

The Impact of Coaching Leadership on In-Role Performance of Employees

—Based on the Perspective of Social Information Processing Theory

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Abstract

As a new way of leadership, coaching leadership behavior is receiving more and more attention from experts and scholars. Although studies have shown that coaching leadership behavior significantly improves employee performance, there are few studies on how coaching leadership behavior affects and under what circumstances it can affect the in-role performance of employees. Based on the social information-processing theory, this paper discusses the impact of coaching leadership behavior on the in-role performance of employees and its internal mechanism—the mediating role of role ambiguity and the social alertness. Through the investigation and analysis of 224 employees, the coaching leadership behavior has a significant positive impact on the in-role performance of employees; the employee role ambiguity has played a partial intermediary role in this process; In addition, the social astuteness of employees is positively moderating the relationship between coaching leadership behavior and employee role ambiguity, the higher employee's social astuteness, the stronger the weakening effect of coaching leadership behavior on employee role ambiguity, and the mediating effect of role ambiguity on role performance is enhanced.

Keywords

Coaching Leadership, In-Role Performance, Role Ambiguity, Social Astuteness

1. Introduction

Napoleon, a famous French military strategist, has a famous saying: the lion legion of the sheep commander can never defeat the sheep corps of the lion commander. This shows the important role of team leaders in the whole team. A

good leader can set an example for team members, enhance confidence, lead the team to achieve goals, and achieve success. The lack of leadership may waste team members' ability and influence. The completion of the work task is difficult to achieve success. In the context of the current rapid social progress and increasingly fierce market competition, organizations have put forward higher requirements for leaders. Traditional leadership behavior has gradually failed to adapt to the increasingly fierce market competition and increasingly distinctive employees, so more and more scholars began to study new leadership behavior. In 2001, Goleman first proposed the concept of "coaching leadership" in his article published in the Harvard Business Review, and believed that coaching leadership would be one of the must-have behaviors of business managers in the 21st century. Hamlin *et al.* (2006) also point out that coaching leadership is at the heart of effective management practices [1]. Coach-led leadership behavior refers to the use of induction and inspiration to help employees discover their deep-seated needs and establish appropriate work goals. Provide resources and support in the process of achieving goals, improve employee mental models and stimulate employee potential. The effect is ultimately to achieve a win-win situation for employees and organizations [2].

In recent years, coaching leadership has attracted more and more scholars' attention, mainly focusing on the positive impact of coaching leadership behavior on employees, such as improving employee job satisfaction [3]; increasing organizational citizenship behavior [4]; Increasing organizational commitment and reducing turnover [5]; Promoting employee learning [5]; Improving role performance [6]; Achieving work goals [7] and enhance work morale [8] and so on. Although foreign scholars have conducted a comprehensive study on coaching leadership behavior, coaching leadership is still a relatively new concept in China. At present, domestic scholars mainly study its role in employee innovation behavior, and fewer scholars have paid attention to the role and mechanism of coaching leadership in employee in-role performance. Therefore, the primary focus of this study is the impact of coaching leadership behavior on employees' in-role performance.

Although foreign scholars have proved that coaching leadership behavior can help employees improve their performance, it still needs to understand the internal mechanism of coaching leadership behavior to improve the performance of employees. The Social Information-Processing Theory (SIP) proposed by Salancik and Pfeffer (1978) argues that employees use the information obtained in the workplace to understand and interpret events, thereby gaining work-related cognition and attitudes. And decide on the behavior afterward [9]. In other words, the behavior of employees at work is affected by the job-related information they receive. Role Ambiguity is the individual's perception of one's own role. It means that the individual lacks a clear understanding and cognition of the desired behavior at work, or lacks sufficient information about the individual's role-related expectations. The lack of information about the job role affects the employee's work behavior, which in turn affects Gong's overall outcome,

which is the performance within the role. Therefore, this study suggests that role ambiguity may play a mediating role in the relationship between coaching leadership and performance within employee roles.

