism of psycho-social capital acting on the interaction between individuals and the environment (Chen et al., 2020). From the initial theoretical constructs, there are three main explanations of career adaptability: the ability to deal with the difficulties caused by work changes (Savickas, 2013), the process of self-adjustment to solve new problems (Creed et al., 2009), and the self-orientation of career development problems in different scenarios (Lent & Brown, 2013). Kusyadi (2020) summarized the definition of career adaptability in different career scenes, which can help individuals to cope with various tasks, role changes, traumas, and commitment, predicting all possibilities of the future of the career.

Career adaptability, as one of the most important psychological resilience to adapt, recover, and maintain their power in the face of adversity or duress (Feng et al., 2024), is the core variable that connects individual's motivation, behavior and behavioral outcomes, which revealing the process of career construction in various career stages and situations (Rudolph et al., 2017). This construct has some universal explanatory power across different cultural backgrounds and socio-occupational attributes (Rudolph et al., 2019). For example, career adaptability mediated Germans' optimism and income level (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2020) and their proactive behavior and quit intention (Spurk et al., 2020). Adaptability resource mediated the relationship between active personality and career sustainability of full-time workers in India (Talluri, Schreurs & Uppal, 2022), and the relationship between the optimistic future orientation of Afghans during the COVID-19 pandemic (Green, Yıldırım & Jalal, 2023), and the relationship between work–family conflict, work stress and innovative work behavior among married female nurses in Indonesia (Nurcholidah et al., 2023), and the relationship between the proactivity of American employees, work involvement and their performance evaluation by supervisors (Haynie et al., 2020).

Similarly, in the Chinese context, the indirect mechanism of career adaptability in the work site has also received wide attention. Chang et al. (2023), using survey data from MBA and DBA, found that career adaptability partly mediated the positive orientation and subjective career success of these working students. In Hong Kong enterprises, working values of young employees indirectly affect their level of professional optimism through the intermediary mechanism of career adaptability (Chui et al., 2022). Career adaptability directly delivered the negative impact of work stress, further escalating into counterproductive behavior harmful to the organization (Yu et al., 2019). As the core element of individual career construction, the generation and accumulation of adaptability will be significantly influenced by specific personality or goal-achieving orientation. Individuals equipped with strong adaptability will tend to adopt positive coping behavior or decision-making style, so as to achieve better career development results (Rudolph et al., 2017; Savickas, 2013). It is career adaptability that plays an important intermediate role in the individual career construction of new employees.

3.3 The Role of the Future Work Self in the Process of New Employees' Career Construction

The continuous upgrading of the economy and technology makes the social-professional world full of uncertainties, and people's work values and career development patterns have changed accordingly. Compliance-related change and self-growth orientation become a prominent feature of individual career construction (Chui et al. 2022). Understanding your own needs, identifying possible opportunities, and predicting future developments are all critical to shaping the competitiveness of the job market (Guan et al., 2014) and career success (Chang et al., 2023). The self-concept of future orientation reflects a person's expectations and aspirations for work (Strauss et al., 2012). Future work self represents a strong self-exploration motivation, in the individual's behavior for future expectations. Its clarity can be viewed as a reasonable expectation of future work degree, can significantly predict related career planning, vocational skills in development, and professional networking construction (Strauss et al., 2012).

A meta-analysis study reviews that future work self-predicted an individual's career fitness level (Rudolph et al., 2017). A clear future direction can lead individuals to participate more actively in external environment interaction, so as to gain a more comprehensive and possible

understanding of career development. According to career construction theory (Savickas, 2013), it is a cognitive and behavioral motivation that actively embraces adaptation, which helps individuals understand and eliminate adverse factors, to analyze and solve problems by actively accepting challenges (Guan et al., 2014; Strauss et al., 2012). In the study of Taber and Blankemeyer (2015), future work-self clarity positively predicted the career adaptability level and a series of active career development behaviors of college students.

