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The *ICPR* is an international publication with a focus on the theory, practice and research in the field of coaching psychology. Submission of academic articles, systematic reviews and other research reports which support evidence-based practice are welcomed. The *ICPR* may also publish conference reports and papers given at the British Psychological Society Special Group in Coaching Psychology (BPS SGCP) and Australian Psychological Society Interest Group in Coaching Psychology (APS IGCP) conferences, notices and items of news relevant to the International Coaching Psychology Community.

Case studies and book reviews will be considered. The *ICPR* is published by the BPS SGCP in association with the APS IGCP.

1. Circulation

The circulation of the *ICPR* is worldwide. It is available in hardcopy and PDF format. Papers are invited and encouraged from authors throughout the world. It is available free in paper and PDF format to members of the BPS SGCP, and free in PDF format to APS IGCP members as a part of their annual membership.

2. Length

Papers should normally be no more than 6000 words, although the Co-Editors retain discretion to publish papers beyond this length in cases where the clear and concise expression of the scientific content requires greater length.

3. Peer review

This publication operates a policy of anonymous peer review. Papers will initially be desk reviewed by the editorial team, to confirm they meet the scope and focus of the journal. At the sole discretion of the editor/s the paper will be sent to two independent reviewers, with the aim of a review within 21 days. The reviewers will not be aware of the identity of the review and any markings, references, etc., will be removed from the paper to ensure the anonymity of the author/s. Authors are asked to remove any information about the authors, including self-citations, acknowledgements, affiliations, etc., to ensure a blind review. These can be added following the review if the paper is accepted.

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International Coaching Psychology Review



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Editorial

Yi-Ling Lai

IT IS wonderful to return from my maternity leave and see the new issue of ICPR to be composed and presented nicely. We are pleased to present four fascinating studies in coaching psychology and one book review in digital communication with clients who receive learning and development interventions (e.g. coaching) in this issue. During my maternity leave period, I encountered several enormous and unprecedented challenges in life and my academic career. However, I also had the opportunity to reflect on several topics which have been intensively studied in coaching recently. For instance, I started to appreciate a simple self-coaching practice through mindfulness meditation before the little one woke up. In addition, a short walk at the seafront (or any outdoor exercises) to refresh my mind has also become my new way of self-coaching. Therefore, in the past ten months, I began to see the coaching conversation can be a day-to-day activity to support life or workplace well-being and self-efficacy.

In this issue, I am pleased to see my reflections on coaching have attracted more coaching experts' (both in research and practice) attention, and rigorous studies were carried out. This first paper by Ben Van Den Assem, Victor Dulewicz and Jonathan Passmore investigated the impact of mindfulness meditation practice on post-graduate coaching students. Their study discovered the increase in mindfulness and improvement of their academic achievement after a ten-week meditation training programme. The second paper by Alexandra Sarah Burn and Jonathan Passmore drew upon Attention Restoration Theory (ART) which explains why nature enables the brain to restore directed attention, improve cognitive capabilities and relieve stress into outdoor coaching practice. Their Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) indicated that taking

coaching conversations outside make positive impacts on individuals' feelings and emotions. This third paper by Sophie Cliff focused on a self-support approach in coaching to facilitate greater career development. This study applied theories in positive psychology to facilitate the millennial generation's career confidence in potential career change. Last, but not the least, a systematic review conducted by David Tee, Kantz Misra, Gareth-Roderique-Davies and David Shearer in coaching client characteristics is presented. Distinguishing from recent other reviews in coaching literature, this paper outlines three most frequently client factors: willingness or motivation to change, commitment to the relationship and process and openness can be used as predictor variables in the coaching process. Furthermore, we include one book review in this issue. Tia Moin reviewed *'Digital Body Language'* by Erica Dahwan and indicated that the digital landscape is another layer of complexity and core skills of listening and empathy discussed in this book are transferable into coaching setting.

As always, we welcome contributions from all coaching researchers and practitioners, please submit your empirical studies, theoretical discussions or project reports (4500 to 6000 words) and feel free to contact us if you have any suggestions and thoughts regarding the future improvement of ICPR (ICPRsubmissions@bps.org.uk). In addition, we have extended the submission deadline of the Special Issue: Coaching in Education to 23 December 2022. Please visit the following link <https://www.bps.org.uk/publications/international-coaching-psychology-review> for details. I hope you enjoy this issue.

Dr Yi-Ling Lai

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The impact of mindfulness meditation training and practice on post-graduate coaching students

Ben Van Den Assem, Victor Dulewicz & Jonathan Passmore

This study aims to examine the insights and development of post-graduate trainee-coaches engaged in mindfulness meditation training and how mindfulness meditation contributed to their development and performance.

Methods: Data were gathered from 67 trainee-coaches who undertook a 10-week program. The Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) measured pre- and post-training results. Opinions of the training and a daily diary log system to track the time each spent in mindfulness meditation practice were used to capture the impact of the training and each trainee's contribution to the development of their own mindfulness. Ten hypotheses were proposed.

Results: An increase in mindfulness in trainee-coaches was found for the majority (85 per cent) after the practice sessions. A large majority (78 per cent) were positive about the training and practice and had found it beneficial. Those with higher levels of mindfulness, and those whose mindfulness had improved, tended to have more favourable opinions of mindfulness, showing positive effects of practice in contrast to those with lower mindfulness. These and a positive relationship between increases in mindfulness during training and the days available spent practising mindfulness are the important findings. Three hypotheses were supported. These indicated higher FFMQ scores in the students' mindfulness meditation after the training; relationships between trainees' FFMQ pre- and post-test scores and available days spent practicing; and opinion of their mindfulness meditation practice and the days available spent practicing. Two other hypotheses were partially supported: Relationships between FFMQ pre- and post-scores and trainees' opinions about their mindfulness meditation practice; and between FFMQ post- and pre-scores and trainee academic achievement on the academic module in which mindfulness meditation was taught and practised. Academic performance was less directly related to mindfulness meditation training and practice and there were no significant differences between males and females on measures relating to the training and practice.

Discussion: Findings on increases in mindfulness, opinions of mindfulness practice and academic performance are explained or generally supported by the literature. Practical applications, limitations and further research are also covered. The importance of training is presented in terms of the development of insights and the mindfulness skills of attention, presence, empathy, self-regulation and non-judgement, the impact of which are fundamental in mindfulness coaching.

Conclusion: Mindfulness meditation training of trainee-coaches complements and aids the development of professional and personal skills. The training offers opportunities for greater interpersonal insights, and the use of mindfulness meditation in coaching practice.

Keywords: Mindfulness meditation training; Practice; Coaching; Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire, Diary logs; Academic performance.

THE LITERATURE covers studies concerning university training programs based on mindfulness practice in coaching (Cavanagh & Spence, 2013; Collard & Walsh, 2008; Deiorio et al., 2016; Kemp, 2016; Lech et al., 2018; Passmore & Marianetti, 2007; Virgili,

2013). However, Good et al. (2016, p. 135) report there has been little attempt to consider 'the active ingredients' of mindfulness training programs and, according to de Bruin et al. (2015), few studies have been conducted on mindfulness in higher education.

Why is mindfulness training relevant to coaches

This study aims to examine the insights and development of post-graduate trainee-coaches engaged in mindfulness meditation training and how it contributed to their development and performance in practice. Mindfulness training is regarded to be helpful and relevant for coaches in preparing them for coaching sessions, maintaining focus and staying emotionally detached therein, and in teaching mindfulness to their clients (Passmore & Marianetti, 2007). These authors considered the teaching of it would include areas such as concentration, awareness and acceptance, which are also supported by various definitions of mindfulness (Van Den Assem & Passmore, 2022). Furthermore, suggestions to integrate mindfulness and coaching for practising coaches has also been proposed (Virgili, 2013; Kemp, 2016) as has the integration of mindfulness training and health coaching (Spence et al., 2008). These integrations are considered achievable through the use of interpretive qualities such as presence, attentiveness and openness, and training, to develop other skills such as attention, empathy, self regulation and non-judgement, which are relevant to the quality of coaching relationship (Virgili, 2013).

The Five Facets Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ), which is used in this study to measure the impact of the mindfulness training and practice, is based on these concepts as well, e.g. awareness, noticing, non-judging, non reactivity (Baer et al., 2008), as is the International Coaching Federation (ICF) core competence Maintaining Presence. Specifically, the emphasis of this ICF competency is on coaches being focused, regulating their emotions, creating space for clients and the ability to cultivate learning and growth, in terms of awareness, insight or learning with respect to their worldview and behaviours. (International Coaching Federation (ICF), 2019). In addition, Cox's (2013) conceptualization of the coaching process which includes an emphasis on the

present and presence provides additional support to this ICF competency, as does the authors preliminary findings with respect to presence as the enabler of the present in a mindfulness and coaching supervision context (Van Den Assem, Passmore & Dulewicz, 2022).

The present study follows through on Virgili's (2013) work noted above and describes what the active ingredients of mindfulness training and practice are for coach trainees and to demonstrate a case for the integration of these for mindfulness coaching practice (Kemp, 2016).

Definitions of mindfulness and mindfulness meditation

The definitions described below are supportive of, and compatible with the facets of the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ), which is the main instrument used to gather data for this study. Baer et al. (2004, p.9) note that mindfulness 'is generally defined to include focusing one's attention in a nonjudgmental or accepting way on the experience occurring in the present moment'. Brown et al. (2003, pp.822–848) defined mindfulness as 'an enhanced attention to an awareness of current experience or present reality'. These definitions support Hölzel et al's. (2011, p.538) position on mindfulness meditation, which 'encompasses focusing attention on the experience of thoughts, emotions, and body sensations, simply observing them as they arise and pass away', which also describe aspects of the facets of the FFMQ.

Mindfulness meditation training has been shown to enhance present moment awareness by teaching participants to notice distractions and repeatedly bring attention back to the object of meditation. This may increase awareness of ongoing cognitive states, which improve attention, reduce mindwandering and improve cognitive tasks and mindfulness (Zeidan et al., 2010). Although various exercises are prescribed during this mindfulness meditation training, no specific goals are set. Participants only

observe whatever is happening in the moment without judgement (Baer, 2003). Those who have completed mindfulness training indicated improvements in mindfulness, depressive symptoms, rumination, memory and sustained attention (Chambers et al., 2008).

Impact of mindfulness meditation training and practice

Good et al. (2016), Tang et al. (2015) and Zeidan et al. (2010) report that the effectiveness of minimum mindfulness training may occur after only a matter of minutes, brain changes in three hours and structural brain changes in 11 hours of training. Brief mindfulness meditation and training has been reported to significantly effect cognitive tasks that require sustained attention and executive processing efficiency, reduce fatigue, anxiety and improved mindfulness, higher-order executive processes, visuo-spatial processing and verbal fluency (Zeidan et al., 2010), and students' retention of information from lectures (Ramsburg & Youmans, 2014). It has been reported that a 10-minute-per-day fully automated mindful awareness training program improved grades in reading and science (Bakosh et al., 2016). However, an important qualifier to these effects would appear to be with respect to when the meditation practice occurs. According to Chan & Woollacott (2007) and Soler et al. (2014), these effects appear related to frequent or regular rather than irregular or infrequent mediation.

Finally, both Manuel et al. (2017) and Soler et al. (2014) suggest that objective indices such as frequency and duration of meditation practice may be useful in assessing practice and that further research consider these in terms of practice outcomes.

Academic performance and mindfulness meditation training and practice

Although some studies revealed a significant direct relationship between mindfulness and academic performance, others did not (Caballero et al., 2019; Chiang & Sumell,

2019; Miralles-Armenteros et al., 2019; Lin & Mai, 2018; Teodorczuk, 2013). As a result, the relationship between academic performance and mindfulness does not appear to be a direct one.

Bennett et al. (2018) suggest that mindfulness improves academic performance because it 'is purely a product of (i) cognitive enhancement (i.e. working memory, information recall and attention) and (ii) personality and individual differences (such as resiliency and mindfulness)'. Lin & Mai (2018, p.373) report 'mindfulness meditation intervention can help in-class learning' and 'significantly improves short-term academic performance but does not significantly improve long-term academic performance'.

However, Zeidan et al.'s. (2010), McConville, et al.'s. (2017) and Boo et al.'s. (2019) studies have noted that various processes underpin the effect of mindfulness on academic performance. These include coping with stress, enhancing self-awareness, attention, thinking, feelings and behaviours and reducing distressing thoughts and rumination. Miralles-Armenteros et al. (2019) note that these relationships are not direct but with mindfulness may facilitate students' compassion, which may in turn improve feelings of closeness, connectedness, trust and support, which consequently can lead to increased levels of engagement and academic performance.

Objectives of the study

The purpose is to examine the insights and development of trainee-coaches engaged in a post graduate mindfulness meditation training program. The literature, in particular Good et al. (2016) and de Bruin (2015), helped to focus the need for this study and shape its three research questions: (i) What is the impact of mindfulness meditation training on post graduate trainee-coaches in terms of practising mindfulness meditation; (ii) How does the training effect their opinions of the practice of mindfulness meditation; and (iii) How does their training impact on the academic

marks they received for the module. These questions in turn served to frame four areas of focus to guide our research and develop ten related hypotheses: (i) the impact of a mindfulness meditation training program on trainee-coaches (Hypothesis 1), (ii) their opinion of the training (H 2,3,4), (iii) the time they spent practising mindfulness meditation during their training (H 5,6), and (iv) their academic performance (Marks achieved) related to their training (H 7,8, 9,10).

Hypotheses

‘...if there was a strong theoretical basis for the research, then the researcher may derive hypotheses and empirical generalizations and begin to collect evidence in a structured way for the purposes of formal testing’ (Remenyi et al., 1998, p.142).

The rationale for the development of the hypotheses was based on major areas of interest and connections between these as identified in the literature above with respect to the training and practice of mindfulness. One of these areas selected for this research was to identify and understand the *active ingredients of the mindfulness training and practice program*. It included concepts such as the awareness, the present, attention, non-judgement, which were reflected in published work and definitions of mindfulness (Baer, 2003; Baer, et al., 2004; Brown et al., 2003; Hölzel et al., 2011; Zeidan et al., 2010). Contributions with respect to the *impact of the training and its effectiveness*, the second area of focus of the hypotheses was provided by several additional sources (Good et al., 2016; Tang et al., 2015; Zeidan et al., 2010; Ramsburg & Youmans, 2014; Bakosh et al., 2016; Chan & Woollacott, 2007; Soler et al., 2014; Manuel et al., 2017). Finally, contributions with respect to the *impact of mindfulness on academic performance* were offered by a number of sources (Caballero et al., 2019; Chiang & Sumell, 2019; Miralles-Armenteros et al., 2019; Lin & Mai, 2018; Teodorczuk, 2013; Bennett et al., 2018; Lin & Mai, Zeidan et al., 2010; McConville,

et al., 2017; Boo et al., 2019). Based on these contributions from the literature, the hypotheses were formulated and expanded to reflect additional related interests and themes from the literature above, and are presented with the related cited literature against each one below.

H1. The majority of the students will have a higher post-module than pre-module FFMQ score. (Baer et al., 2006, p.36, 2008, p. 329; Zeidan et al., 2010, p.603; Chambers et al., 2008, p.303).

H2. There is a significant positive relationship between FFMQ scores and opinion of practice (Baer et al., 2006, p. 36, 2008, p.329; Good et al., 2016; Tang et al., 2010; Zeidan et al., 2010, p.597)

H3. There is a significant positive relationship between time (minutes per day) spent practicing mindfulness and opinion of practice. (Manuel et al., 2017, pp.1,5; Soler et al., 2014, p.5; Chan & Woollacott, 2007, p.656).

H4. There is a significant positive relationship between days (per cent of total available) spent practicing mindfulness and opinion of practice. (Manuel et al., 2017, pp.1,5; Soler et al., 2014, p.5; Chan & Woollacott, 2007, p.656).

H5. There is a significant positive relationship between FFMQ scores and time (minutes per day) spent practising mindfulness. (Manuel et al., 2017, pp.1,5; Soler et al., 2014, p.5; Chan & Woollacott, 2007, p.656).

H6. There is a significant positive relationship between FFMQ scores and the days (per cent of total available) spent practising mindfulness. (Manuel et al., 2017, pp.1,5; Soler et al., 2014, p.5; Chan & Woollacott, 2007, p.656).

H7. There is a significant positive relationship between FFMQ scores and academic achievement. (Zeiden et al., 2010, pp.597, 602, 603; Miralles-Armenteros et al., 2019, pp.7,8; Lin & Mai, 2018, p.373; Chiang & Sumell, 2019; Boo et al., 2019, p.288; Teodorczuk (2013, p.ii).

H8 There is a significant positive relationship between time (minutes per day)

spent practising mindfulness and academic achievement. (Manuel et al., 2017, pp.1,5; Soler et al., 2014, p.5; Chan & Woollacott, 2007, p.656).

H9. There is a significant positive relationship between days (per cent of total available) spent practising mindfulness and academic achievement. (Manuel et al., 2017, pp.1,5; Soler et al., 2014, p.5; Chan & Woollacott, 2007, p.656).

H10. There is a significant positive relationship between opinion of mindfulness meditation practice and academic achievement. (Miralles-Armenteros et al., 2019, pp.7,8; Lin & Mai, 2018, p.373; Chiang & Sumell, 2019; Boo et al., 2019, p.288).

