

Academic Paper

The Stable Individual Differences Driving Employee Coachability Behaviours

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Abstract

Emerging literature indicates the critical value of employee coachability for individual, coaching practice, and organisational effectiveness across contexts. To expand our understanding of coachability and maximize its application within organisations, we require a greater understanding of its antecedents. Thus, this paper explicates and examines trait, motivational, and behaviourally based individual differences underlying employees' coachability. Findings from this investigation demonstrate feedback orientation, expressed humility, and the instrumental feedback motive significantly influence employees' coachability. This research contributes to the growing body of coachability literature and provides a strong foundation for enhancing its identification and development in organisational settings.

Keywords

coachability, coaching, coachee, feedback, individual differences

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Introduction

Contemporary organisations utilise managerial coaching practices to facilitate continuous behavioural change, development, and performance improvement of employees necessary for thriving and achieving optimal performance levels, especially during times of change (International Coaching Federation, 2018, 2020; Joo, Sushko, & McLean, 2012; Saleh & Watson, 2017). Additionally, researchers and practitioners regard coaching as a key avenue through which organisations can create and sustain competitive advantages (Pousa & Mathieu, 2015; International Coaching Federation, 2018). Consequently, the International Coaching Federation (ICF, 2020) notes investments in coaching exceed \$2.8 billion USD annually, representing a 21% increase since 2015. As organisations reap the benefits of coaching practices, many now take a

more comprehensive and sustainable approach, wherein they establish robust coaching cultures (Gormley & van Nieuwerburgh, 2014; ICF, 2018; Milner, Milner, & McCarthy, 2020). Thus, organisations place a premium on coaching practices and cultures as drivers of employee growth and effectiveness, organisational success, and competitive advantage.

However, even with the boom in coaching practices and cultures across organisations, researchers and practitioners too often focus on coaching in isolation, directing attention almost exclusively to the coach without considering the impact those being coached exert on the success of these initiatives (Gregory & Levy, 2010; Weiss, 2019; Weiss & Merrigan, 2021). As such, employees' coachability – the extent to which they proactively seek, receive, and enact constructive feedback to accelerate development and improve performance (Weiss, 2019) – remains a vital, yet understudied and underleveraged factor across coaching contexts. Even so, burgeoning research highlights the value of coachability for achieving key outcomes in various environments. In entrepreneurial contexts, Ciuchta and colleagues' (2018) found coachability as one of the most critical factors investors consider before investing in an entrepreneur's business venture. Furthermore, Marvel, Wolfe, and Kuratko (2020) demonstrated coachable entrepreneurs and founders exploit more innovative products than those less coachable. In more traditional organisational environments, coachability significantly influences sales performance (Shannahan et al., 2013), organisational citizenship behaviours, organisational commitment (Brent, 2017), adaptability, promotability, and employee effectiveness (Weiss & Merrigan, 2021). Additionally, Weiss & Merrigan (2021) assessed the relative importance of coachability and effective coaching behaviours and dynamics (e.g., feedback delivery; coach-coachee relationship) on key outcomes and found coachability more strongly predicts employees' adaptability, promotability, and performance compared to managerial coaching behaviours.

Taken together, these findings emphasise the importance of coachability for individual, coaching practice, and organisational success. While research outlines the behaviours indicative of highly coachable individuals (Ciuchta et al., 2018; Weiss, 2019), we require a greater understanding of the antecedents influencing coachability to identify coachable talent more accurately and effectively in selection processes and elevate the coachability skill sets of employees. Previous research explored linkages between individual differences – personal characteristics and dispositions that provide both descriptive and explanatory accounts of why people think, feel, and act in boundedly-unique ways (Jayawickreme, Zachry, & Fleeson, 2019; Jones, Woods, & Hutchinson, 2014; Noe, Tews, & Marand, 2013) – and coachability (Favor, 2011; Johnson, Kim, Colarelli, & Boyajian, 2021), but these efforts used incomplete or incongruent conceptualisations and operationalizations that deviate from the current expanded understanding of coachability; for example, focusing exclusively on the facet of feedback receptivity. Thus, we aim to advance the full, robust concept of coachability by specifically examining its trait, motivational, and behaviourally based antecedents.