General self-efficacy and proactivity will indirectly affect the career adaptability level of Chinese undergraduates through future work self (Chan & Chan, 2021). Guan et al. (2014) used an over-lag survey to investigate the job-searching behavior of college students, and found that the interaction between future work self and career adaptability predicted the job-searching efficiency, which further affected the results of job hunting. As for the workplace, Siu (2003) found that Confucian work values can regulate the negative stress effect of working people in Hong Kong, indicating that the stress-performance relationship is driven by internal motivation or value orientation. It is clear that positive coping strategies can reduce or cushion the negative effects of stress and help improve work performance (Haynie et al., 2020; Lu et al., 2010), while negative coping strategies can further aggravate the negative effects (Siu, 2003).

Future work self can be seen as an incentive to actively invest in resources to strive for additional valuable outcomes, which is quite in line with the logic of resource conservation theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018). For young people with a clear vision for the future, they will choose positive responses to stress, such as taking the initiative to explore various conditions related to the work site, seeking more useful resources or external support, adjusting to stress losses, pursuing a new work balance point (Ellis et al., 2017). On the contrary, those new members with cognitive ambiguity can only adopt a relatively conservative stress response, reducing blind waste of resources by stopping positive behavior and negative response to the cultivation of adaptability (Deng et al., 2019). What is more, fuzzy role identification may further lead to more physical and mental tension, which is likely to cause worse work performance (Wu et al., 2019). The hypothesis is proposed as:

H2: Future work self moderates the relationship between work stress and career adaptability of new employees.

As a combination of the first and second hypotheses, it finally put up a moderated mediation model among the study variables:

H3: Future work self moderates the mediating effect of career adaptability in the relationship between work stress and the performance of new employees.

In conclusion, the research framework of this article is shown in Figure 1.

4 Method

4.1 Sample Selection and Data Collection

The study collected data using standardized measurements. The respondents came from a trainee project of a private company in southern China in August 2021. The research group contacted the Human Resource Management Center of the company in advance. After getting the consent of the responsible leader, purpose and data requirements of the research topic are all explained to the project managers. Some basic data of these trainees, including the basic information of overall new employees involved in this project, detailed arrangement schedule, regulation and rule in managing trainees and their evaluation system, etc. A total of 164 new employees as trainees were recruited, and the project lasted for 7 months. During this period, the trainees need to experience three weeks of lecturing study in the classroom and observation at sites, one week of group building activities and expected position application, and then enter the internship position for half a year by double selection. After the end of the project, the trainees who pass the performance appraisal will formally be assigned to their working departments and positions.

In the process of questionnaire design, the research group indicated in the instructions that “the survey data is only for academic use” and “the questionnaire filling results will be strictly confidential,” which were used to ease the participants’ concerns about the disclosure of personal information. The questionnaire was distributed by the members of the research group and guided to fill out and collect immediately. All participants provided informed consent prior to their participation in this study.

The data were collected in three stages: the first stage questionnaire included new employees’ self-reported gender, education level, first job or not and clarity of future work self, arranging in the concentrated learning at the initial stage of the project (mid-August 2021); The second stage questionnaire conducted information collection including the trainees’ self-

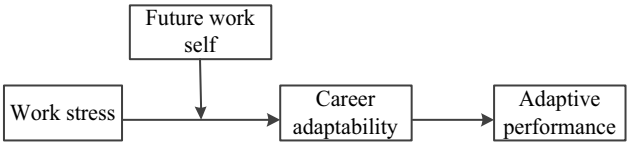

Figure 1: The study framework diagram of this article.

reported job stress level and career adaptability, on a working day at the end of the first month (at the end of September 2021); The third stage information is collected after the project completion, getting the interns' performance evaluation rating provided by the human resource management center (March 2022). Since the research group had gotten the roster of trainees in advance, the first two stages of the questionnaire were filled in with a small program on a smartphone, hiding the personal information. The trainees entered the sequence program through the WeChat group by the "working ID Number" to match the questionnaire link.