Method

Participants

The research was conducted with post graduate trainee-coaches who attended a module on neuroscience and psychology within a post-graduate coaching programme in a UK business school, in which they engaged in the training and practice of mindfulness meditation. The total number of these trainee coaches who commenced training was 107, 67 of whom completed all the requisite forms; 35 in 2019, 10 in 2020 and 22 in 2021. The disruption caused by Covid-19 had reduced the number available in 2020 and 2021. The average age of the sample was 48.5 years with a standard deviation of 6.6. The gender ratio was 61 per cent female and 39 per cent male.

Procedure

Three cohorts participated, spread over three years (2019, 2020 and 2021, each over a ten-week period). They took part in a four-hour class session on the first day of the training on the theory and practice of mindfulness. This was conducted by two senior trainers skilled in the practice and theory of mindfulness coaching from the academic and practitioner communities. This class session was followed by a 15-minute guided practice during the second and third

days of that week. During the second week of class the following month, each of the first three days were devoted to 15 minutes of guided practice, totalling 45 minutes. In the last month of class, the first four days were each given to 15 minutes of guided practice, for a total of one hour.

In addition to the class sessions, trainee-coaches continued to practice mindfulness meditation at home and maintained their personal daily diary logs recording the time in minutes practised on a daily basis for the duration of the training. During this time they were also contacted individually by the researchers and program staff to remind them of the benefit of recording their mindfulness exercises in their logs soon after they completed these. At the final workshop of each cohort the second FFMQ form was administered and later collected along with the daily diary logs.

Measures and data collection

The data sources used included pre- and post-training scores from the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ), trainee-coaches' opinions about their training and practice of mindfulness meditation, daily diary logs of their personal mindfulness meditation practice at home, as well as the students' age, gender and academic achievement, i.e. Marks obtained on the neuroscience and psychology module in which the mindfulness meditation training occurred.

Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire

Since the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) provides a comprehensive source to measure mindfulness (Bergomi et al., 2013; de Bruin et al., 2012; Gherardi-Donato et al., 2020; Sauer et al., 2013) and examines 'a greater range of the facets of mindfulness than others' (Baer et al., 2006, p.36), it was specifically selected to measure the impact of mindfulness meditation training. 'Meditation is significantly and positively correlated with four of the FFMQ mindfulness facets (all but acting

with awareness)’...and ‘most mindfulness facets were significantly related to meditation experience and to psychological symptoms and wellbeing’ (Baer et al., 2008, pp.329, 336). Participants completed the long version (39 questions) of FFMQ before (pre) their mindfulness training and practice commenced and as well as a second FFMQ long version after (post) upon its completion.

In an attempt to operationalize mindfulness FFMQ integrates a number of different instruments and produces a five-factor (facet) solution:

- *‘Observing’* includes noticing or attending to internal and external experiences, such as sensations, cognitions, emotions, sights, sounds, and smells.
- *‘Describing’* refers to labeling internal experiences with words.
- *‘Acting with awareness’* includes attending to one’s activities of the moment and can be contrasted with behaving mechanically while attention is focused elsewhere (often called automatic pilot).
- *‘Nonjudging’* of inner experience refers to taking a nonevaluative stance toward thoughts and feelings.
- *‘Nonreactivity’* to inner experience is the tendency to allow thoughts and feelings to come and go, without getting caught up in or carried away by them’ (Baer et al., 2008, p.330).

FFMQ pre- and post-meditation training measures provide the data to test Hypothesis 1 in terms of the impact of the mindfulness training conducted during this study; H2 regarding the trainee-coaches’ opinions of the mindfulness meditation practice; H5 and 6 on frequency and time spent practicing; and H7 academic marks.

Students’ opinions of the benefit of mindfulness meditation training

All students who participated were asked at the end of their training once they had completed the second FFMQ to comment

in writing on how beneficial the mindfulness meditation training was in terms of their practice of mindfulness meditation. All provided written comments. Their qualitative responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale, from 1 being not helpful/beneficial through to 5 being very helpful/beneficial. Two experienced researchers rated the students’ responses independently and, where differences or disagreements occurred, these were discussed and a final rating agreed.

Daily diary logs of home mindfulness meditation practice

Each trainee-coach used a well-known research device, a daily diary/log, to record the time in minutes each day they spent practising mindfulness meditation at home over the three-month period of the mindfulness meditation training (Carmody & Baer, 2008; Lloyd et al., 2018). The logs provided the data to test H5 and 6 in terms of the time spent practising mindfulness meditation, H3 and 4 with respect to the students’ opinions on their training and H8 and 9 on academic performance.

Academic performance

Academic performance (i.e. assignment Mark obtained) on the neuroscience and psychology module was a variable which was related to trainee-coaches’ performance with respect to training and practice of mindfulness meditation. The focus of the assignment for the module was to choose and critically review a cognitive behavioural model approach, which included mindfulness coaching.

Demographic variables

Gender and age data were collected and related to all other measures noted above. In the relevant studies in the literature, gender was more frequently used than age, and gender differences with respect to mindfulness-based interventions were found in one study (Rojiani et al., 2017).

Table 1: Post minus Pre FFMQ score Percentage Changes and FFMQ 1 vs 2 t-test Results.

Total & Subscales	Negative %	Equal %	Positive %	t-test	t	Sig.
Total Score	15	0	85		69.87	0.01
Observe	6	9	85		48.54	0.01
Describe	28	10	61		46.75	0.01
Awareness	30	5	66		49.88	0.01
Nonjudging	27	10	63		39.16	0.01
Nonreacting	16	10	73		44.56	0.01
N=67					df=66	

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) (Field, 2018) was used to analyse the data and to test the hypotheses, specifically Pearson product-moment correlation and Mann-Whitney t-test.

Results

Three tables are presented and explained, with key results relating to the hypotheses emphasised. Table 1 shows the percentage changes between post and pre-FFMQ total and facet scores. Percentage change figures are normally used in such cases and enable direct comparisons between scale scores to be made, not possible when using raw scores. Positive means an increase and Negative a decrease in score. On Total Score, 85 per cent showed an increase and 15 per cent a decrease in score. On the facets, between 61 per cent and 85 per cent recorded an increase and between 6 per cent and 30 per cent a decrease, with Observe showing the largest increase.

In order to determine if these results are significantly different, a one-sample t-test was conducted to compare Pre- and Post-FFMQ total and facet scores. Table 1 shows that all differences were highly significant. In addition, all Post-FFMQ mean scores were higher than Pre mean scores. Overall, these findings reveal clear support for H1.

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlations with significance levels between the variables:

Time Spent (Average minutes per day, Min/Day) and percentage of days available (% Days) spent practising; ratings of Opinions on the practice; academic performance (Ac Marks); and FFMQ total and facet scores Pre (1), Post (2) and Post minus Pre (PP); and age of participants.

All correlations between FFMQ and Time Spent on practice were not statistically significant. These findings reject H5. Regarding Days spent practising, all correlations with Pre FFMQ were not significant. However, correlations with Post FFMQ total score and all facets except Describe were significant. Furthermore, Post minus Pre FFMQ total score and two facets, Observe and Nonjudging, were significant. Therefore, these findings provide some support for H6. Those who spent more days practicing were more mindful (i.e. attained higher scores) after practice.

The correlation between opinion of practice and time spent practising was not significant and so H3 is rejected. However, the correlation between opinion of practice and days spent practising was significant and so H4 is supported. Those who spend more days on practice appear to have a higher opinion of that practice.

Ratings on participants' opinions of their practice show a similar pattern. While only two facets showed significant correlations between opinions and Pre FFMQ, Post FFMQ total score and four facets (all except Describe) showed significant relationships. Furthermore, Post minus Pre FFMQ total

Table 2: Correlations between Diary Log, Opinions, Academic Mark, Age, Experience, FFMQ.

	Mins/Day	% Days	Opinions	Ac Marks	Age
Total FFMQ1	0.060	-0.024	0.172	0.256**	0.025
Observe1	0.134	0.070	0.212*	0.182*	-0.020
Describe1	0.010	-0.080	-0.046	0.230*	0.012
Aware1	-0.051	-0.099	0.175	0.122	0.003
Nonjudging1	0.088	-0.015	0.059	0.190*	0.097
Nonreacting1	0.024	0.072	0.236*	0.138	-0.043
Total FFMQ2	0.112	0.393**	0.401**	0.231*	-0.074
Observe2	0.045	0.218*	0.370**	0.134	-0.157
Describe2	-0.023	0.004	-0.005	0.182	-0.076
Aware2	0.015	0.258*	0.395**	0.133	-0.088
Nonjudging2	0.167	0.486**	0.316**	0.162	0.077
Nonreacting2	0.149	0.259*	0.248*	0.150	-0.023
Total Post - Pre	0.041	0.416**	0.212*	-0.017	-0.113
ObservePP	-0.131	0.210	0.232*	-0.066	-0.118
DescribePP	-0.047	0.134	0.066	-0.112	-0.094
AwarePP	0.070	0.348**	0.179	0.074	-0.142
NonjudgingPP	0.067	0.462**	0.244*	-0.031	-0.038
NonreactingPP	0.154	0.229*	-0.003	0.063	-0.045
Mins Per Day	1	0.403**	0.155	0.071	0.220*
% Days	0.403**	1	0.469**	-0.051	0.092
Opinions	0.155	0.469**	1	0.124	0.073
Academic Marks	0.071	-0.051	0.124	1	0.060
Age	.220*	0.092	0.073	0.06	1
N	59	59	67	65	67

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

score and two facets, Observe and Nonjudging, were significantly related. Therefore, these findings provide some support for H2. Those with more favourable opinions tended to be more mindful (i.e. attained higher scores) after practice.

Turning to the correlations with academic performance (Ac Marks), Pre FFMQ total score and three facets, Observe, Describe and Nonjudging, were all significantly correlated with Ac Marks, as was Post FFMQ total score. However, not one of the Post minus Pre scores

was significant. Therefore, these findings provide partial support for H7. Those who achieved higher Marks tended to be more mindful (i.e. attained higher scores).

Correlations between Academic Marks and both Time and Days spent practicing were not significant and so H8 and H9 were rejected. Furthermore, opinion of the practice was not significantly correlated with Academic Marks and so H10 is also rejected. Therefore, amount of, and opinion about, practice do not appear to influence academic performance.

Finally, Age was only significantly correlated with one variable, Time Spent practising. Correlations with Frequency and Opinions of Practice, and Academic Marks were not significant. Therefore, Age does not appear to influence the key variables.

In order to explore the coach trainees' opinions more deeply, they were rated independently by the first two authors on a 5-point Likert scale from *very useful* to being of *no benefit*. The trainees' ratings were then split into two similar sized groups. Those with high, favourable opinions of their practice with ratings of 4 and 5, 46 per cent of the sample; and those with lower, less favourable opinions with ratings of 1, 2 & 3, 54 per cent. t-tests, which compared mean scores of the two groups on all the other variables, were conducted. Results are presented in Table 3.

There were no significant differences on Pre FFMQ mean scores between the two groups whereas Post FFMQ total score and four facet scores (all except Describe) showed significant differences, four of which were highly significant. On Post minus Pre FFMQ there were significant differences between mean group scores on Total Score and the facet Nonjudging. These findings are broadly in line with the relevant correlation results and provide further support for H2.

There was not a significant difference between groups on Time Spent practicing, thus providing more evidence for the rejection of H3. However, there was a highly significant difference between groups on Days Spent practising. These findings are in line with the relevant correlation results and provide further support for H4.

There was a significant difference between groups on Marks attained. Those with more favourable opinions of their practice achieved significantly higher Marks than those with less favourable opinions. This finding contrasts with the correlation found between rating of opinion and marks, which was not significant, but do provide partial support for H10.

In summary, the findings confirm the importance of training in the development

of insights and skills with respect to attention, presence, empathy, self-regulation and non-judgement, the impact of which are also considered by the literature to be fundamental in mindfulness coaching. An increase in mindfulness in trainee-coaches was found for the majority of the trainee coaches after the practice sessions. A large majority of trainee-coaches (52; 78 per cent) were positive about the training and practice and had found it beneficial. Those with higher levels of mindfulness, and those whose mindfulness had improved, tended to have more favourable opinions of mindfulness, showing positive effects of practice in contrast to those with lower mindfulness. A positive relationship between increases in mindfulness during training and the days available spent practising mindfulness are important findings.

Discussion

Why the training and regular practice of mindfulness is useful for coaches

Increases in mindfulness

The unifying theme of this study is the place of mindfulness meditation in the development of trainee-coaches. Improvements in mindfulness were found after the practice sessions. The results showing an increase in mindfulness for post- minus pre-FFMQ scores for the majority of the students, a finding supported by de Bruin et al. (2015).

Frequency of, commitment to and favourable opinion of practice

The importance of regular mindfulness meditation practice resonates with the trainee-coaches' opinion about mindfulness practice. Although no significant relationship was found for them between minutes of practice per day and their opinion about the practice, there was a significant positive relationship between the number of days spent practicing, indicative of frequent practice, and their opinion. Therefore, it is not the amount of time spent meditating but rather

Table 3: t-test: Opinion Rating Groups 1/2/3 vs 4/5 on all other variables.

	Opinion	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
Total FFMQ1	Low	36	120.8	14.50	-1.55	65	0.13
	High	31	127.6	21.09			
Observe1	Low	36	24.3	4.75	-1.82	65	0.07
	High	31	26.5	5.07			
Describe1	Low	36	28.3	5.51	-0.32	65	0.75
	High	31	28.7	6.38			
Aware1	Low	36	23.6	4.69	-1.31	65	0.19
	High	31	25.3	5.61			
Nonjudging1	Low	36	25.4	6.50	-0.89	65	0.38
	High	31	26.9	6.53			
Nonreacting1	Low	36	19.2	4.00	-0.99	65	0.33
	High	31	20.2	4.74			
Total FFMQ2	Low	37	131.2	13.47	-4.36	66	0.00
	High	31	146.6	15.61			
Observe2	Low	37	27.7	4.85	-2.87	66	0.01
	High	31	31.0	4.54			
Describe2	Low	37	29.9	5.38	-1.17	66	0.25
	High	31	31.4	5.38			
Aware2	Low	37	25.3	4.21	-3.50	66	0.00
	High	31	28.8	3.98			
Nonjudging2	Low	37	27.0	6.34	-3.70	66	0.00
	High	31	32.1	4.72			
Nonreacting2	Low	37	21.4	3.69	-1.98	66	0.05
	High	31	23.3	4.40			
Total Post - Pre	Low	36	10.5	15.30	-2.18	65	0.03
	High	31	18.9	16.46			
ObservePP	Low	36	3.5	3.32	-1.20	65	0.23
	High	31	4.5	3.37			
DescribePP	Low	36	1.4	4.04	-1.32	65	0.19
	High	31	2.68	3.70			
AwarePP	Low	36	1.72	4.57	-1.52	65	0.13
	High	31	3.48	4.91			

Note on Opinion Rating: Low Group 1,2,3, 54.4%; High Group 4 & 5, 45.6%.

Table 3: t-test: Opinion Rating Groups 1/2/3 vs 4/5 on all other variables. (Continued).

	Opinion	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
NonjudgingPP	Low	36	1.53	6.12	-2.41	65	0.02
	High	31	5.23	6.41			
NonreactingPP	Low	36	2.31	3.75	-0.86	65	0.39
	High	31	3.06	3.44			
Mins Per Day	Low	31	11.05	4.06	-1.86	57	0.07
	High	28	13.64	6.47			
% Days	Low	31	43.09	25.72	-4.41	57	0.00
	High	28	71.97	24.46			
Academic Marks	Low	34	64.82	8.02	-1.97	63	0.05
	High	31	68.45	7.01			

Note on Opinion Rating: Low Group 1,2,3, 54.4%; High Group 4 & 5, 45.6%.

the frequency of the meditation as a percentage of the number of days available for practice which is significant. This relationship suggests that those who practise regularly are also more likely to be more committed or motivated to the practice of mindfulness meditation than those who do not practise regularly and that this commitment would appear to be reflected in their opinion also about their practice.

Those trainee-coaches with higher post FFMQ2 scores tended to have more favourable opinions of practice, as did those with higher change scores (FFMQPP). The implication of these findings is that those with higher levels of mindfulness, and those whose mindfulness had improved, tended to have more favourable opinions, showing positive effects of practice in contrast to those with lower mindfulness. Numerous positive personal written comments from trainee-coaches offered clear affirmations of how mindfulness meditation training had helped them in their practice of mindfulness meditation. Although a large majority of trainee-coaches (52; 78 per cent) were positive about the mindfulness meditation training and practice and had found it beneficial, a few (15; 22 per cent) offered fewer positive comments.

The results on improvements of mindfulness and on trainee-coaches opinions relate well with the findings indicating a positive relation-

ship between post (but not pre) FFMQ, and significant increases in scores and the days available spent practising mindfulness. These are important findings. Regular mindfulness meditation practice for shorter periods of time is more effective than intermittent or infrequent practice for longer periods of time, findings supported by Soler et al. (2014), cited above. These results suggest that trainee-coaches who choose to practice more frequently may already be committed to developing or maintaining their mindfulness skills than those who do not. As such, those who may be more committed are also likely to be more motivated to use mindfulness meditation skills in their practice and can see that they have a place in their present or future coaching practice. Some may already have had an appreciation of mindfulness meditation prior to the training, which they felt may have suited their temperament and personality or to be a preferred approach to coaching.