Individual Differences Underlying Coachability

Based on an extensive review of the individual differences, feedback, coaching, and coachability literatures, we propose certain traits, motivations, and behavioural expressions underlie coachability. Specifically, we conducted a robust literature review focused on identifying relevant theories and key individual differences proximally influencing feedback and coachability-related behaviors using several databases of research relevant to social science, sports, and organisational domains. A subject matter expert review of these publications, coupled with an examination of theory and data in the extant literature, determined the individual differences we propose in this section. For example, investigation of the motivation literature highlighted the importance of goal orientation and feedback motive theories for understanding differences in individuals' learning and coachability-related behaviors, such as feedback seeking and receptivity. Furthermore, coachability scholars highlighted a need for future research to examine antecedents beyond the big five to advance our understanding of the dispositional factors directly influencing individuals' coachability (Ciuchta et al., 2018). Thus, we answer this call in the present paper. As

such, we explore relationships between coachability and learning goal orientation (LGO), feedback orientation (FBO), proactive personality, achievement striving, expressed humility, and the instrumental feedback motive. In all, we contend employees possessing elevated levels of these characteristics exhibit a greater likelihood of operating in a highly coachable manner in the workplace, which we detail further in the following sections.

Learning Goal Orientation

Learning goal orientations (LGO) – undergirded by individuals' growth mindsets (Dweck, 1986; VandeWalle, 1997) – describe individuals' disposition or tendency to seek to develop competencies by acquiring new skills and mastering new situations (Payne et al., 2007; VandeWalle, 1997). We suggest individuals with elevated levels of LGO demonstrate greater coachability as a result of their enacted behaviours. Research demonstrates individuals possessing higher trait levels of LGO view feedback as more useful (Brett & Attwater, 2001), seek more feedback (Anseel, Beatty, Shen, Lievens, & Sackett, 2015; Tuckey, Brewer, & Williamson, 2002; VandeWalle & Cummings, 1997), are more persistent, have higher goal achievement expectancies after receiving negative or constructive feedback (Colquitt & Simmering, 1998; Cron, Slocum, & VandeWalle, 2002). Furthermore, they prove more likely to implement feedback and subsequently improve performance (Heslin & Latham, 2004), as this information enables them to develop critical job-related knowledge and skills. As such, we propose LGO is a significant trait that drives an individual's coachability.

H1: Learning goal orientation (LGO) positively relates to an employee's coachability

Feedback Orientation

Feedback orientation (FBO) refers to an individual's overall receptivity to feedback. Consequently, those holding strong feedback orientations tend to value, internalize, and act on feedback provided (London & Smither, 2002). In contrast, individuals possessing weaker FBOs demonstrate greater resistance to receiving, and, therefore, often ignore or discount feedback, making them less likely to respond to or act on feedback provided. Research demonstrates positive relationships between FBO and feedback seeking behaviours (Dahling, Chau, & O'Malley, 2012), feedback receptivity, and intentions to implement the feedback to drive individual performance (Linderbaum & Levy, 2010). Interestingly, Johnson and colleagues (2021) found a positive relationship between coachability and FBO. However, as noted above, their conceptualisation deviates from the more robust understanding of coachability. Taken together, we suggest and test feedback orientation as an individual difference leading to elevated levels of coachability, as defined in this paper.

H2: Feedback orientation (FBO) positively relates to an employee's coachability

Proactive Personality

Researchers define proactive personality as a stable tendency to affect environmental change (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Individuals with proactive personalities are relatively unconstrained by situational forces, tend to set higher standards, and focus available resources on accomplishing the high standards and goals they set. Additionally, highly proactive individuals actively scan the environment for opportunities, show initiative, take action, and persevere until they reach closure by bringing about change (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Crant, 1996). Thus, we suggest highly proactive individuals are more likely to seek (Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001; Thompson, 2005), demonstrate receptivity to, and implement feedback, as it provides them with the necessary means required to effectuate behavioural change and achieve their goals.

H3: Proactive personality positively relates to an employee's coachability

Achievement Striving

Achievement striving, a facet of conscientiousness, refers to an individual's disposition to be highly motivated to succeed, work hard toward goals, and turn plans into actions (Costa & McCrae, 1992). We specifically examine achievement striving as researchers indicate examination of sub-facets can provide a more accurate assessment of the relationship with the criterion and incremental validity over general personality dimensions (John, 1990; Moberg, 1998). In this context, research shows highly conscientious and achievement focused individuals proactively solicit feedback (Krasman, 2010). Given achievement striving individuals' action-oriented goal focus, we suggest they accept feedback as a valuable resource and subsequently enact it to drive performance and realize their goals. In all, we contend individuals high in the achievement striving facet of conscientiousness seek, internalize, and more readily implement constructive feedback to adapt behaviour and drive performance.