In addition, social information processing theory also emphasizes that individuals do not passively accept information from the social environment. Individual differences cause different individuals to interpret the same information differently, leading to differences in cognition and behavior [9]. Therefore, this study will further explore the impact of individual employee differences—Social Astuteness. Social astuteness is the ability of individuals to accurately understand social interactions, understand themselves and others' behaviors, and adjust behaviors to various social environments in a timely manner [10]. Some scholars have found that individuals with higher social astuteness are more sensitive to their surroundings and can acutely identify opportunities and available resources and use them effectively [11]. Individuals with lower social astuteness, they cannot understand the inspiration and guidance of coaching leaders more quickly and accurately. That is to say, the influence of coaching leadership behavior on individual perceptions and behaviors with high social astuteness is more significant. Therefore, this study believes that the higher the individual social astuteness, the stronger the effect of coaching leadership on the in-role performance of the employees through the role ambiguity.

In general, this study is based on the theory of SIP to explore whether employee role ambiguity plays a mediating role between coaching leadership behavior and employee in-role performance while studying the interaction between employee social astuteness and coaching leadership behavior. In summary, this study initially proposes the research framework shown in **Figure 1**.

2. Theory and Hypotheses

2.1. Coaching Leadership and In-Role Performance

Unlike previous leadership styles that focus on establishing authority and giving orders to subordinates, coaching leadership is a new type of leadership that attracts scholars' attention in recent years. Wang *et al.* (2016) defined coaching leadership as: using encouragement, guidance, authorization, and other more equal ways to communicate with employees, helping employees to identify their deep needs, establish appropriate work goals, and achieve goals in employees. In the process of supporting and helping employees, providing necessary resources and support for employees, in addition, paying attention to the improvement of

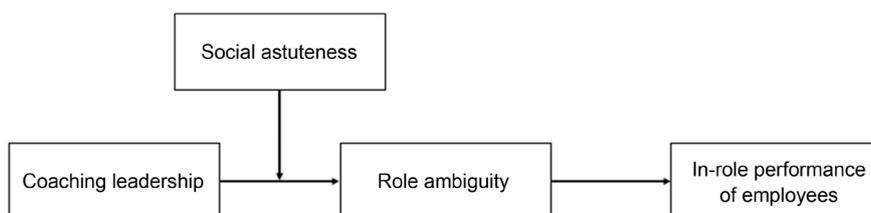


Figure 1. Theoretical model.

employees' mental models and the activation of their potentials, and ultimately achieving leadership behavior that promotes mutual promotion between organizations and employees [2]. Unlike other leadership behaviors, coaching leadership emphasize the promotion of employee learning, enhance employee competencies, and ultimately achieve employee performance. To achieve this goal, coaching leadership will perform the following main behaviors: 1) clarifying work tasks; 2) inspiring and inducing employees; 3) improving mental models; 4) giving support and help; and 5) promoting innovation and performance improvement.

Social information processing theory states that employees' understanding of the work environment is based on the processing of social information in the workplace, which in turn affects their behavior and further influences the outcome of the behavior [9]. Effective social information often comes from people with high social status. In the workplace, leaders become the main source of information for employees to obtain social clues [12]. The behavior of the leader or the information provided by the leader will influence and shape the employee's behavior, ultimately leading to different performance results. According to scholars, coaching leaders have the following characteristics [2]: First, coaching leaders focus on long-term career development of employees, focusing on helping employees improve their professional skills and abilities instead of focusing on the immediate tasks [13], so that employees can gain job-related skills and abilities to achieve better performance. Second, coaching leaders can develop a positive and optimistic attitude [14], which guides employees to identify the reasons for failure, encourage employees to continue to improve, and achieve better performance. Third, coaching leaders tend to communicate with employees on an equal footing, treat employees equally, and help build a high-quality relationship [15]. High-quality relationships can help employees work positively and achieve better in-role performance.

In the past, researchers also discussed the relationship between coaching leadership behavior and employee performance. The results all proved that coaching leadership behavior has a significant effect on employee performance [16] [17]. In summary, this study proposes hypothesis 1:

H1: Coaching leadership has a positive impact on the in-role performance of employees.

2.2. The Mediating Role of Role Ambiguity

Role ambiguity is a cognition that reflects an individual's uncertainty about the job information and performance expectations required for a particular role in the organization [18], including the relationship between role positioning, others expectations of roles, steps to satisfy such expectations, behavioral goals of roles, and evaluation of role behaviors [19]. Whether employees can fully grasp the information about the work is crucial to their ability to work effectively: if employees can clearly understand the goals and expectations of the role, it means

that they can grasp the methods and steps to achieve the goal, showing higher levels of performance [20]; high levels of role ambiguity mean a lack of proper understanding of work goals and responsibilities, which often leads to poor, unsatisfactory performance [21]. The results of Deluga & Winiers (1990) show that there is a significant negative correlation between role ambiguity and job performance. Therefore, role ambiguity may negatively impact the in-role performance of the employees [22].