Other areas related to training and practice

Academic performance and mindfulness meditation practice

No significant positive relationships were found between marks achieved on the neuroscience and psychology module and the amount of time spent on mindfulness meditation prac-

tice; the number of days spent practising; or ratings of the students' opinion of their mindfulness meditation training. A possible explanation of these findings is that the assignment marks measure knowledge and understanding of the general subject area, and not the skills developed in the practice – the focus of this study. Therefore, Marks are based on work on a number of topics, only one of which is mindfulness.

Notwithstanding, literature cited above shows a relationship between academic performance (Marks achieved) and mindfulness meditation practice, in that practice provides the conditions which can enhance academic learning and performance in terms of increasing awareness, improving mood, attention, processing information, as indicated by improvements on cognitive tasks and mindfulness scores (Zeidan et al., 2010). This contrasts with our findings and merits further investigation.

Those with higher Mindfulness scores at the start of the module (FFMQ 1) and at the end (FFMQ 2) were likely to achieve higher Marks but those with higher FFMQ Post minus Pre scores were not. A possible explanation may be that many of these students already had high levels of mindfulness and so the scope for further development was limited. Thus, the improvements in mindfulness (from FFMQ PP scores) were not related to Marks achieved.

Demographic variables

There were *no* significant correlations between Age and any of the FFMQ scores. Furthermore, t-tests comparing gender differences on *all* variables produced *no* significant differences between males and females. The literature is sparse on this subject and what does appear relates only to facets of mindfulness. Soler et al. (2014) found differences between the effect of both gender and age on FFMQ mindfulness facets and Baer et al. (2008) found that age by itself is modestly correlated with the FFMQ facet Acting with Awareness. Further research on demographic differences in mindfulness appears to be required.

Practical applications of the findings

The major findings of this study have implications for practice of mindfulness meditation. There was an increase of mindfulness in trainee-coaches between the start and end of practice sessions. The implication of this finding is that the practice of mindfulness meditation appears to have had a beneficial effect on mindfulness of the trainee-coaches and that practice seems to be effective and should continue. Further, given the linkage between coach competencies (ICF, 2019) encouraging coach presence and client engagement, it may be concluded these aspects of coach practice will also be enhanced.

Whereas the time spent practicing does not improve mindfulness as measured by FFMQ, the frequency of practice sessions and opinions of the practice do. Furthermore, all FFMQ facets except Describe indicated improvements. The clear implication here is that trainee-coaches should be encouraged to have frequent and regular practice sessions, rather than a few lengthy sessions.

Although opinions of practice were not significantly correlated with marks, the group with high/favourable opinions (4 and 5) achieved significantly higher Marks than those with less favourable opinions (1, 2 and 3). The practical implication of this finding is that lessons might be learned by those administering this training program from the opinions of both these trainee-coaches groups in terms of the impact these could have on their development.

Students with higher mindfulness scores at the start of their mindfulness meditation module (FFMQ test 1) were likely to achieve higher Marks. This also extended to three facets (Observe, Describe and Non-judging) and to the total score on the post test (FFMQ2). Furthermore, significant t-test results between favourable and less favourable opinion groups found significantly higher marks for the favourable group. These findings suggest that at the outset those trainee-coaches with higher levels of mindfulness overall and on the three facets were likely

to achieve higher marks. This provides a case for the use of FFMQ as an instrument to select trainee-coaches (students) for courses.

Limitations of the research

This was a single study on a specific coaching programme in one business school. It raises questions about how far the results can be generalised. However, because of the limited literature on mindfulness training on coaching programmes, this study does provide some rare and useful findings. The comparison of these results with those of other programs is difficult because 'there is no standardization between programs' (McConville, 2017, p. 42). Notwithstanding, some of the outcomes of this study are supported in the literature above by other mindfulness meditation training results.

The study did not probe the student participants' future considerations with respect to their personal practice and professional use of mindfulness meditation. This would have offered useful insights to gauge the students' intentions to use or continue to use mindfulness meditation, in different ways and contexts.

Further research

Students with more coaching experience might logically be expected to score higher on mindfulness meditation since they would be considered to have a broader or more in-depth appreciation of coaching and how and where mindfulness meditation could most appropriately be used in coaching. This premise needs to be considered in future research on other programmes.

Since this study did not find a significant difference between males and females or provide a compelling explanation for this, it is suggested that future research into mindfulness meditation further examines the impact of gender in mindfulness meditation training.

Given that practice frequency has a relationship to the opinion students had about mindfulness meditation practice, it is suggested further research be conducted on

this relationship on other programmes, in terms of the development of trainee-coaches, and also perhaps of practising coaches, who are seeking to develop their mindfulness meditation skills. Such research could also examine the short- and long-term impact of the mindfulness training and practice and the trainee coaches' continued commitment to these in their day-to-day coaching practice.

Finally, additional related work by the authors which further explores the development of mindfulness in coaching, the focus of which is the use of mindfulness by experienced coach practitioners (Van Den Assem & Passmore, 2022) and coach supervisors (Van Den Assem, Passmore & Dulewicz, 2022) is already underway. Based on the results of that research and of this study, the authors' aim is to present an integrated understanding and position for the training and development of mindfulness for coach practitioners.

Conclusion

Three hypotheses were supported: The majority will have higher FFMQ scores on mindfulness meditation after the training than before (H1). There is a positive relationship between trainees' FFMQ test scores and available days spent practicing (H6). There is also a positive relationship between opinion of their mindfulness meditation practice and the days available spent practicing (H4). Two other hypotheses were partially supported: There is a positive relationship between FFMQ scores and opinions about mindfulness meditation practice (H2); and there is a positive relationship between FFMQ scores and academic achievement (H7). Hypotheses 3, 5, 8, 9 and 10 were rejected.

Mindfulness meditation training of trainee-coaches complements and aids the development of professional and personal skills, and the use of mindfulness in coaching. The training offers opportunities for greater interpersonal insights, and the use of mindfulness meditation in coaching practice. The contribution of this research has broad impli-

cations for the training and use of mindfulness meditation in academic settings. In particular, the use of the FFMQ in the selection of students, and possibly extended to teaching staff, in mindfulness meditation training and practice could promote a positive mindfulness environment in support of both students and faculty.

In addition, the implications of the applicability of mindfulness training for coaches would be that it is also useful in the devel-

opment of mindfulness for coaching practice generally. Since the use of mindfulness in coaching has become more prominent in the coaching literature, a broader application and interest in it is likely to continue to evolve. Not only in the practice of coaching and evidence of its impact, but also in terms of continuing professional development, coaching supervision, academic research and for professional coaching organizations.

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Outdoor coaching: The role of Attention Restoration Theory as a framework for explaining the experience and benefit of eco-psychology coaching

Alexandra Sarah Burn & Jonathan Passmore

There is little empirical research into the benefits and experiences of coaching specifically in the outdoors. Attention Restoration Theory (ART) identifies four facets that explain why nature enables the brain to restore directed attention, improve cognitive capabilities and relieve stress. It is proposed that ART is relevant to understanding the benefits of outdoor coaching because, according to ART, natural environments can help the brain to focus more efficiently, make decisions, think creatively and process information effectively by restoring directed attention and cognitive capacity - all of which are aspects of high quality coaching conversations. The aim of the research is to identify the benefits of outdoor coaching experienced by the participants and analyse them using Attention Restoration Theory as a framework to explain these benefits. Data regarding the felt experiences of nine participants who are currently having, or recently had, outdoor coaching is analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and discussed. The key findings show six identified key themes linking the participants' felt experiences with the four facets of ART: Being side-by-side; movement and pace; the perceived benefits of outdoors vs indoors; thinking differently; openness and expanse; senses, emotions and feelings. We conclude that there are benefits to taking coaching conversations outside and that ART is a framework that can explain these benefits.
Keywords: Coaching; Outdoor coaching; Eco-coaching; Nature; Attention Restoration Theory (ART); Stress Recovery Theory.

COACHING has been a predominantly indoor activity since it emerged as a method for personal development and growth in the 1970s. More recently, outdoor coaching has appeared as a branch of coaching that takes coaching conversations outdoors. Many coaches offer outdoor or eco-coaching as part of their practice and claim wide ranging benefits to coaching outcomes, but there is little evidence which has been offered to support these claims (Burn & Watson, 2021). Outdoor coaching can take many formats, for example sitting, standing, walking or a combination, and utilise many different types of location, from urban based parks, to canal paths, and from short countryside walks to more technical mountain locations. Outdoor coaching also affords

a range of durations to suit the coachee, location and format, from the typical hour long coaching to full day or multi-day sessions. It can be one to one, or group based (Burn & Watson, 2021).

Whilst the benefits of contact with nature and natural environments are widely researched across many fields, such as mental health (Hegarty, 2010; Berman et al, 2012; Lovell, 2016), workplace psychology (Williams, 2017) and education (Lester & Maudsley, 2007; Ridgers et al, 2012; Owen, 2020), there is, however, currently almost no empirical research into the benefits specifically of *coaching* in natural environments.

Attention Restoration Theory (ART) (Kaplan, 1995) provides a framework that can be drawn on to better understand the

parallels between the benefits of natural environments proposed by ART and the benefits of outdoor coaching reported anecdotally by coachees and coaches.

This research aimed to gather empirical evidence regarding the felt experiences of coachees who are currently having, or who have had, outdoor coaching sessions, and discover whether the research supports the anecdotal reports of the benefits of outdoor coaching. The aim is to gain a better understanding of the benefits of outdoor coaching and its impact on coaching outcomes. This research does not look at the different types of coaching in the outdoors, and whether coaching technique or approach impacts the benefits felt by the coachees. It looks singularly and specifically at the aspect of being *outdoors* and what impact that has on the felt benefits of the coaching conversation. Further research could look at the type, technique and approach used in the outdoor coaching setting versus the indoor coaching setting.

This is a non-systemic, structured literature review of the research into the benefits of natural environments in general and specifically of any research into the benefits of outdoor coaching.

Outdoor coaching research

Most forms of business coaching that have emerged since the 1970s have taken place indoors (Wildflower, 2013), often with the coach and coachee sat across from each other, with a table or desk between them. Coaching qualifications and training for new coaches also lend themselves predominantly to the expectation of this indoor environment for 'typical' coaching conversations. Whereas, outdoor coaching takes coaching conversations *outside*.

The practice of taking coaching conversations outdoor has, actually, been around for about 20 years, with coaches who practice it and coachees who have experienced it, extolling its benefits (Burn & Watson, 2021).

One study by Palmer & O'Riordan (2019) suggested a link specifically between the nature-based activity of walking and

coaching. They conducted a two-part study and found that a short coaching conversation whilst walking along a London canal or a Welsh seafront increased self-reported wellbeing scores for the coachees, based on sample sizes of 45 and 20 participants in the respective studies, conducted immediately after the activity. They also found bad weather did not adversely impact the positive self-reported scores. Whilst this research used very short conversations, 15 and 20 minutes (respectively), and had no control group, it does provide support to the theory that coachees taking part in outdoor coaching can benefit from the additional advantages that being outdoors, around nature and adding the element of movement, can bring.

Research into the benefits of natural environments

The hypothesis that nature has a beneficial impact on both mental and physical health has been around for a long time. The Japanese extolled the healing benefits of 'Shinrin-Yoku' or Forest Bathing (Williams, 2017; Clifford, 2018).

Children spend increasingly more time indoors and this may be carried on into their adulthood. Louv's (2005) theory of Nature Deficit Disorder (NDD) has described the negative outcomes on our health and wellbeing that results from depriving ourselves of contact with nature, especially from a young age, and has been supported by other researchers (Tucker, 2006; Gladwell et al, 2013; Kuo, 2013; Warber et al, 2015; Owen 2020).

Empirical studies into the benefits of spending time in natural environments have shown clear links to improved cognitive functioning after connecting with nature (Berman et al, 2009; Kaplan & Berman, 2010; Berto, 2014; Bratman et al, 2015), improved concentration (Berto, 2005), greater levels of attention (Kuo, 2013) and improvements in mood and both mental and physical wellbeing (Korpela & Hartig, 1996; Louv, 2005; Barton & Petty, 2010; Hegarty, 2010; Kuo, 2013; Howell et al, 2011; Palmer, 2015; Franco et al, 2017; Suttie, 2019). Further-

more, research also shows that daylight is good for our mood (Knez, 2001; Selhub & Logan, 2012).

Ulrich et al (1991)'s Stress Recovery Theory (SRT) found people recovered more quickly from stressful events when exposed to natural environments. This has been corroborated by Berto (2014) who found natural environments had a greater calming effect than urban environments, reduced negative mood and enhanced positive emotion.

In addition, research into birdsong (Ratcliffe et al, 2013) found that it was the type of natural sound most commonly associated with stress recovery when out in nature.

Berman et al (2012) found a significant increase in memory and mood was experienced by adults suffering from Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) following interactions with nature. The Happiness Project (Keltner et al, 2017) found watching programmes on nature and natural history increased feelings of joy, awe and contentedness. It also reduced anger, tiredness and stress. The '30 Days Wild' campaign discovered sustained increases in happiness, health and nature connectedness after participants engaged with nature daily for a month (Richardson et al., 2016). The improvement in happiness was a predictor for improvements in health.

More recently, White et al's (2019) research, with 20000 people, identified that two hours a week is the minimum amount of time that is needed to be spent in nature to report physical and mental wellbeing.

Many of these studies have been small scale, qualitative studies, so whilst they provide an insight into the benefits of nature, more research using larger sample sizes and both qualitative and quantitative research methods is needed.

Attention Restoration Theory (ART)

Attention Restoration Theory (ART) (Kaplan & Talbot, 1983; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Kaplan, 1995), provides a conceptual framework which helps explain the benefits of outdoor coaching.

The Kaplans first proposed the concept of how nature is restorative in an article written in 1983 (Kaplan & Talbot, 1983) about the benefits of wilderness experiences, this was further developed in 1989 (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989) and solidified into Attention Restoration Theory in 1995 (Kaplan, 1995).

ART proposes that being in contact with natural environments increases our ability to recover from mental fatigue and stress. Directed attention is a highly valued executive function of the brain and resource for human beings (Kaplan & Berman, 2010), as it enables us to process information, make decisions, solve problems and focus our attention (Kaplan, 1995). It can, however, become exhausted over time, affecting our cognitive capabilities such as attention, memory, mood and emotion, and our ability to adapt. According to ART, nature provides a restorative environment which can help us recover from this fatigue, thereby improving cognitive functioning and recovery from stressful situations (Herzog et al, 2003; Berto 2005; Berman et al, 2009; Berman et al, 2012; White et al, 2013; Berto, 2014; Bratman, 2015; Ohly et al, 2016).

ART proposes that the most restorative and stress relieving environments have four key facets (Kaplan, 1995; Kaplan & Berman, 2010; Selhub & Logan, 2012)

1. Fascination

Everything holds a degree of hard or soft fascination for us, with natural environments providing large amounts of soft fascination. Soft fascination is the type that enables us to restore our mental capacity and recover from stress and fatigue, because it requires much less directed attention. It does capture our attention, but in an effortless way. Hard fascination are things we need to focus on, requiring purposeful and directed attention, using up this mental capacity and causing cognitive fatigue.

2. Compatibility

There is a high level of compatibility between us and natural environments - we are part of

nature. The concept of Biophilia (Kellert & Wilson, 1993; Selhub & Logan, 2012; Wilson, 2017; Arvay, 2018) describes this as a human being's genetic predisposition to the natural world. This connection is being lost the more time we spend indoors. The more connection that is felt the higher restorative quality a natural environment has. The more compatible the outdoor setting is with an individual's purposes or intentions for that setting the more restorative it is (Herzog et al, 2003; Selhub & Logan, 2012). Natural environments provide a large range of compatibility possibilities for everyone depending on their preferences.

3. Being away

Being away from the everyday, from locations that are typical and common place. It does not have to be a great distance away but provide the feeling of 'getting away', or disconnecting from daily life.

4. Extent

Providing an awareness and experience of size or space. Unlike the indoors, the outdoors helps to generate the feeling of a wider connection to the expanse of nature. Natural environments provide an almost limitless opportunity to experience the depth and size of the world around us. Even urban environments designed to magnify the field of vision can provide this sense of extent (Selhub & Logan, 2012).

People come to coaching for many reasons, for example they might have a challenge they need to find a solution for, they might be finding it hard to adapt to a new situation, or to think creatively, or they may have beliefs and habits that are limiting them in some way. They may be suffering from mental fatigue and their directed attention capacity could be reduced as they are not giving themselves time to restore and recover. Higher stress levels may result in people finding it harder to cope with change, to focus their attention on problem solving and thinking creatively, and this may impact on cogni-

tive functioning such as memory (Lovell, 2016). This mental fatigue also impacts mood, resulting in more intense feelings of frustration, anger, sadness, hopelessness and lethargy. Seligman (2007) argues the core role of coaching is to improve wellbeing by increasing positive emotions and creating positive environments. Providing a coaching environment and setting, the outdoors, that can help recovery from mental fatigue, improve directed attention and positively affect mood, could improve the coaching outcomes significantly.

ART and outdoor coaching

ART can, therefore, provide a framework to explain how natural environments can help with coaching conversations.