H4: Achievement striving positively relates to an employee's coachability

Expressed Humility

Expressed humility refers to an individual difference that emerges in social contexts. It connotes an individual's willingness to view oneself accurately; teachability, which manifests by showing openness to learning, feedback, and new ideas from others; and displayed appreciation of others' strengths and contributions (Owens, Johnson, & Mitchell, 2013). In essence, expressed humility reflects an individual's tendency to approach interpersonal interactions with a strong motive for learning through others to accelerate personal development (Nielsen, Marrone, & Slay, 2010) and drive performance (Owens et al., 2013).

Researchers suggest individuals expressing humility utilise information gathered from interactions with others to capture a more accurate picture of themselves and aid in their personal development (Nielsen et al., 2010). Fittingly, humble individuals seek more feedback (Anseel et al., 2015; MacDonald, Sulsky, Spence, & Brown, 2013) to see themselves accurately through interactions with others. Having a more accurate view of oneself provides clarity regarding how to modify behaviour to achieve increased performance. Furthermore, individuals expressing high levels of humility display openness to learning, feedback, and new ideas from others. Thus, they demonstrate greater receptivity to feedback, which allows them to effectively capture and subsequently implement the information necessary to grow and elevate performance (Owens et al., 2013).

H5: Expressed humility positively relates to an employee's coachability

Instrumental Feedback Motive

Researchers detail three major motivations underlying individuals' feedback seeking and receptivity behaviours. Specifically, the instrumental, ego defense and enhancement, and image defense and enhancement feedback motives. In relevance to coachability, both the ego and image defense and enhancement motives refer to an individual's tendency to avoid or distort feedback that would make them look or feel bad or solicit feedback that makes them feel or look good (Ashford, Blatt, & VandeWalle, 2003; Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Ashford, De Stobbeleir, & Nujella, 2016). In contrast to the ego and image motives, research indicates individuals holding instrumental motives

seek feedback because it contains informational value that enables them to regulate behaviour and meet their goals (Anseel, Lievens, & Levy, 2007; Ashford et al., 2003). Therefore, as the perceived diagnostic value of feedback increases, individuals holding instrumental motives more frequently engage in feedback seeking and receptivity behaviours (Ashford, 1986; Tuckey et al., 2002). Because these individuals seek feedback to acquire information to facilitate goal attainment, it follows they internalize and implement the feedback to achieve desired goals.

H6: The instrumental feedback motive positively relates to an employee's coachability

Methodology

Sample

We collected data using the Prolific participant platform May through August 2021. Participants were paid \$3 for their participation, culminating in an average pay rate of \$14 per hour. To participate, individuals had to be adult residents of the United States, and fluent in English. The total sample included 218 participants. We examined data for invariant responses and participants who failed attention checks. After screening, we retained 201 participants. The sample was 45% female and 45.5% male, with 1% identifying as transgender and 8.5% refusing to provide identification. The average age was 35, SD = 9.94. White respondents constituted 50% of the sample while 26.5% identified as Asian, 20% as Black, 21.5% as multi-ethnic, and 7% as other. Additionally, 67% of participants were employed full-time, 60% reported having management experience, and 44% had tenure over 3 years with their current employer.

Measures

Learning goal orientation (LGO)

We measured LGO using the five-item measure developed by VandeWalle (1997). Questionnaire responses were measured on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include: "I am willing to select a challenging work assignment I can learn a lot from" and "For me, development of my work ability is important enough to take risks."

Feedback orientation (FBO)

Feedback Orientation was measured using three of four factors from the Feedback Orientation Scale (FOS; Linderbaum & Levy, 2010). Specifically, we measured the factors: utility, accountability, and feedback self-efficacy as they directly assess dispositional receptivity to feedback. The excluded factor, social awareness, conceptualizes feedback as an impression management tool, which overlaps with the instrumental feedback motive scale. Questionnaire responses were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include: "Feedback contributes to my success at work" (Utility), "I don't feel a sense of closure until I respond to feedback" (Accountability), and "I feel competent when responding to both positive and negative feedback" (Feedback Self-efficacy).