The survey lasted for more than half a year, and a total of 164 questionnaires were collected. According to the number of trainee ID, the research group matched the sample data of the three stages, and finally obtained 151 valid data, with a recovery rate of 92.1%. The basic statistics of the trainees are shown in Table 1.

Informed consent: Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Ethical approval: This study was exempted from ethical approval by the Institutional Ethics Committee because it involved minimal risk and did not collect identifiable private information.

4.2 Measurement

All variables measured in this study used a mature scale suitable for the Chinese context, and a small range of pretesting was conducted to ensure the effective preparation.

Future Work Self: A scale developed by Guan et al. (2014) is adapted from Strauss et al. (2012). The scale consists of four items, using a 5-point Likert rating, 1 representing "strongly disagree," while 5 represents "strongly agree." A sample is "in my mind, the work future I want to engage is very clear," Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.835.

Work stress: a Chinese translation from Motowidlo et al. (1986). The scale has 3 items, using 5-point Likert rating, 1 representing "strongly disagree," while 5 representing "strongly agree." A sample is "my work is extremely stressful," Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.896.

Career adaptability: A short form of the career adaptability scale by Maggiori et al. (2015) revised from Savickas (2013), using Hou et al. (2012). There are 12 questions in the scale, 5 points, 1 means "very no advantage," 5 means "very advantage," "I know the career choice I have to make," Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.869.

Performance evaluation: The standardized performance score provided by the company's human resource management center is obtained, including both bonus points and deduction points. The former includes work ability, work attitude, group-think, and creative problem solving, while the latter includes attendance, discipline violations, and working errors. The maximum score was 98, and the minimum score was 62. The average performance score of all students was 82.6, and the standard deviation was 8.14.

Table 1: Basic sample information (N = 151)

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	79	52.3%
Female	72	47.7%
Education		
Junior college	43	28.5%
Undergraduate	76	50.3%
Postgraduate	32	21.2%
First job		
No	33	21.9%
Yes	118	78.1%

4.3 Analytical Technique

Variables' descriptive, correlation, and multiple linear regression were first used in SPSS22.0 to test the proposed hypothesis of the relationship among variables. The test of mediation and moderation effects using the Process program plugin developed by Hayes (2013), setting the confidence interval of the estimated effect size at the 95% level by random-sampling bootstrap up to 5,000 times.

4.4 Data Analysis

4.4.1 Common Method Bias

The data collection methods that focus on the individual level in empirical research often fail to completely eliminate the problems of data collinearity and common method bias. Therefore, we adopted some research design techniques to minimize bias and also controlled the impact of these biases through *post hoc* checks.

Firstly, we adopted a design of collecting data from multiple sources and multiple time points. In the study, some individual statistical control variables and the adaptive performance results of management trainees were provided by the enterprise human resources center, which

Table 2: Variable description statistics and correlation coefficients (N = 151)

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Gender[a]	0.48	0.50						
2. Education[b]	1.93	0.70	0.06					
3. First job[c]	0.78	0.46	−0.11	0.11				
4. FWS	3.44	0.76	0.02	0.07	−0.08			
5. Work stress	3.49	0.87	−0.20*	0.07	−0.05	−0.14		
6. CA	3.56	0.53	0.00	−0.02	−0.14	0.57**	−0.21*	
7. Performance	82.57	8.14	0.01	−0.04	−0.05	0.71**	−0.27**	0.75**

Note: *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; FWS = future work self, CA = career resilience. [a]Gender: 0 = male, 1 = female; [b]Education: 1 = junior college, 2 = undergraduate, 3 = postgraduate; [c]Fisrt job: 0 = No, 1 = yes.

can be considered as an objective and reliable rating. For the measurement of work stress, future work self, and career adaptability in the study, as they are all individual perceptual evaluations, obtained through self-report by new employees. Nevertheless, we collected data in two stages (with a time interval of approximately 40 days, Section 4.1) through online questionnaires. All these may reduce the occurrence of collinearity and common method bias issues to a certain extent.