1. Fascination and outdoor coaching

The ART concept of soft fascination (Kaplan, 1995; Kaplan & Berman, 2010) is applicable to taking coaching conversations outdoors. Nature provides unlimited soft *Fascination* and the human brain can attend to these things with relative ease and little effort. This enables the brain to recover from mental and attentional fatigue. Anecdotally, advocates of outdoor coaching describe it as enabling them to see things more clearly and having sudden 'ah-ha' moments. These moments of clarity and realisation can come after taking time to reflect on a specific coaching question or topic and allowing their minds to drift and be attracted to the effortless soft fascinations of the nature around them. Their directed attention and cognitive processing (executive function) is restored and free to focus on the coaching question or challenge at hand.

2. Compatibility and outdoor coaching

It would be plausible to suggest that coachees would feel a connection with nature and get inspiration from the outdoor environment during outdoor coaching sessions because all humans are part of nature. They may experience the benefits of awe when they see a rainbow (Rudd & Vohs, 2012; Anderson

et al, 2018; Rudd et al, 2018; Suttie, 2019), or find a metaphor (Walsh, 2018) in the resilience of a small plant shoot appearing from beneath snow. The weather could also provide this aspect of *Compatibility*, reflecting and mirroring someone's mood, whilst also providing perspective and context. Nature prevails and the cycle of life goes on - nature is ever changing, but we get a sense of comfort in the repetition of the yearly cycle of change (Walsh, 2018). Connecting with nature and using it as an analogy for the coaching conversation could be highly beneficial for the coachee. Natural environments also provide such an array of settings that there would be somewhere compatible with each individual's preference. So different coachees could experience very different types of outdoor coaching - if the setting is compatible it could be hugely restorative.

Howell et al (2011) conducted research which showed positive associations between nature connectedness, mental health and social wellbeing. Mindfulness was found to be a correlate of nature connectedness, meaning having an awareness of nature and its impact significantly, positively, impacts these associations.

3. Being away and outdoor coaching

Outdoor coaching provides an opportunity to have a coaching conversation in a different setting, to move away from 'classic', indoor, seated coaching conversations. Coachees that desire a change of scenery, to get outside, away from their office, away from their typical daily indoor environments, could experience the benefits of ART's (Kaplan, 1995; Kaplan & Berman, 2010) concept of *Being Away*. The distance does not need to be great, it may simply be to the local park near where they work. Or it may be a hike up a mountain, or an extended trip over a number of days to a much more remote wilderness location (Kaplan & Talbot, 1983; Richardson et al, 2016). But the distinction between being outdoors, rather than indoors, appears to fit with the restorative effects of 'being away' suggested in ART.

A change of scenery provides the brain with the chance to look at things in a new way - and not just the change from indoors to outdoors, but the fact that the natural environment is ever changing. Every outdoor coaching session provides a different experience to the last, as the seasons change and nature responds. Indoor coaching does not necessarily have the ability to provide this sense of being away, even if it takes places in a location away from the office.

4. Extent and outdoor coaching

The ART (Kaplan, 1995; Kaplan & Berman, 2010) concept of *Extent* also finds parallels in the anecdotally reported benefits of outdoor coaching. Even in small parks, in urban areas, the sense of being out in the open, of the size of the world around us, helps to provide a restorative effect which enables the brain to recover from mental fatigue and improve cognitive function. Taking coaching conversations outdoors enables the coachee to see the height of the clouds in the sky, to stand at the top of a hill and see the expanse of nature around them, to walk alongside a lake or the sea - all these natural settings provide a sense of the size and the extent of the natural world around us. Herzog et al (2003) indicate that even environments that are, or feel like they are, smaller in scale can still have Extent if their content occupies the mind. So even wandering through woodlands surrounded by tall trees, or in a small urban park, could provide a sense of extent and the restorative benefits that result.

Beyond ART

Over the past two decades the original ART model has been developed further. Korpela & Hartig's (1996) research found that perceived restoration in all four facets of ART was highest when respondents had been in their *favourite* outdoor places, versus locations they identified as unpleasant.

Research by White et al (2013) compared the perceived restoration effects of different types of outdoor environments, identifying that coastal (blue space) environments were

the *most* restorative, with non-urban greenspace environments coming second with a closely comparable result. Urban greenspaces, such as town parks, were the least restorative, although did still provide good levels of restoration potential.

This suggests the positive and beneficial outcomes of outdoor coaching could be enhanced further by the choice of location and setting of the session, based on the preference of the coachee and their Compatibility. The research suggests that, where possible, locating outdoor coaching near water (Voelker & Kistemann, 2011) and wide-open greenspaces (Korpela & Hartig, 1996; Hartig et al, 2014) could maximise the restorative benefits of the natural environment.

Research into the benefits, cognitively and physically, of connecting with nature, therefore, demonstrates potential implications for our understanding of the benefits of outdoor coaching. These parallels suggest that the positive experiences and outcomes that have been anecdotally reported by coachees could be due to the restorative power of natural environments. The ART framework (Kaplan, 1995; Kaplan & Berman, 2010) provides a good basis for investigating the benefits of outdoor coaching further.

Limitations of ART

Gatersleben & Andrews's (2013) research found that not all natural environments are restorative or provide soft fascination. They found directed attention may be required, for example, to focus on not tripping over or getting lost and certain natural environments, such as dense woodland, could elicit a fear response. Their research indicated that environments with a clear field of vision (high prospect) and a low number of places to hide (refuge) were restorative, but those environments with low prospect and high refuge were low in perceived restoration.

Ratcliffe et al (2013) highlight that whilst birdsong is synonymous with most people's experience of being outdoors, to many people the sounds of particular birds

is more irritating than restorative (such as pigeons and gulls) or could be scary (ravens, birds of prey). 'Not all birds may be perceived as restorative, and not all listeners may find them restorative' (Ratcliffe et al., 2013, p.223)

Whilst some limitations and criticism of ART have been published (Ulrich et al, 1991; Joye & Dewitte, 2018) much of the critique focuses on the method used for researching the theory rather than on the theory itself. Systematic literature reviews by Ohly et al (2016) and Stevenson et al (2018) found mixed evidence, but noted the limitations of some research that used virtual environments as stimuli (videos or photographs), rather than conducting the research in actual outdoor environments. Many studies have, however, found support for the theory (Korpela & Hartig, 1996; Berto, 2005; Berman et al, 2009; Berman et al, 2012; Ratcliffe et al, 2013; White et al, 2013; Bratman et al, 2015; Basu et al, 2019) using a variety of research methods and experiments, providing results consistent with the concept that natural environments provide Attention Restoration and improve both affect and cognitive abilities.

Methods

This research aimed to discover more about the *experiences* of coachees who are currently having, or have had, outdoor coaching sessions. In order to gather information about coachees' *actual* experiences of outdoor coaching sessions a qualitative methodology was chosen. This kind of research lends itself very clearly to a qualitative approach as it focuses on participants' *experiences*, and how they make sense of these experiences to generate *meaning*. Gathering descriptions of their experiences, accessing the richness of first-hand accounts of: what they did; how they felt; what it meant to them; what the impact was for them, is critical to this research.

Qualitative research deals predominantly with meaning (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014), with non-numerical, word based information

and is concerned with gathering in-depth insight into phenomena in their more natural contexts (Rose et al, 2015). It is more often focused on individual cases, rather than variation from a norm. The design of qualitative research is also flexible, in that it seeks to gain insights into emerging themes. One challenge of qualitative research is the influence of the researcher on the participants involved and, therefore, the information gathered. This is due to the method used to gather findings - interviews or observations. It is widely acknowledged that the researcher will have some level of impact on the findings of qualitative research, including on the way in which the information is interpreted during analysis (Rose et al, 2015). 'Researchers need to develop reflexive awareness of their assumptions about what there is to know (ontology) and how they can come to know it (epistemology)' (Willig, 2019). The knowledge of this and an awareness of the researcher's own onto-epistemological position, reflexivity and assumptions was maintained throughout the research.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was selected as a method best suited to provide an insight into coachee reactions and emotional responses to outdoor coaching processes (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011; Smith et al 2012; Rose, et al. 2015)

In Creswell (2013) a phenomenological study 'describes the meaning of several individuals of their *lived experiences* of a concept or a phenomena. Phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon' (p.57-58). So this kind of research identifies a phenomena, collects data from people who have experienced it, and analyses *what* they experienced and *how* they experienced it.

IPA takes phenomenology further by adding the element of *interpretation* of these lived experiences - both by the participant themselves as they recount them and by the researcher when they analyse the findings

(Smith & Osborn 2007; Smith et al, 2012; Creswell, 2013; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Alase, 2017). Interpretation is critical as each participant needs to be able to interpret their experience, the meaning of it and be able to express that verbally to describe it to the researcher. The researcher needs to be able to then interpret what the participant has described and make meaning of it from the participant's perspective.

This research aims to better understand 'several individuals' common or shared experiences' (Creswell, 2013, p.60) of the phenomenon of outdoor coaching, and to gather insight, through interpretation, about the themes, such as the benefits, of this phenomenon. As such, IPA appears to be a well suited methodology to use for this research.

The use of IPA does present some challenges, this approach requires the participants to be able to recall and understand the meaning of their experiences, and then be able to vocalise that in a comprehensible way for the researcher to interpret.

The key sampling criteria was the participants' experience of being coached outdoors. It was not possible to control for any other similarities and differences in other aspects of their background or demographics. Participants volunteered to take part following a request for volunteers and signed an informed consent document. All research data collection and storage meets confidentiality and privacy requirements.

Nine semi-structured interviews were conducted, with six females and three males. Participants had received between two and over a hundred coaching sessions, and the length of each ranged from 55 minutes up to three hours. Four of the participants were currently still having outdoor coaching and the rest had experienced it within the last year.

The data was collected through one-to-one telephone interviews lasting approximately 60 minutes. Participants were asked to describe in as much detail as possible their *felt experiences* of their outdoor coaching sessions, and what those experiences *meant* to them.

The interviews were recorded, transcribed and the IPA methodology used to conduct detailed analysis of the content.

Results

Analysing the content of the interviews, using the IPA methodology, resulted in over 50 emergent themes. Connections were then made between the emergent themes to identify which linked together, thus creating super-ordinate, or *clustered* themes. The participants' accounts clustered around six key themes (Appendix 1).

The clustered themes were cross-referenced back to the explanatory comments to identify the relative importance of each for use in the analysis.

Theme 1 – Being side-by-side

'There was no eye to eye contact...so I could overcome those uncomfortable bits...if it was being sat in a room and he'd been looking at me directly I'd have felt a little more under pressure.' (P5, 207)

Participants reported that being side-by-side, or alongside the coach, felt liberating because it was less judgmental, compared to sitting opposite a coach, and less scrutinised, because there was no eye contact. It gave participants the confidence to talk about things that were more challenging as they felt more comfortable not having to meet the coach's eye. It was easier to experience silence and not feel like they had to say something or answer a question because their coach was looking at them. It enabled them to experience the expanse and openness of the natural environment before them (without a table or a coach in front of them), think more openly and articulate what they wanted to say. They reported falling into sync easily with their coach, making the pace flow and it felt like walking with a friend - which they reported as beneficial to building the relationship with their coach, being on a *literal*, as well as metaphorical, journey together. These reported benefits of being alongside their coach were apparent when standing and sitting too.

Theme 2 – Movement and pace

'The pace reflected the exploration within the conversation. Internally digesting and making sense of things.' (P1, 65)

Participants reported movement and pace as beneficial aspects of outdoor coaching. Because being outdoors included an element of movement which they either already enjoyed or wanted to do more of. They described how the pace directly mimicked or reflected how they were feeling and enabled them to express their emotions. The changeability of pace, being able to stop and start, also positively affected their ability to reflect, was a mechanism for giving the brain time to think, and made pauses in conversation more natural. Being outdoors enabled more freedom of movement, of the whole body, as a way to release emotions and aid the thinking processes.

Theme 3 – the perceived benefits of the outdoors vs indoors

'Indoors you are contained...I'm quite sensitive to indoor light...being outdoors with the natural light...such a different experience.' (P2, 101)

The participants reported that being outdoors added value and power to the coaching session. All but one reported having an affinity to the outdoors from a young age, and this being one of the reasons for choosing outdoor, over indoor, coaching. They reported that a benefit of being outdoors is that it enabled them to get away from their indoor life, breathe fresh air, see different things, hear different things and feel different things by invigorating the mind, body and soul. Taking the coaching conversation outdoors also provided an added benefit of getting some exercise, enhancing their sense of achievement. The participants described the indoors quite negatively for example using words and phrases such as: confined; cooped up; constrained; trapped;

suffering; not being able to see beyond the four walls. Conversely, they described being outdoors more positively using words and phrases such as: free; freedom; comfortable; calm; relaxed; energised; peaceful; exhilarating. They also described the horizon being limitless and finding benefit in the fact that things are always moving and changing, but nature itself is reassuringly constant. Participants described the benefits of being outdoors as enabling the conversation to flow and allowing them to think more clearly. A number of participants also described how being outdoors enabled them to deal better with difficult emotions as they could move away from them, rather than the emotions being stuck in a room with them.

Theme 4 – thinking differently

‘I think fresh air coaching is more beneficial...you see different things, you hear different things and you feel different things.’ (P7, 167)

Participants reported that being *outdoors* was a critical factor in enabling them to do things *differently*. Think differently, process information differently, experience different things, gain different perspective. They described this as leading to them being able to concentrate and focus better and zoom in and out from macro to micro level thinking. Helping them to make sense of how they felt and what they were experiencing. Having other things around them to focus on consciously, also gave the brain time to think and work subconsciously.

Theme 5 – openness and expanse

‘It creates a sort of distance...something externalised for me. And then having that external device makes it more possible for me to internalise that.’ (P6, 195)

Participants reported that being coached outdoors provided openness and space, positively impacting the way they made sense of

the challenges they are facing or the topics they are discussing. This openness and expanse enabled them to describe and externalise their thoughts and feelings, which they described as making it easier to then internalise and reflect. Some participants described coaching outdoors as beneficial even when in relatively enclosed outdoor environments, such as woodland, as they still felt the sense of openness. It was reported that this openness and space experienced in outdoor coaching lead to feelings of freedom, release and relief.

Theme 6 – senses, emotions and feelings

‘The natural act of walking through grass or through green space, or looking up seems to be very grounding.’ (P9, 97)

Participants linked the feelings and emotions they experienced to one or more of their senses. These experiences enabled the participants to recall specific and vivid memories of particular sights, sounds, smells or touches on their skin, often a long time after the coaching session. These connections between senses and emotions helped the participants to relive the coaching session and the benefits gained. A number of participants described the change of perspective experienced, for example, when at the top of a hill and able to see the views, helping them to feel more confident, optimistic and able to create change. Participants also describe the sounds of nature and how these sounds increased their sense of peace and their ability to think more calmly and clearly. Participants reported that using their senses, and the feelings they evoked, created *Mindful connection* between them and the natural environment around them, enabling them to be present and non-judgemental. It helped with sense making by impacting their thoughts and how they processed them, leading to feelings of being grounded and anchored, and resulting in calmness and being better able to reflect. No unwanted, harmful or disruptive feelings or emotions were described by any participant.

Discussion

This research aimed to discover more about the felt *experiences* of coachees who are currently having, or have had, outdoor coaching sessions. To test ART's applicability to outdoor coaching as a framework where relational and environmental factors can affect the quality of these experiences, the coach conversation and the outcome. De Haan describes these *Critical Moments* in coaching as 'exciting, tense or significant moments from the time spent in the coaching conversation experienced by an Executive Coach and Client' (De Haan & Neiss, 2012, Pg.1)

As discussed, there is very scant research conducted to date on *any* aspect of outdoor coaching, but studies have provided some evidence at least of short term benefit (Palmer & O'Riordan, 2019). In light of this, empirical research and frameworks created in other, but complimentary, fields were reviewed to help better understand the anecdotally reported benefits of outdoor coaching.

In reviewing the six key themes of this research, there appears to be some commonality between the themes which emerged and the ART framework.

ART - Fascination

A key aspect of ART is the concept of hard and soft fascination. ART proposes that *soft* fascination is very important because it enables the mind to recover from cognitive fatigue and restore cognitive processing capabilities. The findings of this research appear to support the use of soft fascination by coachees in outdoor environments, and was a factor which coachees associated with the successful outcome of coaching conversations.

Being surrounded by nature provides many types of soft fascination and plenty of opportunity to recover from mental fatigue and restore directed attention capacity, meaning the coachees are able to then use their restored executive functioning to the fullest to solve their coaching challenges.

The participants described their experiences of using all but one (taste) of their senses (theme six) whilst outdoor coaching and took time to restore and reflect whilst looking at nature, listening to birdsong, or feeling the ground beneath their feet (theme six). These mindful behaviors link well with soft fascination. The participants found attending to nature *easy* and *calming*. Allowing their brain, the space and time it needed to be able to direct attention to things that required more focused cognitive processing - such as thinking differently, generating new and creative ideas and coming up with solutions (theme four).

In addition, removing the fact that there is someone sat opposite the coachee and opening up the visual plain in front of the coachee, naturally allows for capturing more soft fascination (theme one). This could explain the experience the participants had of being able to reflect and think more easily when they are side-by-side with their coach instead of their coach sat in front of them. Their field of vision is more open, their mind is freer to look around and take in the view ahead. These behaviours allow for the benefits of soft fascination to be felt, as the coachees are less likely to be trying to find the answers to the coaches' questions in a way they might do in response to feeling scrutinised when sat opposite them indoors. Instead, they can ponder and mull over the questions whilst enjoying the view or the sound of birdsong (theme three).