Proactive personality

Proactive personality was measured with the short version of the Proactive Personality Scale (PPS) developed by Seibert and colleagues (1999). Questionnaire responses were measured using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Sample

items include: “Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change” and “Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality.”

Expressed humility

We measured Expressed Humility using the scale developed by Owens and colleagues (2013). Developed originally as a rater-completed questionnaire, we converted the scale to self-report by shifting the referent of the items from “this person” to “I.” Questionnaire responses were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include: “I am willing to learn from others” and “I show appreciation for the unique contribution of others.”

Achievement striving

We measured Achievement Striving based on items from the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP; Goldberg, 1999). Questionnaire responses were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include: “I plunge into tasks with all my heart” and “I do more than what’s expected of me.”

Instrumental Feedback Motive

To examine the instrumental feedback seeking motive, we administered the scale developed by Dahling and colleagues (2015). Questionnaire responses were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include: “My job-related skills can be improved if I ask for feedback” and “I can learn more about the performance expectations others set for me by asking for feedback.”

Coachability

Coachability refers to the degree to which individuals seek, receive, and use feedback to drive individual development and improve performance. Since an established measure does not exist to assess coachability as defined in this study, we combined three measures into a composite to examine employees’ behavioural demonstration of coachability: Feedback Seeking, Feedback Receptivity, and Implementation of Feedback (Weiss, 2019).

To assess the feedback seeking component of coachability, we used the feedback seeking measure presented by Dahling and colleagues (2012). We shifted the referent of these items to allow for self-report data collection. Questionnaire responses were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*very infrequently*) to 5 (*very frequently*). Sample items include: “I ask for opinions of my work” and “I seek out feedback on my performance during assignments.”

To examine feedback receptivity, we administered the feedback receptivity measure developed by Ryan and colleagues (2000). Questionnaire responses were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include: “I tend to deny the existence of concerns” and “I accept feedback presented.”

To measure the feedback implementation component of coachability, we adapted the transfer of training measure developed by Facticeau and colleagues (1995) to focus on implementation of feedback by shifting the context of the items, in line with previous research (Weiss, 2019). Questionnaire responses were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include: “My behaviour has improved following coaching interactions” and “My job performance has improved due to the skills/principles learned during coaching interactions.”

Analysis

We used path analysis to test the multiple linear relationships hypothesized. Path analysis is a part of the structural equation modeling family of statistical techniques (Applebaum, et. al., 2018). Evaluation of the model included fit indices to determine the degree to which the specified relationships in the model corresponded to the data. Data were checked for adequate assumptions in line with maximum-likelihood estimation (Finney & DiStefano, 2006). We specifically assess model fit with the chi-square statistic and common model fit indices such as, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; Steiger, 1990), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI; Tucker & Lewis, 1973), and comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990). We utilize these indices with the following cutoffs (criteria outline adequate model fit): Chi-square ($> .05$); RMSEA ($< .08$); TLI ($> .9$); CFI ($> .9$).

Results

Scale statistics, including means, standard deviations and reliabilities are provided in Table 1. Scale reliabilities were all acceptable, ranging from .79 to .92. Total score histograms demonstrated approximately normal distributions.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	M	SD	Alpha	Total omega	Mean r	Median r	n
Learning Goal Orientation	4.65	.86	0.87	0.89	0.57	0.54	5
Proactive personality	5.28	.87	0.88	0.89	0.42	0.38	10
Feedback orientation	3.98	.52	0.90	0.92	0.38	0.39	15
Expressed humility	4.02	.59	0.88	0.89	0.44	0.44	9
Achievement striving	3.82	.49	0.86	0.88	0.38	0.39	10
Instrumental motive	3.62	.36	0.74	0.79	0.36	0.35	5
Coachability	3.34	.76	0.89	0.91	0.33	0.32	17

Note. n = number of items constituting the scale. M and SD are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively.