According to the social information processing theory, employees' social cognition and attitude are based on social cues in the workplace, which affects their behavior [9]. That is to say, the behavior and information clues of leaders in the work situation will first affect the formation of employee cognition and attitude, and thus affect the behavior of employees and obtain different work results. This study believes that coaching leadership can reduce the role ambiguity of employees for the following reasons: First, coaching leader guide employees to establish appropriate work goals based on their specific circumstances, helping employees clearly understand work objectives and leadership expectations, and reduce employees' uncertainty [23]; Second, coach-ling leaders help employees by providing effective developmental feedback and appropriate resource support during employee achievement goals. Systematic feedback to develop self-awareness [24], effective feedback can help employees clearly understand their goals and responsibilities, and build paths to established goals, reducing role ambiguity [25]; A great deal of research has been done in the past that coaching leaders can help employees better understand their roles and effectively alleviate the ambiguity of their roles [20]. In summary, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H2a: Coaching leadership behavior significantly reduces employees' role ambiguity;

H2b: Role ambiguity significantly reduces employees' in-role performance;

H2c: Employee role ambiguity mediates between coaching leadership behavior and employee in-role performance.

2.3. The Moderation Role of Social Astuteness

Social astuteness refers to the ability of individuals to understand social interactions well and accurately explain themselves and others. Individuals with high social astuteness are keen observers, highly self-aware, and able to adapt to different social environments [10]. As the most explanatory dimension of political skills [10], social alertness has been shown to play a regulatory role in the relationship between leadership behavior and employee cognitive and behavior [26].

According to the theory of social information processing, employees rely on past experience to selectively interpret the information and behaviors conveyed by leaders in the workplace. That is, the differences between individuals not only affect their information processing but also affect the formation of cognition and attitude, which in turn affect the behavior shown [9]. Therefore, this study speculates that the differences in individual social astuteness will affect the impact

of coaching leadership behavior on employee role ambiguity. The reasons are as follows: First, individuals with high social astuteness can understand the behavior of workplace leaders [10]. When coaching leaders guide individuals and inspire them to help individuals discover deeper needs and establish work goals, individuals can accurately understand the meaning of leadership, and work towards the direction of leadership guidance, understand the goals and responsibilities of the role, and reduce the role of confusion. Secondly, individuals with high social astuteness can adjust their behavior according to the situation and better adapt to the social situation based on the accurate understanding of social cues [10]. When individuals realize that leaders use coaching behavior to help themselves, they can actively adjust their role positioning and behavior, and communicate effectively with leaders. Effective communication is one of the keys to understanding roles and reducing role ambiguity [27]. Therefore, employees with high social astuteness can more acutely discover and understand coaching leadership, actively communicate with leaders and adjust their roles in a timely manner, and more actively treat the guidance and help of coaching leaders, helping to reduce the role of confusion. On the contrary, it is difficult for individuals with low social astuteness to recognize and understand the interaction in the workplace, and it is difficult to accurately understand the encouragement and guidance intention of the coaching leadership. The role of coaching leadership behavior in reducing role ambiguity is relatively weak. In summary, this study proposes the hypothesis:

H3a: Individual social astuteness moderates the relationship between coaching leadership behavior and employees' role ambiguity. Such that it is stronger when the level of social astuteness is higher.

Combined with hypotheses 2c and 3a, the relationship between coaching leadership behavior and in-role performance can be further extended to a moderated mediation model. Specifically, the employee role ambiguity plays a mediate role in the relationship between coaching leadership behavior and employee role performance, and the mediation role is moderated by the employee's social astuteness. When the employee's social astuteness level is high, the coaching leadership behavior has a more significant effect on the role ambiguity. The employee has a clear and accurate understanding of the role, enabling the employee to work more actively [28] and get better in-role performance. On the contrary, employees with low levels of social astuteness are not sensitive enough to the motivation and expectations of coaching leadership behavior, cannot understand the leadership's help behavior in time, or cannot correctly understand the leadership's inspiration and guidance, thus weakening the positive influence of coaching leadership on the role ambiguity, the lack of information about job roles makes individuals more conservative, reluctant to show their full ability in the work, and ultimately affect the in-role performance. In summary, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H3b: Social astuteness moderates the indirect role of coaching leadership be-

havior on the in-role performance through role ambiguity, that is, the indirect effect is more positive when the level of social astuteness is higher than it is low.