ART - Compatibility

An environment highly *compatible* with the coachee's intention for that environment would be highly restorative, creating the benefits of recovering from cognitive fatigue and freeing up directed attention capacity. The reported purpose of many of the participants in choosing outdoor coaching was their affinity with being outdoors and the appeal of walking and experiencing nature (theme three). It would be very difficult to achieve this purpose if the coach and coachee were sat inside.

Participants described their love for being in natural environments, wanting to spend more time outdoors, and having strong childhood experiences of growing up outdoors. They equated this to feelings of being free, grounded, calm and reflective. This was contrasted starkly with the participants' reported experiences of being indoors, which were commonly described with words such as trapped, constrained, confined (theme three). It is argued that these aspects of the participants' preferences align strongly with the ART facet of compatibility. Clearly, for the participants in this study, being outdoors was highly compatible with their preferences and purpose. The majority of them described a strong sense of yearning for connection with nature, similar to that described by Biophilia (Wilson, 1984) which is a complementary concept to ART. Even the dual benefit for many of combining a coaching session with exercise is an example of compatibility (theme two).

The benefits of this described in the findings is that the more compatible the type of coaching is to the preferences and purpose of the coachee, the more likely the coaching session is to be successful. Because, the coachee will find the situation restorative, rather than distracting or disturbing. And, based on ART theory, this will enable them not only to recover from mental fatigue but direct their attention towards thinking, reflecting and generating solutions for their coaching goals (theme four).

Outdoor coaching also affords the natural behaviour of walking or sitting side-by-side with the person you are talking to (theme one). Participants described this aspect as highly compatible with their purpose and intention for the coaching session, as they had openness in front of them, rather than a table and the coach. Providing the sense of expanse and removing limitations - both physically and mentally (theme five).

ART - Being away

The findings of the research provide evidence of the benefits of *being away* and a number

of participants explicitly describe how they chose outdoor coaching because it got them away from their desk, or away from their indoor life (theme three). The participants' experiences ranged from travelling only a short distance from their homes or offices, for example a local park or a woodland at the back of their house, to driving up to two hours to get to their coaching location. But their experiences of being away from the everyday life were similar, regardless of distance they travelled to get away. This links closely with the Kaplans' view that it was the disconnecting from daily life that was important, not necessarily the *distance* of being away.

This facet of ART also links to the theme in the findings of the benefits of the outdoors vs indoors (theme three). For these participants, indoor coaching would not provide the benefits associated with *being away* precisely because indoor coaching locations are too similar, if not exactly the same, as the locations in which they spend much of their time - for example their place of work.

The benefits of *being away* and the link to outdoor coaching is further demonstrated by the theme of openness, space and expanse as these are features of the outdoors that are in direct contrast to the features of the everyday, indoor locations, that the participants find themselves in (theme five). This aspect of *being away* provides a great opportunity for restoration of mental fatigue and recovering directed attention because the *away* is so different from the *normal*.

Being away also enabled the participants to experience *different* types of environments, which lead to different ways of thinking, processing information and coming up with new ways of doing things.

ART - Extent

The *extent* facet of ART is described as helping to restore directed attention and reduce mental fatigue by providing an awareness of expanse. This awareness generates the feeling of connection with something bigger.

A clearly demonstrated link between the findings and the ART facet of *extent* is theme five - openness and expanse. Participants clearly described benefitting from the openness they experienced when being coached outdoors, leading to a sense of freedom. This openness and freedom enabled them to make sense of challenges they were facing by giving them the *space*, and sense of time, to think and reflect.

The *extent* of the outdoor locations themselves does not necessarily have to be large, according to ART theory. However, research into the most restorative types of outdoor coaching locations (White et al, 2013) would suggest those with greater *extent* (for example open countryside) offer more opportunity for the benefits of *extent* to be felt than smaller spaces (for example urban parks). Just being outside in the 'open air', however, regardless of the size of the location or whether the person is actually moving (they could be sat on a park bench) ensures some level of *extent* is felt and benefitted from. Participants in this study experienced outdoor coaching in a range of locations, from city parks to mountains in Scotland, but the impact of *extent* was felt and reported by all participants, in all types and sizes of location.

Linked to the aspect of being alongside the coach (theme one), both movement and pace were described, by the participants, as important factors in the benefits of outdoor coaching and could be linked to the *extent* facet of ART (theme two). Being able to move and vary the pace is made possible by the space and size of the outdoor environment. In a way that it is not possible to achieve easily in an indoor environment. Being able to 'walk and talk' enables the coachee to experience the true *extent* of the natural environment because they are not confined to one location. Each coaching session provides further *extent* because routes differ, even if the same actual route is walked the nature around is forever changing so the experience of the *extent* of the location can change too. One participant described

a wooded area in summer as 'cocooning' due to the canopy of leaves. But in the winter the *extent* of the environment around it or the sheer size of the wooded area itself was felt because the leafless trees enabled the participant to see further. So the *extent* will be felt differently depending on season.

Extent also helps to explain why some participants reported feeling more connected and grounded in the outdoors. They described feeling part of something bigger, being anchored and connected with the natural environment. This is possible because of the sense of *extent* they felt being outdoors.

Being side-by-side, or alongside, the coach

Being side-by-side was a common experience described by nearly all the participants and would appear to be an aspect, and benefit, that is unique to *outdoor* coaching. Something that is fairly hard to replicate indoors. It appears to have a significant impact for two reasons.

Firstly, the coach and coachee are a) not always sat and b) not opposite each other, they could be sat or stood next to each other outdoors but that did not appear to have the same negative connotations that being sat opposite each other indoors did. It is the combination of being sat and being opposite that results for some in a negative indoor experience.

Secondly, the specific aspect of being *alongside*, as opposed to *opposite*, is key. Being opposite created feelings of judgement, scrutiny and confrontation, and resulted in participants reporting feelings of being uncomfortable, awkward and the need to fill silences rather than taking enough time to reflect. They described feeling as though they were being watched, or observed. By being alongside each other, however, and not having the element of oppositional eye contact, the participants described almost polar opposite feelings of being free, liberated, open, and the conversation being less intense. This created a more natural environment, like walking with a friend, and resulted

in them being able to take time to think and reflect without scrutiny, and often 'fall in synch' with each other.

Limitations of research

Due to the nature of the research and the methodology chosen, IPA, the number of participants in this research is relatively small. As a result, the findings cannot be generalisable to a wider population. Smith et al (2012) state that IPA studies are valid with as few as three participants. Further a mixed methods approach could have been used to further explore impact over time of outdoor compared with indoor coaching.

Conclusions

In conclusion, while there is limited empirical research into outdoor coaching, these findings provide a link to theoretical model, which can inform research in this area and recognises at coaching research is part of a wider psychological movement exploring the human experience, and that creating links between coaching psychology and this wider work can contribute to both areas of study.

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The benefits of the ART concepts of *fascination*, *compatibility*, *being away* and *extent*, described in the findings, highlight this as a potentially useful framework for better understanding the experiences coachees have of outdoor coaching. Along with a deeper understanding of the role outdoor coaching might play, particularly in working with individuals or issues which are highly charged emotionally.

Further research into all aspects of outdoor coaching is needed to test these findings and measure the benefits of this emerging area of coaching practice.

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Appendix 1: Clustered Key Themes, including emergent themes.

Emerging Themes	Clustered Theme
	1. Being side-by-side, or along side, the coach
	Side-by-side: walking or sitting alongside the coach
	2. Movement and pace
	Pace of walking, stopping/starting
	The experience of movement and walking, and doing exercise
	3. Outdoor and indoor comparison and the perceived benefits of the outdoors
	Felt experiences of being indoors and having coaching sessions sat vs moving, indoors vs outdoors
	The double benefit - getting some exercise, being outdoors in nature and having a coaching conversation
	Comparison with the experience or image of counselling - indoors, intense, scrutinised
	The perceived benefits of outdoor coaching
	Affinity with outdoors based on childhood experiences
	Why started outdoor coaching and why it appealed
	4. Different experiences leading to different ways of thinking and processing information
	Differences in way think, process, feel, sense, perspective
	Ability to focus and concentrate
	Hightened sense of awareness
	Different experience, not the norm, change of scenery
	Outcome, the result of the experience
	5. Openness, space and expanse of the outdoors
	The openness, space and expanse of the outdoors
	The perceived sense of freedom felt being outdoors
	6. Using the senses and the feelings and emotions that are elicited
	The use of the senses when outdoors - vision, hearing, touch, smell
	The strong feelings evoked by the way the natural environment stimulates the senses
	The reflective and calming nature of the natural environment
	The strong emotions that are portrayed because of the way the natural environment stimulates the senses
	Feelings before outdoor coaching sessions
	Feelings after outdoor coaching sessions
	6.1. Connection with the natural environment and nature: embodiment and grounding
	Feelings of being grounded in the natural environment and anchored to experiences and moments
	Sense of embodiment (sense making) that natural environments bring
	Connection to nature, the weather, through the senses - bringing about mindfulness
	7. Nature connectedness
	Impact of the weather on outdoor coaching
	Experience of the seasons and changes in the natural environment
	The use of metaphor, analogy and mimicry in the natural environment
	Experiences of animals and nature during outdoor coaching sessions
	Experience, awareness and impact of Greenspace
	Experience, awareness and impact of Bluespace

'A space to try things out': How career changers experience the best possible self intervention. An interpretative phenomenological analysis

Sophie Cliff

Changes in working patterns mean that the youngest generations in the work force, millennials and generation Z, are facing more organisational and job changes than previous generations. Specifically, millennials, defined as the generation born between 1982 and 1999 (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman & Lance, 2010), experience between two and three times as many job and organisational moves as previous generations (Lyons, Schweitzer & Ng, 2015), with 60 per cent of millennials reporting that they are open to a different job opportunity (Gallup, 2016). Research suggests that key resources such as optimism and self-efficacy are important elements of career adaptability (Haeggli & Hirschi, 2020). The field of positive psychology, which was first introduced to the academic community in 2000 (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), aims to better understand and foster valued subjective experiences, such as wellbeing, resilience and optimism. More recently, positive psychology has integrated with coaching psychology to create a new approach to coaching, positive psychology coaching, which can be defined as 'evidence-based coaching practice informed by the theories and research of positive psychology for the enhancement of resilience, achievement and wellbeing' (Green & Palmer, 2019, p.10). With job and career changes becoming increasingly likely for the millennial generation, there is an opportunity to look at how positive psychology coaching can be used to support the experience of individuals within this generation, helping them to enhance outcomes. There has been some research conducted within this field, with one study suggesting that positive psychology coaching can be beneficial in boosting career confidence in potential career changers (Archer & Yates, 2017), however, the existing research is limited, and doesn't specifically focus on the millennial generation. One positive psychology intervention that could be particularly relevant for this population is the Best Possible Self (BPS) intervention (King, 2001). This intervention encourages individuals to imagine a best possible future self, before then writing about what they imagined. Previous research has shown that the BPS intervention is linked to increased positive affect, increased optimism and increased levels of self-concordant motivation (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006), and there is also evidence to suggest that mental stimulation can support psychological adjustment to change (Rivkin & Taylor, 1999). This study endeavours to contribute to the research by understanding how a positive psychology intervention (specifically, the BPS intervention (King, 2001)) is experienced by millennials who are considering a career change, before considering the implications of this for career coaching.

Literature review

THE CURRENT literature does not draw any solid conclusions as to why greater job and organisational mobility is experienced by the millennial generation, and it is not yet known whether changes are

purposeful or reactionary (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). It is suggested that generational differences in values may be the cause of increased mobility, with millennials expressing a desire for a greater fit between their personal situ-

ations and roles than other generations (Gong, Ramkissoon, Greenwood & Hoyte, 2018), however, a study by Dries, Pepermans & De Kerpel (2008), suggests that millennials have a yearning for career stability that is also characteristic of previous generations. Another suggestion is that economic factors could be leading to increased mobility, with millennials entering the workforce at a time when downsizing and layoffs were more common (Becton et al., 2014). Additionally, Baruch and Bozionelos (2011) argue that the flattening of organisational structures in response to globalisation and technological advancements means that individuals increasingly need to move roles or organisations in order to seek career-enhancing experiences.

With career patterns changing and increased job mobility becoming the norm, there is increasing need for individuals to build career adaptability, which is defined as 'the readiness to cope with the predictable tasks of preparing for and participating in the work role and with the unpredictable adjustments prompted by changes in work and working conditions' (Savickas, 1997, p.254). Career adaptability is thought to be composed of four global dimensions: *concern* about the future helps individuals look ahead and be proactive in planning for what might come next, *control* enables individuals to engage in self-discipline and become responsible for their career, *curiosity* refers to having an interest in possible future selves and opportunities, and *confidence* is built when an individual can actualise their choices to implement change and pursue their aspirations (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

Career adaptability is linked with proactive coping in the face of economic stress, and is positively associated with helping people find alternative employment of better quality (Klehe, Zikic, Van Vianen, Koen & Buyken, 2012). Researchers argue that career adaptability is positively linked with key constructs studied within positive psychology, such as hope and optimism, resilience and future-oriented thinking (Wilkins

et al., 2014; Dik, O'Connor, Shimizu & Duffy, 2019; Klehe et al., 2012). There is also evidence to suggest that happiness may precede and facilitate success and favourable outcomes in the work context, with positive affect being linked to better interview performance and enhanced career development (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Whilst there is a significant amount of evidence to corroborate this link, it is not yet understood what causes this relationship, although one theory is that happier employees are less likely to experience job burnout or display retaliatory behaviours (Thoresen, Kaplan, Barsky, Warren & de Chermont, 2003).

Positive psychology is the study of valued subjective experiences, including wellbeing, optimism, flow, satisfaction and happiness (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In recent years, the relationship between positive psychology and coaching psychology, which can be defined as the science of coaching (Lomas, 2019), has been explored, with much overlap between the two fields being identified, particularly their shared interest in maximising optimal human functioning (Panchal, Palmer & Green, 2019). This resulted in the creation of a new approach to coaching, positive psychology coaching, which was formally launched in 2007 (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007). There has been much discussion and interest in the literature about how positive psychology and coaching psychology relate and interact with each other (van Nieuwerburgh, Lomas & Burke, 2018; Kauffman & Linley, 2017), with an understanding being reached that positive psychology coaching combines evidence-based coaching practice with the theories and research developed in the field of positive psychology to help individuals build resilience, achieve goals and improve their wellbeing (Green & Palmer, 2019). However, despite the strong interest in the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of positive psychology coaching, there is still limited research into how the integration of the theories can work in practice, with further exploration needed.

It is clear that there is an opportunity to utilise positive psychology to build career adaptability and better support individuals through job and organisational mobility, however, at the time of writing, the literature in this area is still relatively young. Robertson (2018), explored how positive psychology could be applied to a career development setting, including looking at how positive psychology interventions (PPIs), such as using character strengths, could be used to facilitate career development and success. Whilst this paper was useful for theoretically exploring the potential synergies between positive psychology and career development and success, it did not provide any empirical data or qualitative research to validate these synergies or better understand them. Similarly, a number of papers have explored how positive psychology could be applied and used within career coaching and counselling, with interventions that seek to amplify strengths use, cultivate positive emotions and increase flow being suggested as potentially beneficial within this space (Jacobsen, 2010; Yates, 2013). However, there remains little exploration of either the efficacy or the lived experience of using these interventions within the career coaching domain. One reason for this might be that some perceive positive psychology to be a naïve ‘Pollyanna’ approach to career change, with critics of positive psychology arguing that negative emotions can have adaptive functions (Robertson, 2018).

One study that does seek to integrate positive psychology coaching and career development found that a four-session coaching programme using positive psychology interventions helped to increase the career confidence of participants who were considering making changes in their careers (Archer & Yates, 2017). The four-session coaching programme included the following interventions: a coaching session focusing on the participants’ strengths, the use of a BPS intervention, a session focused on the management of negative thoughts and promotion of positive ones, and a final session that

aimed to raise participants’ awareness of their existing resources. It found that this positive psychology coaching programme was successful in raising hope, changing the cognitive process of participants, and increasing motivation, which all contributed to an increase in career confidence. This initial study suggests that there is a basis for further exploration of how positive psychology and positive coaching psychology can be used to support career adaptability and change. It should be noted that this was a qualitative study with only five participants, and therefore the findings cannot be generalised, however, qualitative research is of great value within the field of coaching psychology, given the contextual nature of the practice (Grant, 2017). A further limitation of this study is that it uses a number of PPIs alongside coaching, therefore it is difficult to draw conclusions as to which intervention or activity contributed to the increase in career confidence, and whether coaching alone would have provided the same outcome.

One PPI used as part of this study by Archer & Yates (2007) is a variation of the BPS intervention. BPS was developed by King (2001), and has been shown to increase positive affect, optimism and self-concordant motivation (King, 2001; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006; Peters, Flink, Boersma & Linton, 2010). The original intervention is a written intervention that asks participants to think about their life in the future, imagining that all life goals have been accomplished and everything has gone as well as it possibly could. Participants are then asked to write about what they imagined for 20 minutes, repeating the intervention on four consecutive days.