Besides, Harman single-factor and partial correlation methods were used to conduct statistical tests on the survey data. Principal component analysis of all items without control variables extracted four common factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, with a cumulative explanatory variance of 60.77%. The first common factor without rotation explained 33.55% of the overall variance, indicating that there is no serious problem of common method bias in the data.

Furthermore, we test the collinearity bias and constrained competing models. The Pearson coefficient indicates that there is no significant correlation between work stress and future work self, measured at the same time period, basically ruling out the possibility of severe collinearity between the two variables. By examining the VIF values in linear regression, it was found that the estimated values varied between 1.045 and 1.523. Generally speaking, intervention is necessary when the VIF value exceeds 10, again indicating that the collinearity effect is not significant.

4.4.2 Statistical Analysis of Variable Description

Table 2 is the mean, standard deviation, and correlation coefficient matrix of all the variables involved. Work stress negatively correlated with career adaptability (r = −0.21, p < 0.05) and performance rating (r = −0.27, p < 0.01), career adaptability positively correlated with performance rating (r = 0.75, p < 0.01), future work self positively correlated with career adaptability (r = 0.57, p < 0.01) and performance rating (r = 0.71, p < 0.01), providing a preliminary evidence for the hypothesis test of H1 to H3.

4.4.3 Hypothesis Test

As shown in Table 3, the regression model represents, respectively, explaining the direct effect and moderating effect and conditioned mediation effects of new employees.

In the direct effect model M1, work stress negatively predicted the performance rating score (B = −2.66, SE = 0.76, p < 0.01) when controlling the gender, education and previous work experience, supporting H1.

Next, the mediating effect model M2 is tested by the data. Career adaptability deliver some indirect effect from stress to work performance (ΔR^2 = 0.50, F = 39.57, p < 0.01), supporting H2.

This was followed by examining the first-stage moderated mediation model M3. First, look at the moderating effect of self-clarity on future work stress and career adaptability. The interaction term product (FWS × work stress) has a significant positive impact on career adaptability (B = 0.11, SE = 0.05, p < 0.05, 95%CI = [0.01, 0.20], R^2 = 0.38).

Furthermore, when the clarity level of future work self of new employees is low (less than 1 times standard deviation), there was a negative correlation between work stress and career adaptability (B = −0.18, SE = 0.06, p < 0.01, 95%CI = [−0.30, −0.06]), When the clarity level of future work self is high (above 1 times the standard deviation), there is no significant effect on the career adaptability (B = −0.02, SE = 0.05, p > 0.05 ns, 95%CI = [−0.12, 0.09]), The moderating effects are shown in Figure 2.

Finally, a first-stage conditioned mediating effect on performance rating score. Samples with lower clarity in future work self was a significant negative effect (B = −1.20, SE = 0.60, p < 0.01, 95%CI = [−3.13, −0.69]), while the higher group's indirect effect was not significant (B = −0.19, SE = 0.82, p > 0.05, 95%CI = [−1.79, 1.43]). The career adaptability conveyed

Table 3: Pathway analysis of new employee performance

DV: Performance	M1	M2	M3		
	B(SE)	B(SE)	CA-B(SE)	B(SE)	95%CI
Gender	−0.95 (1.33)	−0.15 (0.91)	−0.04 (0.73)	−0.15 (0.91)	−1.95 to 1.64
Educational level	−0.10 (0.93)	−0.22 (0.63)	−0.01 (0.05)	−0.22 (0.63)	−1.47 to 1.03
First job	−1.41 (1.58)	0.92 (1.09)	−0.16 (0.09)	0.92 (1.09)	−1.24 to 3.07
Work stress	−2.66**(0.76)	−1.09*(0.53)	−0.47*(0.18)	−1.09*(0.53)	−2.15 to −0.04
CA		11.15**(0.85)		11.15**(0.85)	9.46 to 12.83
FWS			−0.01 (0.19)		
FWS × work stress			0.11**(0.05)		
Low FWS			−0.18**(0.06)		
High FWS			−0.02 (0.05)		
CA with low FWS				−1.20**(0.60)	−3.13 to −0.69
CA with high FWS				−0.19 (0.82)	−1.79 to 1.43
R^2	0.08	0.58	0.38	0.57	
F	3.20*	39.57**	14.65**	39.57**	

Note: N = 151; Bootstraping = 5,000; *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01.