3. Sample and Measures

3.1. Sample and Data Collection

In this study, data collection was conducted by network questionnaire. The subjects were mainly ordinary employees of the company, and the region was mainly concentrated in Guangdong Province. The questionnaire was distributed mainly on the professional questionnaire survey website. A total of 254 questionnaires were distributed in this study, and 224 valid questionnaires were collected. The effective recovery rate was 88.2%. The specifics of the sample are shown in **Table 1**.

3.2. Measurement Scale

All scales were translated and back-translated from English to Chinese. All of the items were measured by 5-point Likert scales anchored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Coaching Leadership: An eight-item scale compiled by Ellinger *et al.* (2003), which is filled out by employees and measures the perception of employees' direct leader coaching leadership behavior [3]. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.88.

Social astuteness: The "social astuteness" dimension of the Political Skills Scale compiled by Ferris *et al.* (2005) is used, which includes five measurement items [29]. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.77.

Role ambiguity: The five-item role ambiguity scale of Peterson *et al.* (1996) [24]. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.95.

Table 1. Basic situation of the sample.

| | Classify | Number | Proportion |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|--------|------------|
| Sex | Male | 105 | 46.9% |
| | Female | 119 | 53.1% |
| Age | Under 25 years old | 55 | 24.6% |
| | Between 26 - 35 years old | 142 | 63.4% |
| | Between 36 - 45 years old | 25 | 11.2% |
| | Over 46 years old | 2 | 0.9% |
| Education level | Junior college and below | 32 | 14.3% |
| | Undergraduate | 175 | 78.1% |
| | Graduate students and above | 17 | 7.6% |
| Working tenure | Less than 1 year | 24 | 10.7% |
| | Between 1 - 3 years | 65 | 29.0% |
| | Between 3 - 5 years | 50 | 22.3% |
| | Over 5 years | 85 | 37.9% |

In-role performance: Using the in-role performance scale developed by Williams and Anderson (1991), the scale contains 7 items, of which 2 are reverse-scoring items [30]. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.82.

Control variables: In this study, the gender, age, education, and working tenure were used as control variables.

4. Analyses and Results

4.1. Discriminant Validity Test and Common Method Biases Test

In order to test the discriminant validity between variables, this study conducted a confirmatory factor analysis of four variables: coaching leadership behavior, role ambiguity, social astuteness, and employees' in-role performance. The results are shown in **Table 2**. The results show that compared with several other models, the four-factor model has the best fit, RMSEA is lower than 0.08, CFI, NFI, NNFI are higher than 0.09, and the ratio of chi-square to degree of freedom is smaller than 2. This shows that the four variables of coaching leadership behavior, role ambiguity, social astuteness, and in-role performance have good discriminant validity in this study.

Harman single factor method was used to test the homologous variance [31]. Exploratory factor analysis showed that the variance explained by the first factor without rotational precipitation was less than the standard (50%). It means that the deviation of common methods will not cause a serious impact in this study.

4.2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

We used SPSS 20.0 to process the data. Descriptive statistics and related analysis are shown in **Table 3**. Coaching leadership is positively correlated with employees' in-role performance ($r = 0.43$, $p < 0.01$), and negatively correlated with employees' role ambiguity ($r = -0.3$, $p < 0.01$). Role ambiguity is negatively correlated with employees' in-role performance ($r = -0.85$, $p < 0.01$).