There are multiple quantitative studies exploring the impact of BPS, and these have shown that the intervention is effective in influencing mood (positive affect), raising expectancies for the future (optimism), increasing self-awareness and self-regulation, and promoting wellbeing (King, 2001; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006; Lyubomirsky,

Dickerhoof, Boehm & Sheldon, 2011; Heekeren & Eid, 2020), all factors that could be beneficial for an individual considering a career change. Furthermore, other 'possible selves' interventions have shown that mental simulation can aid psychological adjustment to change (Rivkin & Taylor, 1999). It was noted by Parks & Biswas-Diener (2013), that writing about future possible selves is not always a pleasant experience, and in particular, some relatively anxious students had reported that the intervention made them feel more anxious, suggesting that BPS is better suited for relatively high-functioning participants. However, this claim appears to be anecdotal, with no objective data presented, and does not seem to be discussed elsewhere in the literature.

The validation of the efficacy of BPS relies heavily on statistical, quantitative research which is in keeping with positive psychology's prioritisation of rigorous empirical and scientific methods (Hefferon, Ashfield, Waters & Synard, 2017). Despite an abundance of literature validating the efficacy of BPS in creating favourable outcomes, there still remains a lack of clarity about the underlying psychological mechanisms of the intervention (Heekeren & Eid, 2020). Additionally, to date, there is little to no research on how this intervention is experienced specifically by individuals considering a career change, with versions of BPS being largely researched amongst student populations. However, a meta-analysis conducted by Carrillo, Martínez-Sanchis, Etchemendy and Baños, (2019) found that the efficacy of the intervention was greater when used with community samples as opposed to undergraduate samples, suggesting that this intervention could be beneficial for the population this study is interested in.

Furthermore, very little research explores the subjective experience of using this intervention. Qualitative research into how individuals experience BPS could have a number of benefits, including providing explanations, deepening understanding and asking different questions of the phenomena of interest as

well as of the data produced (Hefferon et al., 2017). The literature also suggests that qualitative research is particularly needed in the field of coaching psychology, given the highly subjective and contextual nature of coaching and the uniqueness of the coach-coachee relationship (Grant, 2017), with IPA highlighted as an appropriate methodology for developing deeper subjective understanding within this field (Rajasinghe, 2020).

Aim and rationale

It is clear from the literature that career patterns are changing, with the millennial generation experiencing more job and organisational mobility than previous generations (Lyons & Kuron, 2013, Lyons et al., 2014, Becton et al., 2014). Given this change, there is an increasing need for individuals to build greater career adaptability, which encompasses concern, control curiosity and confidence, and that positive psychology, which focuses on key constructs such as optimism, wellbeing and resilience may be able to support that pursuit (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005; Wilkins et al., 2014; Dik et al., 2019; Klehe et al., 2012).

The integration of positive psychology and coaching psychology has allowed a new field, positive psychology coaching, to emerge, supporting the enhancement of resilience, achievement and wellbeing (Green & Palmer, 2019). It is clear that there is an opportunity for this field to better support individuals considering a career change (Archer & Yates, 2017), although the literature in this arena is still relatively light.

This study aims to add subjective, qualitative data to this field through an IPA study of the lived experience of using a positive psychology intervention, Best Possible Self, when considering a career change.

The output of this study may contribute more knowledge as to how positive psychology interventions can be used to better support career changers, as well as adding an additional tool to the coach's collection of resources, aiding them to better support clients during a transitional period.

Table 1:

Participants				
	Gender	Age	Current career status	Stage of career change process
A	Female	29	Employed	Retraining
B	Female	32	Student	Retraining
C	Female	27	Employed	Mid-transition
D	Female	29	Employed	Retraining

Methodology

Design

This study employed an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) allowing for exploration of the meanings that participants bring to their experience (Rajasinghe, 2020). While there are many quantitative studies about the impact of the BPS intervention, there is little exploration in the literature of how individuals experience it. By adopting an IPA approach, this study seeks to add greater depth to the existing body of knowledge by rooting any findings in direct accounts from participants (Smith et al., 2009).

IPA employs a double hermeneutic approach to sense making, with participants reflecting on their experience, and the researcher then trying to interpret the participant's experience (Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty & Hendry, 2011). This methodology facilitates deeper understanding of subjective experiences and is also accepted as a good approach for new and under-researched disciplines, both of which make it a good fit for understanding how positive coaching psychology can better support career changers (Rasajinghe, 2020).

Participants

Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants, following adverts shared to Instagram and LinkedIn with eligibility criteria in order to attract participants who could offer 'insight into a particular experience' (Smith et al., 2009, p.48). These criteria included a) being

a millennial adult (defined as anyone born between 1982 and 1999 (Twenge, 2010)) and b) currently considering a career change.

IPA studies focus on a relatively small sample size as this approach benefits from a more in-depth focus on fewer cases (Smith et al., 2009), therefore four participants who met the criteria were recruited. Despite no restrictions being made outside of the identified eligibility criteria, the sample ended up being relatively homogenous. Please see Table 1.

All four participants self-selected to be part of the study after seeing an initial call out online. After an introductory discussion with each of the four participants, each was offered an opportunity to participate in the study, all accepted the offer.

Prior to recruitment, ethical approval was secured from the University of East London. All participants were fully briefed on the study and what was required of them, and consent forms were signed prior to participation. Participants were also debriefed following the interview.

Procedure and data collection

This study had two stages.

Stage one

The first stage included participants completing the Best Possible Self intervention (King, 2001). Participants were provided with a briefing document that asked them to complete the intervention using the instructions laid out in King's paper (2001), writing on the following prompt for 20 minutes for four consecutive days:

Table 2: Summary of findings.

Overarching themes		Sub-themes	Frequencies
1	Affirming the career change	a. Rejection of the old path	3/4
		b. Affirmation of the new path	3/4
2	It's about more than just work	a. Exploring career in the context of wider life	4/4
		b. Focusing on feelings	4/4
3	Connecting with the authentic self	a. Time to focus on self and own desires	4/4
		b. Increase in self-awareness	2/4
		c. Rejection of expectations and social norms	3/4
4	Thinking about the future helps in the present	a. Self-concordant motivation	4/4
		b. Building self-efficacy	2/4
		c. Psychological adjustment to change	2/4

Think about your life in the future. Imagine that everything has gone as well as it possibly could. You have worked hard and succeeded at accomplishing all of your life goals. Think of this as the realization of all of your life dreams. Now, write about what you imagined.

Stage two

Following completion of stage one, participants were invited to stage two, which consisted of an in-depth, semi-structured interview lasting between 45–60 minutes. These interviews provided the data of the study. The interviews took place online using Microsoft Teams, and each was video recorded. The interviews took a humanistic and empathetic approach, with care taken to establish a rapport between researcher and participant in order to ensure the obtainment of rich data (Smith et al., 2009).

A short interview schedule was created prior to the interviews, which included the following questions:

- Please can you tell me a little bit about your experience of using the Best Possible Self intervention?
- What emotions did you experience while using the intervention?
- What has been your experience since completing the intervention?
- Do you feel as though this intervention has impacted your experience of career change in any way?
- (If yes) Please can you tell me about what that experience has been like?

- Is there anything else you'd like to share?

This interview schedule was used to gently direct the conversation, however, as per the guidance of Pietkiewicz & Smith (2014), plenty of space and flexibility was provided in order to explore any unique or original issues that participants raised.

Data analysis

Data analysis began with the researcher transcribing each interview verbatim. This was followed by a full, in-depth immersion in the final interview transcripts, following an 'iterative and inductive cycle' (Smith et al., 2009). Firstly, the transcripts were read multiple times, with line-by-line analysis of each transcript taking place, noting down all micro-themes, concepts and ideas that occurred. Next, emergent patterns and themes were identified for each individual case, before eventually, then looking for connections between emerging themes and identifying clusters of overarching themes and sub-themes.

In order to uphold quality and avoid researcher bias an attempt to bracket potential preconceptions was made (Tufford & Newman, 2012) and reflexivity was deployed throughout, with ongoing attention paid to how the researcher's own experience could be impacting the analysis. Regular supervision, self-scrutiny and the keeping of a reflective log were all used to mitigate this challenge.

Findings

Please see Table 2.

1. Affirming the career change

a. Rejection of the old path

Participants reported that completing the BPS intervention helped them to feel more certain that their current or previous career paths were not right for them, which in turn helped them to reaffirm their decision to explore a career change.

'It's made me more sure, because not once in any of the four days did my future self look like the job I'm in now.' (P3)

'When I thought about what it would have been had I continued in that job, it was still a lovely happy life... but it would have been kind of boring.' (P2)

b. Affirmation of the new path

Additionally, for three out of four of the participants, completing the BPS intervention also helped them to reaffirm that their new chosen career path was right for them.

'It was definitely clear that when I see this sort of successful future and how that looks, I'm doing the thing I'm currently retraining in.' (P1)

'The place where I am going is far more intrinsic and authentic to me.' (P2)

'It kind of like affirmed to me that that's what I want to do.' (P4)

These three participants also reported that affirming their new path created positive emotion – for example:

'That felt quite good.' (P2)

2. It's about more than just work

a. Exploring career in the context of wider life

Unprompted, all participants identified that the intervention made them consider their career in the context of their wider life, with some expressing that this was the first time they had done this.

'We know we want kids but never thought very far into the future at how it might look in conjunction with like a career as well [...] that was the first time I've ever visualised how it might actually work in reality and seen in a practical sense that it could still all work together.' (P1)

'The way that I approached it was to think about life as a whole and rounded life, not just career. I then retrofitted career around that.' (P2)

'I think it made me realise that my career is maybe not as important as I thought it was.' (P3)

'I just want to feel better as a person [...] I do think that having a change in career that is more fulfilling and helping people will make me feel more fulfilled.' (P4)

This context looked different for each participant, but it was clear that considering their career as a wider part of their lives felt important to them when completing this intervention.

b. Focusing on feelings

Similarly, all participants reported that they focused more on feelings rather than tangible goals when completing the intervention, with some reporting that this surprised them.

'Long term (the career change) would bring me happiness.' (P1)

'I was writing about feelings a lot rather than what I could actually see it looking like.' (P3)

'I wanna feel content, I wanna feel confident, I wanna feel good in myself.' (P4)

3. Connecting with authentic self

a. Time to focus on self and explore own desires

All participants expressed that completing this intervention was the first time they had spent time focusing on themselves and their own desires in any great depth.

'It gave you twenty minutes a day for thinking about the future which I don't really do.' (P2)

'I've never actually thought about this, I don't really think that far in advance [...] I've never spent that time on myself before.' (P4)

Additionally, some participants commented that the intervention provided a safe space to explore their feelings, for example:

'I could use it as a space just to try things out.' (P3)

b. Raising self-awareness

Two of the four participants commented that completing the intervention made them realise there were elements of life they felt uncertain about, thus raising their self-awareness.

'It made me think about [...] things in my life that there are question marks around.' (P2)

'To sit down and think I don't really know what I want, that was quite a shock [...]. There's just so much noise, it's hard to know [...]. I'm like what do I want? I don't know what I want.' (P3)

c. Rejection of expectations and social norms

As part of that exploration of the authentic self, another common theme was the rejection of expectations and social norms.

'It doesn't necessarily have to take this sort of really linear route, and you know it could be more interesting to sort of look a bit different.' (P1)

'I always think I have to do things [...] because someone's told me, but (completing this intervention) is when I felt like actually able to delve into what it is that I want.' (P4)

Most participants expressed that the intervention felt like a safe place to explore their own desires, which in turn helped them to reject previously held beliefs or external expectations.

4. Thinking about the future helps in the present

a. Self-concordant motivation

All participants reported that exploring possible future selves helped them to take action in the present moment, and built their levels of motivation and determination.

'It's given me [...] that determination to keep going with it and to carry it on and see it through all the way.' (P1)

'(There's a) decision that I need to make now, and it made me realise what I should do with that.' (P2)

'I was feeling motivated by writing, I was feeling like, cool, I'm gonna have a good day and I'm gonna work towards getting to what I've been thinking about.' (P4)

b. Building confidence

Two out of four participants commented that reflecting on their best possible future self helped to build their sense of confidence and self-belief.

'You know, everything that I wrote about, I will get there.' (P1)

This increase in confidence also appeared to be linked to an acknowledgement of the progress already made.

'I'm already halfway to getting the qualification that I need to make that dream a reality.' (P1)

'I've done these two postgraduate certificates now so I'm actually on my way.' (P4)

c. More able to deal with ambiguity

Unprompted, two of the four participants reported that completing the intervention had

made them feel more able to deal with the ambiguity that comes with changing careers.

'Anything can happen and you know, I'll be okay [...]. I can still get where I want to go even if the worst happens and I lose my job.' (P1)

'It's okay to just keep going, see what comes up, because things always do. I'm always stressing and it always works out.' (P3)

It appears that exploring potential future selves helped these participants to psychologically adjust to change.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experience of using the BPS intervention when considering a career change, aiming to add deeper understanding as to how positive psychology interventions can support career changers. This section discusses the findings and the potential implications for coaches.

The findings suggest that completing the BPS intervention was overall a positive and useful experience for participants. Firstly, it increased participants' engagement with their careers and the career change they had in mind, both rejecting their old career path, and for some, affirming their new choice. This appears to align with the findings of Archer & Yates' (2017) pilot positive psychology coaching programme targeted at career changers, where participants experienced an increase in career engagement and self-awareness.

Participants reported an increase in authentic self-awareness as a result of exploring their own desires and uncertainties, and this also led to a rejection of expectations and societal norms for some. These findings are in keeping with previous studies that demonstrate the effectiveness of BPS in raising self-awareness (King, 2001; Round & Burke, 2018).

Participants were able to engage with the four dimensions of career adaptability resources, or the 4Cs, which comprise

concern, control, curiosity, and confidence (Savickas and Porfeli, 2012). All four participants reported that completing this intervention was the first time they had spent a significant amount of time looking ahead (concern) and there was a recognition that actions taken in the present moment would impact on future outcomes (control). The nature of the intervention meant that participants had the opportunity to explore future selves (curiosity), and for some of the participants there was a recognition that the best possible selves they imagined were achievable (confidence). As increased career adaptability is positively associated with proactive coping and the attainment of alternative employment of better quality (Klehe et al., 2012), it would appear that the intervention is a useful tool for coaches supporting career changers.

Participants reported that completing the intervention helped them to draw a connection between their short term actions and long term outcomes, and also increased their capacity to deal with ambiguity as they navigate through the career change process. This appears to validate previous findings in the literature which suggest that there is a link between future-oriented thinking and proactive coping (Klehe et al., 2012), and that exploration of 'possible selves' can support psychological adjustment to change (Rivkin & Taylor, 1999). Additionally, writing about their best possible future selves helped some participants increase their levels of self-concordant motivation and build confidence, supporting Maddux's theory (2009) that self-efficacy beliefs can be influenced by imagined experiences.

Completing the intervention allowed participants to not only think about their proposed career change, but to also explore the bigger picture of their lives. Unprompted, all participants discussed their career in the context of their wider life, with equal or greater importance being given to other areas such as family, personal values or leisure. Additionally, participants also articulated that when imagining their best possible

selves, their focus was predominantly on how they would feel, as opposed to what they would have or achieve. This is consistent with findings in the literature that suggest that the millennial generation desire a greater fit between their personal situations and roles than other generations (Gong et al., 2018) and place greater importance on work-life balance than non-millennials (Twenge et al., 2010). These findings may suggest that when supporting millennial coachees as they navigate a career change, it is important to take a more holistic approach and use tools that allow them to explore their career in the context of their wider life.

Whilst participants reported positive outcomes such as increased confidence, self-awareness and certainty in their decisions, it's important to note that completing the intervention was not without challenge for some. Half of participants reported that using the BPS intervention raised their awareness of areas of their life where they were experiencing uncertainty, and that this was at times unpleasant or confronting. This adds some weight to the claims by Parks & Biswas-Diener (2013) that writing about future possible selves is not always a pleasant experience and can be particularly challenging for anxious participants. It is clear that further qualitative exploration is needed in order to better understand the lived experience of using this intervention for those who are anxious, and how this impacts on their experience.

Implications for practice

This study contributes new knowledge to the research exploring how positive psychology interventions can be applied and used within the career coaching domain. The use of a qualitative approach allowed for rich data to be collected and insights pertaining to the specific experience of using a PPI when considering a career change by people who were living through the process of changing their jobs.

Based on the findings of this study, it appears that the BPS intervention provides a useful framework for career coaching and

equips career coaches with a valuable tool. It gives career changers the chance to connect with their authentic desires, build trust in their decisions and increase self-concordant motivation and self-efficacy, all of which result in an increase in career adaptability. Additionally, the intervention provided a safe space for participants to explore their desires and the role of their careers in the wider context of their lives, both of which seem to be important for millennial career changers, specifically. Whilst this study relied on participants completing this intervention alone, having the opportunity to discuss their experiences in coaching conversations could further enhance these positive outcomes.

This intervention could provide a useful jumping off point for career change conversations with coachees as it provides them with a framework through which to explore their ideas and desires, which could lead to more fruitful and productive conversations within the coaching space. It is important that coaches are aware that not all coachees may have a wholly positive experience of this intervention, and that they ensure coachees feel supported throughout the process – this can be managed via effective communication with the coachee, for example, by explaining what support is available for coachees if the intervention causes any negative emotions for them. Alternatively, the intervention could be completed immediately before a coaching session so that the coachee can explore any questions that arise with the support of the coach. As a career coaching community, it would be interesting to explore the best way of integrating this intervention into the career coaching process - for example, conducting further research to establish at which stage of the process it would be most effective to use this intervention.