Table 2: Correlations with confidence intervals

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. LGO						
2. PP	.73** [.66, .79]					
3. FO	.57** [.46, .65]	.59** [.49, .68]				
4. EH	.34** [.21, .45]	.31** [.18, .43]	.53** [.42, .62]			
5. AS	.62** [.53, .70]	.71** [.64, .78]	.57** [.46, .65]	.34** [.22, .46]		
6. IM	.38** [.26, .49]	.34** [.21, .46]	.57** [.47, .66]	.43** [.31, .54]	.34** [.21, .45]	
7. CBTY	.47** [.35, .57]	.44** [.32, .54]	.55** [.44, .64]	.57** [.46, .65]	.36** [.23, .47]	.50** [.39, .60]

Note. N = 201 observations. M and SD are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation. The confidence interval is a plausible range of population correlations that could have caused the sample correlation (Cumming, 2014). * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$. LGO = Learning Goal Orientation; PP = Proactive Personality; FO = Feedback Orientation; EH = Expressed Humility; AS = Achievement Striving; IM = Instrumental Motive; CBTY = Coachability.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Measurement Models

To assess the fit of our measurement models and construct validity of coachability, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis. Confirming previous research, we tested a model of coachability as a second-order factor composed of feedback seeking behaviour, feedback receptivity, and coaching transfer (Weiss, 2019). We used covariance matrices as input. We assessed model fit with the chi-square statistic and common model fit indices such as, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; Steiger, 1990), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI; Tucker & Lewis, 1973), and comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990). Overall fit of the model was good, $\chi^2 = 213.75$, $p < .01$, RMSEA = .08 (90%CI = .06 to .09), TLI = .89 CFI = .90. This further supports previous work suggesting coachability as a second-order factor. Thus, we used the composite variable of coachability as the outcome variable.

Regression Results

We extended the measurement model by adding structural regression elements. Each predictor was simultaneously regressed onto the composite coachability variable. This method also facilitated modeling the covariance structures between predictors (Kline, 2012). Adding regressions minimally changed fit indices, chi-square = 388.44, RMSEA = .08 (90%CI = .07 to .09), TLI = .87, CFI = .9). All factor loadings were significant. We present unstandardized and standardized structural coefficients in Table 3. Analyses were conducted in R using the Lavaan package (Rosseel, 2019).

Significant positive relationships existed between Feedback Orientation ($\gamma = .609$, 95%CI = .40 to .82), Expressed Humility ($\gamma = .276$, 95%CI = .12 to .44), and the Instrumental Motive ($\gamma = .25$, 95%CI = .06 to .43). All other variables exhibited nonsignificant relationships with coachability. The first hypothesis pertained to the relationship between learning goal orientation and coachability. We failed to find support for Hypothesis 1 ($\gamma = .01$, 95%CI = -.08 to .10). The second hypothesis pertained to the relationship between feedback orientation and coachability. Feedback orientation exhibited a strong positive relationship with coachability ($\gamma = .609$, 95%CI = .40 to .82), supporting Hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 3 was not supported in that the relationship between proactive personality and coachability was non-significant ($\gamma = .07$, 95%CI = -.034 to .17). Hypothesis 4 suggested a positive correlation between achievement striving and coachability. Hypothesis 4 was not supported as there was a non-significant relationship between Achievement striving and coachability ($\gamma = .02$, 95%CI = -.14 to .17). Expressed humility exhibited a significant positive correlation with coachability ($\gamma = .276$, 95%CI = .12 to .44), lending support to Hypothesis 5. Finally, we found support for Hypothesis 6 given a significant positive relationship between the instrumental motive and coachability ($\gamma = .25$, 95%CI = .06 to .43).

Table 3: Regression Coefficients

Variable	LGO	PP	FO	EH	AS	IM
Unstandardized	.01	.07	0.61	0.28	0.02	0.25
	[-.08, .10]	[-.03, .17]	[.40, .82]	[.12, .44]	[-.14, .17]	[.06, .43]
Standardized	.02	.10	.57	.22	.02	.16

Note. LGO = Learning Goal Orientation; PP = Proactive Personality; FO = Feedback Orientation; EH = Expressed Humility; AS = Achievement Striving; IM = Instrumental Motive.

Discussion

In this paper, we sought to identify antecedents that influence coachability represented as a second order factor. Results show several of the proposed traits, motivations, and expressed behaviours impact individuals' coachability. When looking at the individual difference variables in combination,

several explain unique variance in coachability. The data demonstrates feedback orientation, expressed humility, and the instrumental feedback seeking motive positively and significantly impact coachability. These results indicate key underlying factors for an individual who operates in a highly coachable manner include an orientation towards feedback; a willingness to view one's self and abilities accurately and subsequently learn from multiple sources to affect behavioural change and performance and; an authentic motivation guiding proactive feedback seeking behaviours, such that these individuals solicit and internalize constructive feedback exclusively to accelerate development, achieve goals, and elevate performance.