4.3. Hypothesis Test

Hierarchical regression was used to test the hypothesis in this study and the results are shown in **Table 4**. Model 3 showed that coaching leadership significantly positively predicted an employees' in-role performance ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$),

Table 2. Results of confirmatory factor analysis.

| Model | χ^2 | df | χ^2/df | RMSEA | CFI | NFI | NNFI |
|--------------------------------------|----------|------|-------------|-------|------|------|------|
| Four-factor model: CL, RA, SA, IRP | 476.23 | 269 | 1.77 | 0.059 | 0.98 | 0.95 | 0.97 |
| Three-factor model: CL, RA, SA + IRP | 831.86 | 273 | 3.05 | 0.096 | 0.95 | 0.92 | 0.94 |
| Two-factor model: CL, RA + SA + IRP | 1201.10 | 276 | 4.35 | 0.12 | 0.89 | 0.86 | 0.88 |
| One-factor model: CL + RA + SA + IRP | 2382.90 | 278 | 8.57 | 0.18 | 0.83 | 0.81 | 0.82 |

Note: $N=224$, CL = Coaching Leadership, RA = Role Ambiguity, SA = Social Astuteness, IRP = In-Role Performance.

Table 3. Mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficients ($N = 224$).

| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|------------------------|----------|-----------|-------|--------|-------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|
| 1) Gender | 1.53 | 0.50 | - | | | | | | | |
| 2) Age | 1.88 | 0.62 | -0.10 | - | | | | | | |
| 3) Education | 1.93 | 0.46 | 0.04 | -0.12 | - | | | | | |
| 4) Working tenure | 2.88 | 1.04 | 0.14* | 0.70** | -0.10 | - | | | | |
| 5) Coaching Leadership | 3.81 | 0.61 | -0.07 | 0.23** | -0.01 | 0.23** | (0.88) | | | |
| 6) Role Ambiguity | 2.45 | 0.99 | 0.01 | -0.15* | 0.04 | -0.19** | -0.39** | (0.95) | | |
| 7) Social Astuteness | 3.37 | 0.50 | -0.08 | -0.02 | 0.03 | 0.06 | 0.38** | -0.30** | (0.77) | |
| 8) In-Role Performance | 4.02 | 0.42 | -0.04 | 0.19** | 0.00 | 0.27** | 0.43** | -0.85** | 0.39** | (0.82) |

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. The number in parentheses is Cronbach's alpha of each scale.

Table 4. Test results of mediating effects and moderating effects ($N = 224$).

| Variable | Role Ambiguity | | In-Role Performance | |
|--|----------------|----------|---------------------|-----------|
| | M1 | M2 | M3 | M4 |
| Intercept | 2.67 | 2.87 | 2.76 | 4.66 |
| <i>Control Variable</i> | | | | |
| Gender | -0.06 | -0.11 | 0.01 | -0.01 |
| Age | 0.04 | -0.03 | -0.03 | -0.01 |
| Education | 0.07 | 0.06 | 0.02 | 0.04 |
| Working Tenure | -0.11 | -0.09 | 0.09* | 0.05* |
| <i>Independent Variable</i> | | | | |
| Coaching Leadership | -0.61*** | -0.54*** | 0.27** | 0.06* |
| <i>Mediating Variable</i> | | | | |
| Role Ambiguity | | | | -0.33*** |
| <i>Moderator Variable</i> | | | | |
| Social Astuteness | | -0.28* | | |
| <i>Interaction Effect</i> | | | | |
| Coaching Leadership \times Social Astuteness | | -0.38** | | |
| R^2 | 0.17 | 0.22 | 0.21 | 0.74 |
| ΔR^2 | - | 0.05 | - | 0.53 |
| F | 8.69*** | 8.67*** | 11.86*** | 102.61*** |

Note: The non-standardized regression coefficients in the table are: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. The related variables have been centralized.

so hypothesis H1 was supported. Model 1 showed that coaching leadership significantly negatively predicted an employees' role ambiguity ($\beta = -0.61$, $p < 0.001$), so hypothesis H2a was supported. Model 4 showed that role ambiguity has a significant negative effect on employees' role ambiguity ($\beta = -0.33$, $p < 0.001$), so hypothesis H2b was supported. And the positive effect of coaching

leadership on employees' in-role performance is still significant ($\beta = 0.06$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, role ambiguity partially mediates the relationship between coaching leadership and employees' in-role performance (intermediary effect = 0.20, bias correction CI 95% = [0.15, 0.28]), so hypothesis H2c was supported.