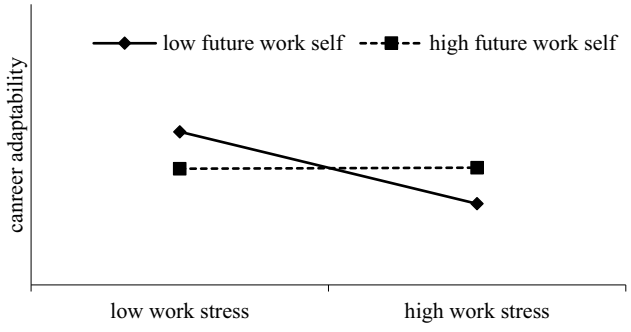

Figure 2: The moderating effect of future career self on career adaptability.

the effect between work stress and future work self interaction on performance ratings, with the indirect effect point estimated at 1.19 (SE = 0.64, R^2 = 0.57). Results from 5,000 random sampling bootstrapping returned with a moderated mediation effect in 95% confidence interval estimates [0.03, 2.53] significantly excluding 0 point. At this point, hypothesis H3 is testified to be acceptable.

5 Conclusion and Discussion

5.1 Study Summary

5.1.1 Study Conclusion

With the increasing attention of career development of the young generation, the disposal of work stress has also become an outstanding problem that cannot be ignored in the management toward new employees. By survey data analysis, this article makes an empirical test of how the internal cognition influences the working stress. The results show that

(1) Work stress is negatively predicting work performance (H1).
(2) Future work self moderates the relationship between stress and career adaptability (H2).
(3) The moderated mediation of future work self in the relationship between work stress and career adaptability, which in turn affects work performance (H3). Specifically, if new employees lack a clear understanding of their future, work stress can not only damage career ability, but also be negative to the job performance rating of new employees.

5.1.2 Discussion

First, this article focuses on the stress management of new employees in the workplace. When entering a fresh environment, young rookies feel multi-source stressors (Chong et al., 2024). First, the content and difficulty of the task (Ellis et al., 2017; Hon, 2013), the ambiguity and conflict after role transformation (Wu et al., 2019), and the maladaptation caused by changes in interpersonal or working environment (Yu et al., 2019), etc. Different stressors have different effects. Some stress is positive, such as challenging stress (Liu & Yu, 2019; Podsakoff et al., 2007); some stress may harm work performance, such as role ambiguity. Interesting speaking, some stress only predicts burnout level without affecting actual work performance (Wu et al., 2019). From the results of this study, the positive effect of

individual psychological resilience of the new employees in the face of job pressure in the workplace has once again been confirmed (Feng et al., 2024).

This study, using multi-period and multi-source reporting survey data, identified work stress on new employees to have some negative effect, which is consistent with most of the early research conclusions. It provides evidence for effective intervention corresponding to stress in the workplace, which is confirmed as a negative factor of individual development and organizational management. It is found an internalization of new employees' work motivation is found, that is, integrating the external information and values they received during the organizational socialization as their own – as a key process for self-development (Chong et al., 2024). When facing pressure and setbacks from work, the young adults are trying to acquire, protect, and maximize resources to reduce psychological distress and prevent burnout (Demerouti, 2025). It provides empirical evidence for the mutual conversion between loss and gain of the individual resource (Childs et al., 2024).