In line with our hypotheses, the data indicates feedback orientation positively and significantly relates to coachability. Individuals holding strong feedback orientations value, demonstrate receptivity to, and feel accountable to act on the feedback provided (Linderbaum & Levy, 2010; London & Smither, 2002). This enhanced relationship with feedback coupled with the intention to implement the information received translates into elevated levels of coachability.

We also found expressed humility strongly and significantly impacts coachability. Individuals expressing humility seek more feedback from other individuals to increase the accuracy with which they see themselves and their abilities. (Anseel et al., 2015; MacDonald et al., 2013). Furthermore, these individuals demonstrate a keen receptivity to learnings, feedback, and new ideas from outside sources. To impact development and performance, individuals expressing high levels of humility implement the received information and, thus, operate in a highly coachable manner.

Additionally, we determined the instrumental feedback seeking motive significantly influences employee coachability. Thus, employees holding an authentic motivation toward feedback operate in a highly coachable manner. This occurs as they view feedback as a critical instrument and avenue through which they can capture the nuanced information necessary for goal achievement, enhanced development, and increased performance. As such, individuals possessing an instrumental feedback motive proactively seek, internalize, and subsequently apply performance-related feedback to elevate their job-related effectiveness.

In contrast, we posited individuals with learning goal orientations demonstrate elevated levels of coachability. The data does not support this assertion. These findings may emerge for a few reasons. For example, individuals with strong LGOs may seek feedback from sources outside their direct manager to receive critical performance related insights, such as soliciting information from colleagues or voluntarily attending a training session sponsored by the organisation.

Additionally, the data does not support our hypothesis postulating proactive personality positively relates to coachability. Evaluation of the PPS scale shows most items speak to a general proactive orientation across all contexts. Thus, the items do not exclusively tap into proactivity at work nor in relation to feedback or development. Researchers suggest contextualizing personality measures by adding conditions to items provides greater predictive power when investigating organisational phenomena (Ryan & Ployhart, 2014). Thus, these findings may stem from methodological issues regarding the nature of items utilised to assess proactive personality.

The data also did not support our hypothesis suggesting achievement striving positively relates to coachability. An explanation for this unexpected finding centers around the notion individuals extremely high in achievement striving may block out external feedback while in pursuit of their performance goals, as they view outside information as a distraction from the objective at hand. In other words, individuals high in achievement orientation may hold a myopic focus where they only see the goal ahead and neglect useful information from outside sources in the process, ultimately affecting the likelihood of goal attainment.

Overall, the trait, motivational, and behavioural antecedents of coachability uncovered in this research significantly advance the literature and our understanding of the individual differences influencing highly coachable individuals. Specifically, the findings in this study highlight the

foundational importance of a strong orientation toward and relationship with feedback. With increased levels of expressed humility and an authentic feedback motive, individuals seek, capture, and implement more accurate and comprehensive feedback from various sources to accelerate development, affect behavioural change, achieve challenging goals, and boost performance. In sum, this allows organisations to maximize coaching practices, elevate employee adaptability and effectiveness, and develop strong talent benches (Weiss & Merrigan, 2021).

Practical Implications

Given the billions of dollars organisations invest in coaching practices and developmental initiatives annually (ICF, 2020), understanding the likelihood of an employee engaging in the behaviours critical for coaching success ensures maximum return on those investments and facilitates the optimal construction of strong, robust coaching cultures. As such, selecting highly coachable talent in the hiring process optimizes the success of coaching practices and elevates organisational effectiveness. Furthermore, as research demonstrates the value of coachability outside of coaching dynamics (Ciuchta et al., 2018; Weiss & Merrigan, 2021), we recommend organisations – across industries and contexts – strongly consider implementing coachability as a core competency on which they evaluate current talent and assess prospective employees during hiring processes. This becomes especially critical in a rapidly-evolving environment where continuous improvement, agility, and building a strong talent pipeline form organisational imperatives.

Regarding adaptability, seventy-seven percent (77%) of HR practitioners and leaders report their organisation remains in a constant state of change, with goals, priorities, and strategies continuously shifting (ICF, 2018). While organisations consistently undergo change, research reveals only thirty-five (35%) of leaders effectively manage change and adapt to dynamic challenges (Neal, Boatman, & Watt, 2021). Thus, it appears clear organisations must improve the identification and selection of highly agile and adaptable talent to drive current and continued success in our rapidly evolving world, as these employees prove indispensable for organisational success and competitive advantage (Huang et al., 2014). This further highlights the critical value of employee coachability and suggests it may be a source of competitive advantage if organisations more intentionally and effectively identify highly coachable talent.