In addition, model 2 showed that the interaction between coaching leadership and social astuteness significantly negatively predicted role ambiguity ($\beta = -0.38$, $p < 0.01$). **Figure 2** shows the interaction between coaching leadership and social astuteness affecting role ambiguity. It can be seen from the figure that the slope of the dotted line is larger, that is, employees with high social astuteness experienced a significant reduction in role ambiguity under coaching leadership. That is to say, when the coaching leadership behavior is less, employees with high social astuteness and low social astuteness experience a higher role ambiguity; when the leadership performance is more, the role ambiguity experienced by employees with high social astuteness was significantly less than that of employees with low social astuteness. Simple slope analysis showed that when the level of social astuteness was high, employees with coaching leadership will perceive less role ambiguity ($\beta = -0.77$, $p < 0.001$); and when the level of social astuteness was low, the influence of coaching leadership on the role ambiguity will be weakened ($\beta = -0.31$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 3a is supported.

Based on this model, we also examined the conditional indirect effect following recommendations by Hayes (2013) [32]. Specifically, for high levels of social astuteness, the indirect effect of coaching leadership on employees' in-role performance through role ambiguity was significant (conditional indirect effect = 0.10, Boot 95% CI = [0.03, 0.18]). However, for low level of social astuteness, the indirect effects were not significant (conditional indirect effect = -0.01, Boot 95% CI = [-0.07, 0.05]). Therefore, the results support hypothesis H3b.

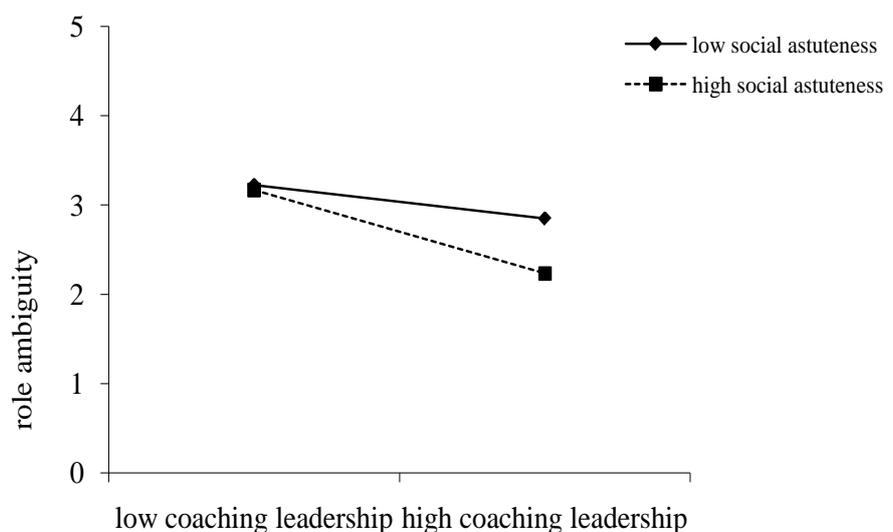


Figure 2. Moderating effect of social astuteness on coaching leadership behavior and role ambiguity.

5. Conclusions

Based on the theory of social information processing, this study conducted a hierarchical regression analysis of 224 employee data. After controlling gender, education, age and working tenures, the following conclusions were obtained:

- 1) Coaching leadership has a significant positive impact on employees' in-role performance;
- 2) The mediation effect test shows that the employee role ambiguity plays a mediating role between coaching leadership and in-role performance;
- 3) Social astuteness has a significant moderate effect on the relationship between coaching leadership and employee role ambiguity. When the employee's social astuteness is strong, the relationship between coaching leadership and role ambiguity is stronger.

6. Discussion and Significance

6.1. Theoretical Significance

First, this study further enriches the internal mechanism of coaching leadership behaviors to promote employees' in-role performance. Most of the existing researches on the relationship between leadership behavior and performance within the employee's role use social cognitive theory [17] or social exchange theory [16]. This study explores the interaction between coaching leadership and individual differences (individual social astuteness) based on the perspective of social information processing theory to promote individual in-role performance by mitigating employee role ambiguity. This not only helps to better understand the promotion mechanism of employee performance in the Chinese context but also provides a new theoretical perspective for explaining how coaching leadership behavior affects individual behavior.