Limitations and future research

Researching the lived experience of using the BPS intervention has shown that further qualitative research in this area could better support the understanding of the psycho-

logical processes underpinning this intervention and the varying situations in which this intervention could be utilised. Specifically, it would be beneficial to understand what makes this intervention feel more challenging to some participants than others, and what the implications of this are for using it within the career coaching domain.

Whilst recruitment was not limited by gender, only participants who identified as female applied to take part in the study. It would therefore be interesting to conduct this study with a mixed gender or male participant pool to see if similar findings are produced. The limitations of this research mean that the intervention was not used within an existing coaching relationship, therefore it was not possible to evaluate whether the intervention enhances the career coaching process - further research into how this potentially changes the experience could be beneficial. As outlined above, it would also be interesting to experiment with using this intervention at different stages of the career change and career coaching process in order to evaluate when it is most effective. Finally, given the ongoing changing nature of working patterns, it would be interesting to explore how the findings from this study could be applied within a workplace setting in order to improve employee engagement and job satisfaction amongst millennials.

It is important to note that the qualitative nature of this study means that all findings are idiographic and not generalisable.

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Conclusion

This study explored how millennial career changers experienced the BPS intervention, and what the potential implications of that are for career coaches. The data collected contributes new insight around how positive psychology interventions can support career coaching, with the findings highlighting that the BPS intervention was useful in helping participants to affirm their decision to change career, explore their careers in the context of their wider lives, connect with their authentic selves and build important resources such as confidence and psychological adjustment to change. These preliminary findings indicate that the BPS intervention could provide a useful framework for career changers to explore their ideas and desires, which could ultimately lead to more fruitful career coaching conversations. With working patterns continuing to change, it would be useful to explore this area of research further.

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A systematic review of coaching client characteristics

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With increasing evidence about the effectiveness of workplace and executive coaching as an organisational development intervention, research has turned to the components that may predict coaching outcome variance. The 'common factors' model from therapeutic outcome research suggests that 'client and extratherapeutic factors' is the single greatest contributing variable. This systematic review determines all statistically significant client factor variables from the peer-reviewed coaching research literature, with 17 distinct factors from quantitative studies and 22 factors from qualitative studies. It is hoped that the three most frequently identified client factors ('willingness or motivation to change', 'commitment to the relationship/process' and 'openness') may be used as predictor variables in future research to bring focus to what has been a disparate field of study to date.

Keywords: Coaching psychology; Common factors; Client factors; Coachability.

Coaching psychology & systematic reviews

A S DETAILED in Grant and O'Connor (2019), there has been an increase in the quantity of peer-reviewed coaching psychology research published in recent years. Their audit stated that over 1,800 studies were published between 2013–2017, compared to approximately 1300 in the preceding twelve years. This maturation of coaching psychology now allows findings to be aggregated and synthesised to generate coaching psychology meta-analyses (such as Burt & Talati, 2017; Wang, Lai, Xu & McDowall, 2021) and systematic reviews (such as Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018; Müller & Kotte, 2020). A systematic review (SR) is a research design which seeks to address a single question by identifying, selecting, appraising and synthesising all secondary data relevant to that question (Bettany-Saltikov & McSherry, 2016). It is differentiated from literature reviews, scoping reviews and other similar activities by applying a rigorous, predetermined set of inclusion criteria to maximise the possibility of generating the best possible information concerning the research question (National Institute for Health Research, 2010).

Although the use of SRs has spread into social care, psychology and other fields, within its source discipline of health research it is typically positioned at the top of hierarchies of evidence. Cochrane (1972) proposed that SRs should use the evidence from randomised controlled trials to address outcome questions concerning the efficacy of particular medicines or courses of treatment. Many of the protocols that exist for the conducting of SRs are still informed by these assumptions.

Multiple coaching psychology SRs and meta-analyses (such as Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018; Theeboom et al., 2014), have focused exclusively on coaching outcomes but these have been complemented by SRs on a broadening range of coaching topics. Examples include Bozer and Jones (2018), whose SR sought to identify determinants of workplace coaching and produced seven themes (self-efficacy, coaching motivation, goal orientation, trust, interpersonal attraction, feedback intervention and supervisory support), or Lai and McDowell (2014), who

conducted a SR of the literature concerning the attributes required by coaching psychologists to aid the effectiveness of coaching relationships and, through them, coaching outcomes.

Why a systematic review of client factors is needed

The ‘common factors’ model (Asay & Lambert, 1999), built on a review of decades of rigorous research into psychotherapy, details four factors asserted to determine variances in therapy outcomes, alongside their respective percentage weightings. ‘Client/extratherapeutic factors’ are argued to be the single largest determinant of therapy efficacy (weighted at 40 per cent of outcome variance), although Asay and Lambert’s weightings for the four factors are not derived from any statistical analysis. Whilst it cannot directly be assumed that coaching has the same effectiveness determinants as other ‘helping-by-talking’ interventions (Smither, 2011), numerous researchers have argued for the conceptual relevance of the ‘common factors’ framework for coaching psychology research (see Grant, 2014; MacKie, 2015; McKenna & Davies, 2009; Smith & Brummel, 2013; Tee, 2013).

‘Client factors’ have been defined as ‘Those that exist ‘within’ the person of the client... In other words, they are identifiable outside of what takes place in therapy... and are relatively enduring and stable ways of being.’ (Cooper, 2008; p.62). The term ‘factors’ is used in the therapy research literature to include ‘objective’ factors, such as gender or age, and ‘inferred’ factors, such as personality traits. Given the potential impact that some of these factors, in isolation or combination, may have on coaching effectiveness, a systematic review of all research that has examined client traits within a workplace coaching context is likely to inform coaching psychology research and practice by drawing reliable conclusions. These may include being able to predict which potential clients are best suited to coaching and which might ethically be better

directed to alternative development interventions, what potential client traits may form the early focus for coaching working alliances as blockers towards progress on desired goals and whether there may be a need for pre-coaching interventions that would then allow clients to gain more benefit from their working alliance with their coach.

Despite the importance of client factors as a predictor variable, no previous review has systematically focused on examining the evidence for the client factor variables that researchers have hypothesised as contributing towards workplace coaching effectiveness. Whilst two systematic reviews have included client factors within their broader remit, Graßmann and Schermuly’s (2020) systematic review only reviewed studies that generated quantitative data. In addition, their focus was on both client and coach factors, but those that might contribute to an effective working alliance, rather than to effective outcomes from coaching. Pandolfi’s (2020) review focused solely on studies regarding executive coaching, and featured inclusion criteria for the review limited to literature reviews, systematic reviews and meta-analyses, resulting in 18 papers being scrutinised.

Therefore, the primary aim of this current review was to determine which client factors have been researched in the context of coaching in the workplace and how these factors have been argued to relate to other hypothesised variables in determining coaching’s effectiveness as a workplace intervention. The review question was: *What are the client factors hypothesised as influencing the effectiveness of workplace coaching?*

Method

Within the boundaries of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, there is no single standard procedure for conducting a SR. Processes range from five steps (Khan, Kunz, Kleijnen & Antes, 2003) to nine steps (Dickson, Cherry & Boland, 2014), with the headings and specific activities varying

between these process models. Within the coaching psychology SRs published to date, there have been deviations from established norms that exist across the different processes. For example, Grover and Furnham (2016) included non-peer reviewed, non-empirical practitioner pieces within their review and Blackman et al. (2016) used their SR to address five research questions, rather than the typical one. In this instance, the review process was conducted in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff & Altman, 2009). This included a detailed protocol for the SR being created, submitted for publication in protocol databases and circulated amongst the research team to guide the execution of the data gathering and analysis phases.

Eligibility criteria

Given the breadth of practice and definition of the term ‘coaching’, it was important that clear eligibility criteria were established prior to the research databases being interrogated, as follows.

The types of study to be included were those (i) produced in the medium of English; (ii) disseminated in peer-reviewed publications; (iii) where the coaching activity researched fits the ‘workplace coaching’ definition (Bozer & Jones, 2018), in that the coach has no supervisory authority over the client; and (iv) where one or more client factors were incorporated into the design for quantitative studies or, for qualitative studies, identified as emerging themes.

With regard to the populations to be featured in included studies, (v) these needed to be coaching clients of working age (16-65) in (vi) individual face-to-face coaching relationships focused upon their working life. This eligibility criterion recognises ‘work’ as more than simply paid employment. It uses Warr’s (2013) definition of work to allow the inclusion of coaching clients who were unemployed but working towards obtaining a job, working as students

in further or higher education or working in unpaid roles (such as interns or volunteers) at the time of the coaching intervention.

As this systematic review had the objective of comprehensively covering studies involving coaching client factors, it was inclusive in covering both quantitative and qualitative data. No specific research designs were excluded, nor were any date restrictions imposed on the age of the research. The intervention (vii) needed to be labelled as ‘coaching’ by the researcher (as opposed to, for example, counselling, mentoring or one-to-one training), but studies were not be excluded due to any particular coaching approach or method. Articles also (viii) needed to include primary empirical data and (ix) feature clients assumed to be neuro-typically functioning. This meant research concerning clients with diagnosed mental or behavioural conditions, such as alexithymia (Cilliers, 2012) or borderline personality disorder (Rizvi, Dimeff, Skutch, Carroll & Linehan, 2011), that formed the focus of the coaching intervention were excluded. Where studies included non-coaching experimental conditions, the *Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions* (Higgins et al., 2017) guidelines were adhered to, with data from all relevant groups extracted and included.

Finally, as this systematic review is concerned with client factors as independent variables, and as the coaching research literature to date has not focused on consensus dependent variables, research was not included or excluded on the basis of the outcomes featured in any given study. Similarly, all variables meeting the Cooper (2008) ‘client factors’ definition were included, whether these were objective or inferred.

Literature search

An initial search of the database at PROSPERO, an international register of systematic reviews, was conducted to ensure no systematic reviews of coaching client factors were already being undertaken. A manual scoping

search was then conducted of four journals that routinely contain coaching or coaching psychology studies to ensure there had been some research that meet the eligibility criteria. In addition, a published researcher in the field of coaching client factors was contacted to advise as to whether they knew of any pending studies relevant to this SR. From this initial scoping, it was determined that an interrogation of research databases would be worthwhile.

An electronic search was conducted in June 2018 of the following databases: Academic Search Complete, Business source complete, CINAHL Plus, EMBASE, Emerald Insight, MEDLINE, ProQuest, PsycArticles, PsycINFO, PubMed, Science Direct, Scopus, SSCI, Web of Science and Zotus. Due to the cross-disciplinary nature of coaching and coaching psychology research, the decision was made to interrogate databases from a range of disciplines, including social sciences, business studies and biomedicine. As the client using the services of a coach is referred to in the research literature using many different terms (such as learner, executive, player or coachee), the keyword 'coach*' was used in the database searches to ensure all studies concerning coaching would be identified.

Study selection

Once duplications from across the databases had been eliminated, the search strategy yielded an initial set of 23,281 peer-reviewed articles (Figure 1). Each of these articles were independently screened at title and abstract level by two reviewers using reference management software. Full texts were then obtained for each article that appeared to be of relevance. The two reviewers once more independently screened these full

texts against the eligibility criteria. At both abstract and full text screening phases, any disagreement between the two reviewers regarding eligibility was resolved by a third supervisory reviewer.

As detailed in Figure 1, following the screening of titles and abstracts and also a snowball search of new citations from eligible full text articles, 230 studies were subjected to full text review. There were 183 texts excluded for seven reasons (with multiple reasons applying to some texts), as follows: three texts were excluded because they featured clients with diagnosable mental health conditions; ten texts were excluded because the coaching was not one-to-one and/or was not conducted face-to-face; 17 did not feature an intervention labelled as coaching; 17 had not been published in peer-reviewed journals; 28 texts concerned coaching where the coach was the line manager of the client; 58 texts did not have client factor predictor, mediator or moderator variables; 88 of the texts contained no primary empirical data.

Results

Preliminary synthesis

As a result of the full-text review, there were 47 studies that met the eligibility criteria and were therefore included in this review. One study (Blackman & Moscardo, 2012) was from an edited volume, with the other 46 appearing in peer-reviewed journals. Of these, 26 were featured in specialist coaching or coaching psychology journals, with the remainder in publications focusing on leadership, human resources and other related disciplines. Table 1 provides a condensed summary of the data extracted from the included studies.

Figure 1: Summary of the screening process (framework adapted from Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff & Altman, 2009).

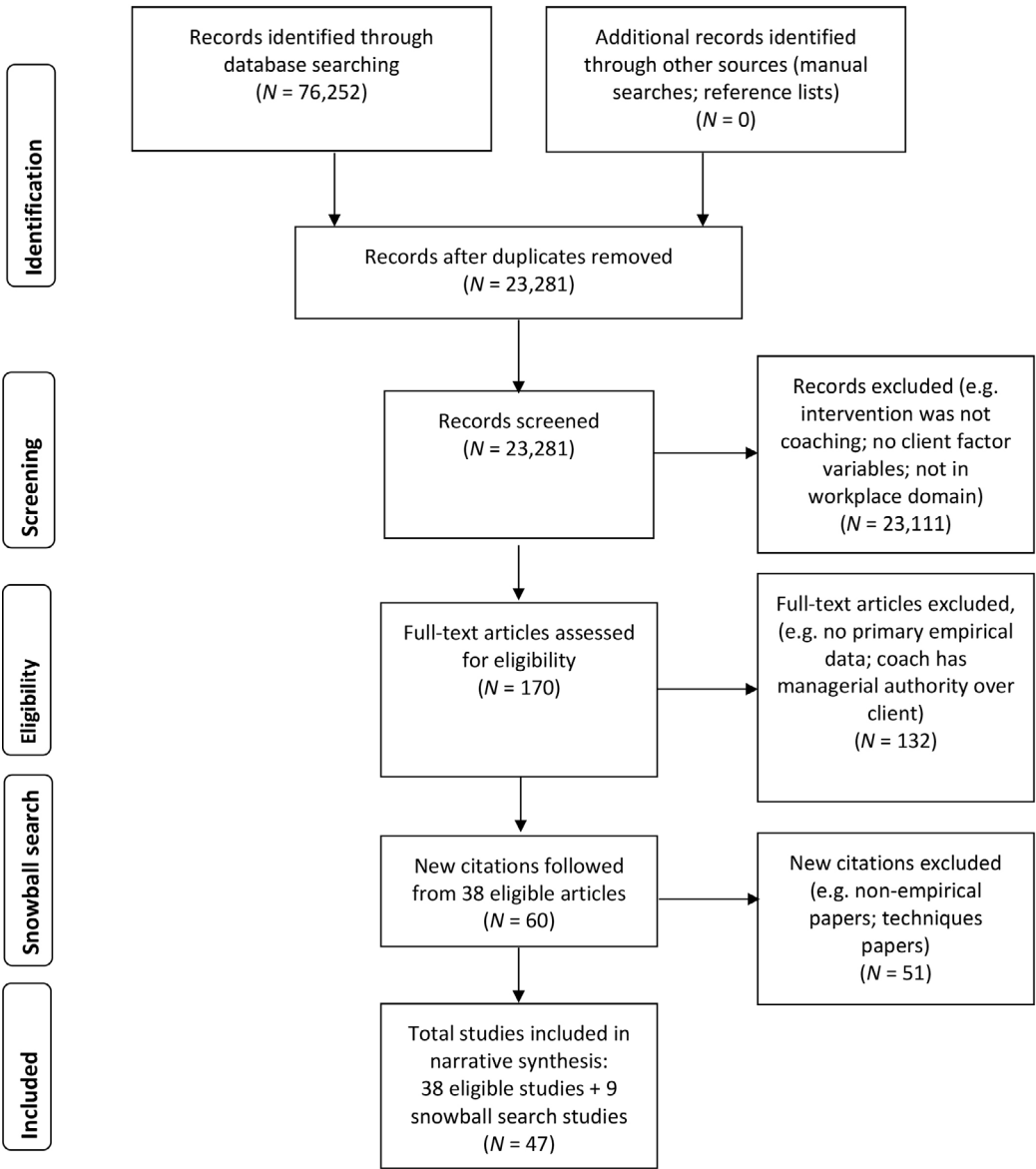


Table 1: Summary of included articles ($N=47$). Unk=Unknown.

Ref. ID	Citation	Design and data source	N	Client Factor-related findings (quantitative) or themes (qualitative)
01	Alvey Et Barclay (2007)	Qualitative. Content analysis. Telephone interviews.	27	Themes: (a) client readiness (b) contextual factors
02	Audet Et Couteret (2012)	Qualitative. Analysis method: Unk. Interviews.	12	Themes: (a) receptive to coaching (b) Committed to the relationship
03	Augustijnen, Schnitzer Et van Esbroeck (2011)	Qualitative. Grounded theory. Interviews.	10	Themes: (a) Openness to introspection
04	Baron Et Morin (2009) *	Quantitative. Hierarchical regression. Survey design and objective data.	97	Findings: Client motivation to transfer significantly correlates with coach-client working alliance.
05	Baron, Morin Et Morin (2011) *	Quantitative. ANCOVA Survey design.	97	Findings: Client's pre-coaching self-efficacy was a non-significant predictor of post-coaching self-efficacy.
06	Blackman Et Moscardo (2012)	Quantitative. T-test, ANOVA, multiple regression. Survey design.	114	Findings: Client age (30–39 and 50+ significantly higher than <30 and 40–49) related to client perception of overall coaching effectiveness.
07	Bouwer Et van Egmond (2012)	Qualitative. Analysis method: Unk. Survey design.	8	Themes: (a) Client's personal commitment (b) Readiness to change
08	Boyce, Jackson Et Neal (2010)	Quantitative. Survey design.	74	Findings: Client commitment significantly predicted leadership performance.
09	Boysen-Rotelli (2018)	Quantitative. Survey design.	227	Findings: Seven client characteristics rated highly, of which one ('Being coachable and open to the results of feedback from the coach') is a trait. However, the other six characteristics were behaviours rather than traits.