Additionally, as research demonstrates a strong positive impact of coachability on promotability (Weiss & Merrigan, 2021), it forms a key consideration for organisations focused on developing leaders and building strong talent benches. Recent global research indicates the top problem facing CEOs centers around developing the next generation of leaders. Exacerbating this issue, only eleven percent (11%) of global human resources leaders indicate their organisation boasts a strong bench to fill leadership roles, the lowest rate in the past decade (Neal et al., 2021). Thus, if organisations want to drive sustained success and achieve competitive advantage, it is vital they identify prospective candidates with leadership potential and elevate current employees' capabilities to accelerate their readiness for advanced roles. Across industries, many organisations employ emerging leader, leadership development, and high potential employee programs to expedite the development of employees' leadership capabilities, retain top talent, and build a strong bench to promote internal talent. As the essence of coachability centers around the proactive seeking of, keen receptivity to, and implementation of new and constructive information, it follows that highly coachable individuals will maximize these developmental opportunities that allow them to hone critical leadership skills and more quickly ascend into advanced roles. In all, given the importance of selecting and developing effective leaders, we suggest organisations focus on coachability in the hiring process and assess employees' coachability as part of the entry criteria for leadership development programs.

Furthermore, pinpointing key individual differences underlying coachability holds critical value in training and development contexts, especially in organisations focused on improving employees' skills to maximize coaching practices and cultures, increase agility and adaptability, and develop

effective leaders. Specifically, research highlights the value of elevating self-awareness to prompt the self-regulatory processes necessary to affect and sustain behavioural change and improvement (Ludwig, Brown, & Brewer, 2020). As such, organisations that endeavor to elevate the coachability skill sets of employees through targeted training initiatives should consider first bringing awareness to employees' dispositional patterns of thinking, feeling, and believing in relation to coachability, which influence subsequent behaviours. Uncovering these tendencies and boosting employees' awareness around how these natural patterns show up for them in the workplace enables individuals to understand their current state more deeply and subsequently self-regulate and modify behaviour to reach their desired state (e.g., behaving in a highly coachable manner). Coupling this elevated self-awareness with targeted training to increase employees' coachability behaviours and skills allows individuals to act in highly coachable ways and drive the individual and organisational outcomes critical for success and competitive advantage more effectively and consistently.

In sum, findings from this study equip organisations with insights necessary to identify coachable talent more accurately during hiring and selection processes. In doing so, organisations can maximize their coaching effectiveness and cultures, elevate their ability to handle large scale strategic and environmental change, develop strong leadership benches, and create and sustain competitive advantages. Additionally, the results of this study provide organisations with critical information to enhance the impact and sustainability of skills training centered around coachability.

Limitations / Future Directions

While this study advances the coaching and coachability bodies of literature, limitations and remaining questions exist. First, limitations of this research center around the cross-sectional, survey-based design utilised. The cross-sectional nature of this investigation hinders the ability to draw robust, causal inferences (Kozlowski, 2015). Additionally, survey-based methods require the cooperation of respondents, and the resulting findings rest on the assumption participants provide candid, accurate data (Hill, White, & Wallace, 2014). Thus, researchers suggest the perceptual and subjective nature of the ratings collected in survey-based studies may prove susceptible to response biases (e.g., social desirability, carelessness). If these biases emerge, they may negatively impact the strength of the data and subsequent findings (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). To avoid human biases when assessing coachability behaviours, objective markers of the manifestation of these behaviours form an optimal measurement approach for future research.

Advancing the coachability and coaching fields, we contend additional factors beyond those included in this study influence individuals' coachability. Results from this examination indicate a complex set of influences – trait, motivation, and expressed behavioural aspects – when determining the antecedents of coachability. Future research should tease out the nuance of the various drivers of coachability to further understand the influence of a broader spectrum of distinct underlying factors. For example, researchers may examine whether additional aspects of humility (e.g., intellectual humility) affect coachability. Additionally, while the data did not support the influence of proactive personality on coachability, future exploration should assess the relationship between proactive tendencies (e.g., future-orientation, curiosity) and employees' coachability. Furthermore, we suggest examining whether contextualizing proactive personality to more specifically focus on initiative in developmental, rather than general, contexts relates to coachability. To pinpoint additional factors, researchers may also employ qualitative methods to expand the richness of data collection and resulting insights.