Second, this study confirms that role ambiguity mediates between coaching leadership behavior and employees' in-role performance. In recent years, the mechanism of coaching leadership behavior on outcome variables has always been the focus of scholars' attention, but so far no research has focused on the role of role ambiguity in this relationship. According to the theory of social information processing, coaching leaders provide employees with relevant information to help individuals develop, improve their work level and skills. It is important social information for employees and will form a cognitive and attitude about roles based on this clue, effectively reduce role ambiguity. When employees have a clear understanding and understanding of their roles, they can stimulate effective work behavior and improve in-role performance. This study confirms the relationship of "leader behavior—employee cognition—employee work behavior", and unveils the mechanism between coaching leadership behavior and employees' in-role performance, providing a new idea and theoretical basis for its formation process.

Finally, this study demonstrates for the first time that employee social astute-

ness not only positively moderates the relationship between coaching leadership behavior and employee role ambiguity, but also significantly moderates the indirect effect of role ambiguity in it. Studies have used political skills as a moderator to explore the role of moderation in the relationship between leadership behavior and employee behavior. For example, Shen *et al.* (2019) found that political skills are positively moderating leadership behavior and subordinate performance [33]. Few studies have separately studied the four dimensions of political skills. Brouer *et al.* (2016) pointed out that in the Chinese context, only the social astuteness and interpersonal influence dimensions are significantly related to employee behavior [34]. Ferris *et al.* (2007) also pointed out that social astuteness is the most explanatory dimension of political skills [10]. This study confirms that social alertness as a dimension of political skills can directly moderate the relationship between coaching leadership and employees' in-role performance, further enriching related research.

6.2. Practical Significance

The results of this study found that coaching leadership behavior can change employees' perceptions of roles, goals, and other aspects, and thus improve the employees' in-role performance. Therefore, enterprises can train leadership behaviors, enable leaders to master effective coaching skills, help employees to explore their own needs, and work with employees to establish appropriate development goals, through inspiration, authorization, guidance and other ways. Provide employees with opportunities for growth, and provide sufficient resources to support and help employees' work skills and career development, and help employees improve their performance within their roles.

The study also found that role ambiguity plays a part in mediating the relationship between coaching leadership behavior and in-role performance. Therefore, leaders can improve their role performance by helping employees to clarify all aspects of their roles and reduce their role ambiguity. For example, leaders can use coaching methods such as language guidance and reinforcement to enhance employees' awareness of roles and reduce role ambiguity. In addition, companies can modify or improve job descriptions, or reorganize organizational structures to clarify the division of labor to help employees identify their responsibilities and work goals.

In addition, this study also found that employee social astuteness plays a positive role in moderating coaching leadership behavior and role ambiguity. Coaching leadership behavior is less helpful to employees with lower social astuteness than those with high social astuteness. Therefore, leaders should continue to explore appropriate leadership behaviors to help low social astuteness to reduce role ambiguity and improve performance. In addition, companies can use relevant tests to measure the social astuteness of candidates as one of the reference conditions for recruiting and screening employees and provide reference information for leaders and employees to match. In addition, as a dimension of political skills, social astuteness can be continuously improved based on

the development experience of the day after tomorrow. Leaders can carry out relevant training according to their own development needs and the actual situation of employees, improve the social astuteness of employees, and enable employees to better adapt to the coaching leadership style and gain personal growth and improvement.

6.3. Deficiencies and Prospects

This study has some theoretical and practical contributions to understanding the relationship between coaching leadership and employees' in-role performance, but there are still some shortcomings that need to be explored later. First, this study only reveals the partial mediating role of role ambiguity between coaching leadership behavior and employee s' in-role performance. Later research can continue to expand the research of related intermediary mechanisms from other theoretical perspectives. Second, this study takes social astuteness as a moderate variable and does not explore the moderate role of other dimensions of political skills, so future research can further explore the moderate role of the other dimensions of political skills. Third, all the data in this study are filled out by employees. The results may be affected by the social appreciating effect. Therefore, subsequent research can use the method of pairing leaders and employees to collect data and improve the accuracy of the results. At present, the scholars believe that the causal relationship contains chronological relations, the first cause, and then result. Therefore, the study of causality between variables usually uses time-point methods to collect data. The data of this research questionnaire were collected at the same time point and the causal relationship between variables could not be explored. Future research can use the data collection method at different time points to enhance the effectiveness of the results.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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