Moreover, this article integrates the theory of career construction and resource preservation to explore the intermediate mechanism of stress and performance in workplace. Career construction theory provides a strong logical framework for the individual career growth process (Savickas, 2013). As one of the important explanatory mechanisms of individual stress and behavioral coping methods, resource preservation theory helps to better understand young rookies' behavior encountering the work stress caused by role changes and environmental changes (Halbesleben et al., 2014). New employees are curious about an unfamiliar environment and new roles. They subjectively expect to achieve a smooth transition to a new stage of their career. Lack of experience and uncertain external environment can bring their tension and stress is almost inevitable (Ellis et al., 2017). Positive orientation will encourage new rookies to increase psychosocial capital and actively gain more valuable new resources that may stop and offset the resource loss caused by work stress (Chui et al., 2022; Silva et al., 2025; Wu et al., 2019). On the contrary, the confused cognition hinders the process of career construction. The "loss vortex" caused by stress will trap the pace of career progress and have a chain impact on the adaptation of new employees (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Lee & Jacobs, 2024).

5.2 Management Insights

The organization should pay full attention to the work stress of new rookies. Performance has always been the main concern of human resource management, and results of the study show that the job performance level of new employees will be significantly affected by the initial stress of career adaptation (Ellis et al., 2017). The stress in the workplace is almost everywhere, especially for new rookies, and the organization's mindset is critical. On the one hand, organizations should understand and tolerate the underperformance of new rookies. On the other hand, organizations also need to guide the attitudes and behaviors of new rookies in resolving the negative effects of stressors, helping them to deal with stress management at work by creating a warm climate (Yu et al., 2019) and a mutual interpersonal environment (Hon, 2013; Lee et al., 2021).

New employee orientation is typically a process that happens in a very limited time frame, but really effective way to impact work attitudes and performance over a long period. It has been testified that this favorable ratio between a short-term input and potentially much longer-term pay-offs that organizations to invest more resources into this crucial process (Raub et al., 2021). In terms of specific stress intervention, employers should help new rookies get familiar with the workplace as soon as possible, establish scientific and reasonable career planning, and encourage them to adopt positive coping to resolve difficulties in work (Deng et al., 2019). New rookies face prominent problems such as a lack of experience and vague roles. At this right moment, it would be a very strong support to the newcomers' socialization, providing them with feedback information and encouragement(Lee & Jacobs, 2024). Only by caring for and supporting their growth from the perspective of young individuals' needs, the organizations can effectively stabilize their pace and successfully overcome career adaptation (Silva et al., 2025; Zhang & Li, 2016). For example, some targeted projects of career growth counseling courses, senior mentor support, special stress monitoring and adjustment training, etc., these activities will help new rookies to resolve the stress encountered at work. These new people, by accepting this support, can more clearly control their future career development, and at the same time also will generate more commitment to the organization. It is a bilateral benefit, pursuing the "win–win" results between the individual and the organization.

5.3 Limitations

First, there are limitations in the variable measurement. The stress sources of new employees are complex, which may be a combination of challenging stress and hindering stress. This article adopts a relatively simple treatment and collects data

with only a single dimension of the work stress scale. The future study can further examine the problems of career adaptation of new employees caused by stressors of different attributes. Secondly, the study did not consider the influence of organizational scenario factors on individual career construction. It is possible that some very critical explanations for effects will be neglected. Finally, personality types and different coping styles, such as positive or negative behaviors, can be considered to extend the research topic of new employees' resolving stress, which may further refine the organizational intervention and help the career adaptation for new employees.

Funding information: This study is supported by the National Natural Science Foundation of China (72102052), Guangdong Educational Science Planning Project (2019GXJK016), Guangdong Philosophy and Social Science Planning Project (GD19CDL17), and College Students' Innovative and Entrepreneurial Training Program of GDUFS (X202511846055).

Author contributions: All authors have accepted responsibility for the entire content of this manuscript and consented to its submission to the journal. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript. Conceptualization, P.G. and M.S.; methodology, P.G.; software, P.H.; validation, P.H.; formal analysis, C.X.; investigation, C.X.; resources, P.H.; data curation, M.S.; writing – original draft preparation, P.G.; writing – review and editing, P.G.; visualization, C.X.; supervision, P.H.; project administration, C.X.; funding acquisition, M.S.

Conflict of interest: Authors state no conflict of interest.

Data availability statement: The datasets used and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Article note: As part of the open assessment, reviews and the original submission are available as supplementary files on our website.

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