Given the impact of coachability on critical organisational processes (e.g., coaching practices) and outcomes (e.g., coaching effectiveness, performance), we suggest future research focus on developing thorough approaches to identify and select coachable talent in the hiring process accurately and effectively. The current study uncovered antecedents to coachability, which provides

a fertile foundation upon which researchers can develop a psychometrically sound measure. In a research context, the development of a scale expands our ability to examine coachability in relation to other psychological phenomena (e.g., behaviours, outcomes) and at various levels of analysis (e.g., team level). For organisations, creating a scientifically rigorous quantitative assessment tool to capture candidates' standing on critical coachability factors allows companies to enhance hiring success while reducing bias and accelerate new hire contribution once selected into the company. In a training context, a coachability assessment enables employees and leaders to understand their propensities that influence their behaviours, which can uncover blind spots, elevate self-awareness, lead to quicker, more sustainable behavioural change (Ludwig et al., 2020), and ultimately elevate performance.

To expand our knowledge about the impact of coachability, we encourage researchers to examine how coachability operates within team contexts. Research on peer feedback seeking within teams found a positive relationship between seeking behaviours and team creativity (DeStobbelier, Ashford, & Zhang, 2020). While coachability encompasses behaviours beyond feedback seeking, this research sheds light on the potential impact of feedback-related processes on team outcomes. Thus, we encourage future researchers to determine team emergent states (e.g., cohesion), processes (e.g., knowledge sharing, collaboration), and outcomes (e.g., performance, viability) influenced by coachability. This may provide additional insights to elevate team functioning and effectiveness.

While individual differences formed the primary point of interest in this investigation, we believe multiple environmental factors likely impact individuals' coachability. As the success of coaching practices rely on both the coach and coachee, examining how the coach impacts a coachee's coachability – the interplay between coaching behaviours and coachability – will provide fruitful insights to enhance our understanding of coaching dynamics and cultures. Other factors related to the nature of feedback provided and relationship between the coach and coachee likely influence an individual's coachability expression. Furthermore, we expect the local team and overarching organisational cultures to impact coachability. For example, whether leaders and organisations create psychologically safe and feedback-encouraged environments. To fully grasp the mechanisms at play and capture a more comprehensive understanding of coachability, future research must broaden the consideration of factors (e.g., dyadic, contextual) impacting individuals' coachability.

Finally, the probable environmental factors (e.g., psychological safety, trust) affecting coachability likely hold unique implications for individuals across varying demographic backgrounds (e.g., minority groups). Historically, racial-ethnic minorities (e.g., Black Americans, Asian Americans) experience the workplace through a different lens than their majority group counterparts (e.g., White Americans; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2012). For example, research indicates Black and Latino Americans report significantly lower levels of happiness, job satisfaction, and perceived acceptance and belonging at work than White Americans (Greenhaus et al., 1990; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2012). These disparate experiences suggest racial-ethnic minorities encounter novel challenges in the workplace and are uniquely impacted by environmental features within organisations. Thus, environmental factors that hinder or promote an individual's willingness and ability to proactively seek, receive, and enact feedback likely operate differently for racial-ethnic minority groups. The possible variance in coachability behaviours exhibited between racial-ethnic majority and minority groups may explain differences in the attainment of critical outcomes (e.g., promotability). To gain a more holistic understanding of coachability and ensure a level playing field for all employees, future research must examine how coachability operates across individuals of varying backgrounds (e.g., racial, ethnic) and what specific environmental factors impact coachability for each respective group.

Conclusion

In closing, research demonstrates coachability as a critical predictor of individual, coaching practice, and organisational effectiveness. In this study, we contributed to the coaching and coachability literatures by identifying key underlying individual differences influencing individuals' coachability, which proves vital for achieving critical organisational outcomes. As such, we encourage organisations to leverage these insights, and those highlighted by other recent coachability investigations, to select for coachability and develop current employees to highly coachable levels through targeted skills training. To advance the literature and organisational practices around coachability, we suggest future researchers expand on these findings by developing a psychometrically sound measure, assessing the impact of coachability across levels of analysis, and examining the impact of coachability on additional critical organisational outcomes.

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