Note: * Articles 04 and 05 are presumed to be derived from a shared data set, but examine different variables, so have been treated as distinct for the purposes of this review.

Table 1: Summary of included articles (N=47). Unk=Unknown. (Continued).

Ref. ID	Citation	Design and data source	N	Client Factor-related findings (quantitative) or themes (qualitative)
10	Bozer Et Joo (2015) **	Quantitative. Multiple regression. Survey design.	68	Findings: Client learning goal orientation significantly related to feedback receptivity.
				Client developmental self-efficacy significantly related to feedback receptivity and self-awareness.
11	Bozer, Joo Et Santora (2015) **	Quantitative. ANOVA and Multiple regression. Survey design and objective data.	68	Findings: Client gender was a significant predictor of improved self-awareness, with female clients improving more than male clients.
12	Bozer, Sarros Et Santora (2013) **	Quantitative. ANOVA and hierarchical regression. Survey design.	197	Findings: Client's pre-training motivation, learning goal orientation, feedback receptivity and developmental self-efficacy all significantly related to self-reported improvement in job performance.
				Client's feedback receptivity significantly related to improvement in job performance (as reported by supervisor).
13	Campone (2014)	Qualitative. Thematic analysis.	19	Themes: (a) optimistic nature (b) orientation toward learning (c) expressed need for compassion and patience.
14	Cantrell Et Hughes (2008)	Sequential mixed method design: Survey then interview.	22	Findings: Client personal self-efficacy significantly predicted post-intervention personal efficacy, pre-intervention collective efficacy and pre-intervention implementation of literary practices

Note: ** Articles 10, 11 and 12 are presumed to be derived from a shared data set, but examine different variables, so have been treated as distinct for the purposes of this review.

Table 1: Summary of included articles ($N=47$). Unk=Unknown. (Continued).

Ref. ID	Citation	Design and data source	N	Client Factor-related findings (quantitative) or themes (qualitative)
15	de Haan, Duckworth, Birch & Jones (2013) ^{***}	Quantitative. Correlations, t-tests and multiple regression.	156	Findings: Client self-efficacy significantly correlates with 'effectiveness'.
16	de Haan, Grant, Burger & Eriksson (2016)	Quantitative. Retrospective survey design.	1895	Findings: Client's generalised self-efficacy significantly correlates with 'effectiveness'
17	Dodds & Grajfoner (2018)	Qualitative: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Interviews.	4	Themes: (a) their cultural background, which manifests through different value systems and different cultural dimensions, such as norms of power distance.
18	Duckworth & de Haan (2009) ^{***}	Quantitative. Survey design.	183	Findings: Client self-efficacy is significantly related to outcome measure.
19	Ellam-Dyson & Palmer (2011)	Quantitative. T-test.	41	Findings: Client's unconditional self-acceptance significantly correlates with engagement in coaching.
20	Gallagher & Bennett (2018)	Qualitative. Thematic analysis. Reflective journals.	13	Themes: (a) client receptivity to coaching.
21	Gan & Chong (2015)	Quantitative. Multiple regression.	172	Findings: Client commitment is significantly related to 'coaching effectiveness'
22	Jones, Woods & Hutchinson (2014)	Quantitative. Correlation.	30	Findings: Client extraversion significantly related to perceived coaching effectiveness.
23	Koroleva (2016)	Qualitative. Grounded theory. Interviews.	12	Themes: (a) Being ready for change (b) Being committed to change

Note: ^{***} Article 18 may be an analysis of the initial data for Article 15.

Table 1: Summary of included articles (N=47). Unk=Unknown. (Continued).

Ref. ID	Citation	Design and data source	N	Client Factor-related findings (quantitative) or themes (qualitative)
24	Kretschmar (2010)	Qualitative. Grounded theory.	27	Themes: (a) Culture and Class (b) Knowledge about Coaching (c) Access to Coaching, (time, cost, client selection) (d) Psychological Interpretations, (openness, healthy self-esteem, ability to take feedback and reflect, a degree of psychological and emotional stability)
25	Lam (2016)	Mixed methods. Focus group and survey design.	68	Themes: Qualitative data were mapped against Hofstede's culture dimensions (a) Power distance (b) Individualism (c) Masculinity (d) Uncertainty avoidance (e) Long-term orientation.
26	Lim, Oh, Ju & Kim (2019)	Quantitative. Correlation. Survey design.	249	Findings: Client career goal commitment significantly related to 'job search behaviour'.
27	Lopez (2017)	Qualitative Analysis method: Unk. Telephone interviews.	10	Themes: (a) Motivation to change (b) Buy-in to coach (c) Accept responsibility to change (d) Reflective thinking (e) Recognise the need to change (f) Practicing new behaviour (g) Self-awareness.
28	MacKie (2015)	Quantitative. ANCOVA and mixed ANOVA.	30	Findings: Enhancement of transformational leadership significantly predicted by coaching readiness (Cohort one only) and by core self-evaluations (Cohort two only).

Table 1: Summary of included articles ($N=47$). Unk=Unknown. (Continued).

Ref. ID	Citation	Design and data source	N	Client Factor-related findings (quantitative) or themes (qualitative)
29	Martin, Oades & Caputi (2014)	Qualitative. Interviews.	5	Themes: (a) client awareness of their own personality (b) motivation to change one or more personality facets.
30	McEnrue, Groves & Shen (2009)	Quantitative. T-test and chi-squares. Treatment & control conditions.	135	Findings: Client receptivity to feedback significantly related to emotional intelligence (EI) training outcomes. Self-efficacy/Receptivity to Feedback and Self-efficacy/ Openness to experience interactions were predictors of EI training gains.
31	McGovern, Lindemann, Vergara, Murphy, Barker & Warrenfeltz (2001)	Qualitative. Analysis method: Unk. Telephone interviews.	100	Themes: (a) executive's commitment to the process.
32	Mosteo, Batista-Foguet, McKeever and Serlavós (2015)	Quantitative. T-tests and ANOVAs. Survey design.	76	Findings: Client's generalised self-efficacy significantly correlates with 'personal vision'
33	Nanduri (2018)	Qualitative: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Interviews.	7	Themes: (a) concentration and self-discipline (b) intrinsic motivation

Table 1: Summary of included articles (N=47). Unk=Unknown. (Continued).

Ref. ID	Citation	Design and data source	N	Client Factor-related findings (quantitative) or themes (qualitative)
34	Rank & Gray (2017)	Quantitative. Regression analysis. Survey design.	59	Findings: (a) How well the client thought the coach performed ('coaching composite') was more strongly and positively associated with clients' relationship satisfaction among clients low in self-presentation ability (SPA). (b) The coaching composite was more strongly and positively associated with clients' self-reflection among clients high in SPA. (c) The coaching dimensions (i) confidence enhancement and (ii) relationship building were more strongly and positively associated with relationship satisfaction among clients low in SPA. (d) The coaching dimensions (i) goal development and (ii) past reappraisal were more strongly and positively associated with self-reflection among clients high in SPA.
35	Ratiu & Baban (2015)	Qualitative. Thematic analysis. Interviews.	15	Themes: (a) openness (b) availability for change (c) willingness to try new approaches.

Table 1: Summary of included articles ($N=47$). Unk=Unknown. (Continued).

Ref. ID	Citation	Design and data source	N	Client Factor-related findings (quantitative) or themes (qualitative)
36	Rekalde, Landeta & Albizu (2015)	Qualitative. Hybrid Delphi (Focus group, Nominal group and Delphi).	34	Themes: Rated 'very high': (a) motivation to learn (b) responsibility for own learning (c) commitment to the process Rated 'high': (d) cognitive flexibility (openness to new alternatives) (e) self-awareness (f) self-effectiveness (g) timely moment for the manager (h) self-esteem (i) the client grants the coach the power to direct his change Rated 'medium': (j) position held in the organization (k) age (and age difference to coach) Rated 'low': (l) gender (own and own compared with coach gender).
37	Salomaa (2015)	Qualitative: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Interviews.	25	Themes: (a) openness (b) internal motivation (c) ability to trust
38	Schermuly (2018)	Mixed methods. Open field surveys and t-tests. Survey design.	115	Findings: Client neuroticism and change motivation significantly related to client drop out.
39	Scriffignano (2011)	Quantitative. Correlations. Survey design.	110	Findings: Client learning goal orientation significantly correlated with level of professional development.

Table 1: Summary of included articles (N=47). Unk=Unknown. (Continued).

Ref. ID	Citation	Design and data source	N	Client Factor-related findings (quantitative) or themes (qualitative)
40	Smith Et Brummel (2013)	Quantitative. Correlation and ANOVA. Coded interviews.	30	Findings: Client involvement and competency developability both significantly correlate with competency change
41	Sonesh, Coultas, Marlow, Lacerenza, Reyes Et Salas (2015)	2 x Quantitative. Correlation and multiple regression. Survey and interview design.	206	Findings: Client motivation significantly correlates with both goal attainment and client insight.
42	Stevens Jr. (2005)	Qualitative. Analysis method: Unk. Interviews.	7	Themes: (a) willingness to consider issues from a different point of view (b) Openness to influence; willingness to be helped (c) Capable of trusting another person and engaging in honest, open dialogue (d) Psychologically mature and healthy.
43	Stewart, Palmer, Wilkin Et Kerrin (2008)	Quantitative. Correlation and multiple regression. Survey design.	110	Findings: Client conscientiousness significantly correlates with coaching transfer. Client openness, generalised self-efficacy and (negatively) emotional stability correlates with 'coaching transfer application'.
44	Susing (2016)	Qualitative. Grounded theory. Interviews.	12	Themes: (a) mindset not supportive of change. Other client themes were related to behaviours.

Table 1: Summary of included articles ($N=47$). Unk=Unknown. (Continued).

Ref. ID	Citation	Design and data source	N	Client Factor-related findings (quantitative) or themes (qualitative)
45	Tamir Et Finfer (2016)	Quantitative. Correlation and regression analysis. Survey design.	72	Findings: Client age significantly correlates with (a) self-reflection (b) degree of change (c) Hogan dimensions of dutiful, diligent and skeptical. Client HDS 'Dutiful' score significantly negatively correlated with self-reflection. Client responsiveness, self-reflection and non-defensiveness significantly correlated with degree of change.
46	Tee, Shearer Et Roderique-Davies (2017)	Quantitative. Multiple regression. Survey design.	45	Findings: All non-significant.
47	Vandev eer, Lowman, Pearlman Et Brannick (2016)	Mixed methods. (a) Interviews and then (b) survey.	(a) 27 (b) 342	Themes: (a) motivation (b) willingness to learn (c) openness to feedback.

Quality assessment and synthesis

As stated, SRs are widely used in medical and healthcare research to determine the efficacy of interventions. The norm, therefore, is to judge the results of the eligible studies against threats to internal or external validity: any aspect of the research that may have led to the over- or under-estimation of an intervention's effect (Heyvaert, Hannes & Onghena, 2016). Study designs are mapped against Department of Health (1999) or equivalent hierarchies, with RCTs judged as inherently better than observational studies, regardless of the research question being addressed. When SRs are restricted to experimental designs and concerned with determining efficacy, the argument for adopting this hierarchy as a yardstick of quality is strengthened. However, the breadth of research questions that SRs are now used to address includes matters of policy, practice and research; of feasibility and intervention development, as well as effectiveness

(Harden & Thomas, 2005). As this review is systematically surveying the client factors hypothesised as inputs, moderators or mediators in coaching interventions, rather than seeking to determine issues of efficacy or effectiveness, the use of the medicine research hierarchy as a criterion for determining quality would not be appropriate. Furthermore, the range of research designs included as eligible in this SR, be they qualitative, quantitative or mixed method, means that the hierarchy of quantitative designs does not include the breadth of necessary design categories to make it of use in this study of quality classification.

Data on aspects of the included studies that would inform any such evaluation were therefore collated using a framework for concomitantly appraising the quality of quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research (Pluye, Gagnon, Griffiths & Johnson-Lafleur, 2009). Based upon a thematic data analysis of the quality

Table 2: Quality appraisal criteria (Pluye et al., 2009).

Types of primary studies	Methodological quality criteria
1. Qualitative	■ Qualitative objective or question ■ Appropriate qualitative approach or design or method ■ Description of the context ■ Description of participants and justification of sampling ■ Description of qualitative data collection and analysis ■ Discussion of researchers' reflexivity
2. Quantitative – experimental	■ Appropriate sequence generation and/or randomisation ■ Allocation concealment and/or blinding ■ Complete outcome data and/or low withdrawal/drop-out
3. Quantitative – observational	■ Appropriate sampling and sample ■ Justification of measurements (validity and standards) ■ Control of confounding variables
4. Mixed methods	■ Justification of the mixed methods design ■ Combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection-analysis techniques or procedures ■ Integration of qualitative and quantitative data or results

appraisal procedures used in 17 mixed study SRs, Pluye et al. (2009) created a scoring system for four categories of research design: qualitative, quantitative – experimental (used in this SR for all studies with control conditions), quantitative – observational (used in this SR for all single condition studies) and mixed methods. The quality criteria for each category are detailed in Table 2. The presence or absence of each criterion was scored 1/0 respectively, and a quality score generated [(number of 'presence' responses divided by the number of criteria) x 100] to describe the quality of the eligible studies in this SR.

As this systematic review adopted a broad scope of research designs eligible for inclusion, a narrative synthesis approach to data synthesis was undertaken. Popay et al. (2006) advocate narrative synthesis as a suitable approach for SRs addressing issues other than the effectiveness of interventions. It should summarise the state of knowledge regarding the review question, and do so through words and text, which does make it subject to researcher bias. To minimise this risk, this SR adhered to the narrative synthesis guidance detailed in Popay et al. (2006).

Quality appraisal results

The 47 eligible studies were grouped into four categories and appraised for quality using the criteria from Pluye et al. (2009). This resulted in a mean quality appraisal score of 62 per cent, with ten of the studies scoring 100 per cent and four scoring 0 per cent. However, there was a distinction in the quality scores across the four study type categories: the quantitative experimental studies had the lowest mean score (33 per cent), whilst the mixed methods studies all scored 100 per cent.

Of the 18 qualitative studies meeting this SR's eligibility criteria, two (#33, #37) scored 100 per cent, with none scoring zero. Each of these studies selected a qualitative approach suitable for their research question and explained the reasoning within the article. 16 of the 18 papers clearly stated a specific objective or question and 16 provided a description of the context within which the research was conducted. The quality appraisal criteria least observed were the description of participants and (particularly) a stated justification for the sampling strategy (present in eight of the 18 articles) and a discussion of the researcher's reflexivity, with only Kretzschmar (2010), Nanduri (2018) and Salomaa (2015) specifi-

Table 3: Significant coaching client factors in quantitative research studies.

Trait	Synonyms used across studies	Study #
Age		06, 45
Client's commitment	Career goal commitment	08, 21, 26
Learning goal-orientation		10, 12, 39
Developmental self-efficacy		10, 12
Gender		11
Motivation	Change motivation	12, 38, 41
Feedback receptivity		10, 12, 30
Generalised self-efficacy	Personal efficacy; self-efficacy	14, 15, 16, 18, 26, 30, 32, 43
Unconditional self-acceptance		19
Extraversion		22
Change readiness		28
Core self-evaluations		28
Openness to experience		30, 43
Self-presentation ability		34
Neuroticism	Emotional stability	38, 43
Executive involvement		40
Conscientiousness		43

cally discussing their own potential influence on the data generation and analysis.

The criterion most present in the quantitative experimental studies was 'complete outcome data and/or low withdrawal/drop-out rate', which applied to each of the six included studies. However, none of them scored for either of the other two criteria, 'appropriate sequence generation and/or randomisation' or 'allocation concealment and/or blinding', resulting in a uniform 33 per cent quality score for this category. There was a uniform 100 per cent quality score for the four mixed methods studies, with all three criteria being present across the study articles.

The largest category, quantitative observational studies, had the second lowest mean quality score (46 per cent). Of the three quality criteria, specific evidence of control of confounding variables was only found in five of the 19 study articles (10, 11, 16, 26, 32). Researchers were most likely to include a justification for the measures used (11 of the 19 articles), though there were instances

of original measures being designed, with no data provided about pilot studies or the reliability and validity characteristics of these measures. For the remaining criterion, where appropriate sampling and sample had not featured, researchers typically showed an awareness of this issue, acknowledging it as a limitation in their article.

Identified coaching client factors

This SR sought to identify all the coaching client factors that had been featured in peer-reviewed empirical studies. For studies using a quantitative design, all client factors were recorded, with those that were significantly related to the dependent variable noted in the final column of Table 1. There were 17 statistically significant coaching client factors, which are listed in Table 3. Some of the client factors that were found to be significant in one study were not found to be significant in others and, as detailed above, most quantitative studies did not meet one or more of Pluye et al.'s (2009) quality assessment criteria. In addi-

Table 4: Coaching client factors generated by qualitative studies.

Trait	Synonyms	Study #
Receptivity		01, 02, 20
Willing to be vulnerable	Willingness to be helped	01, 42
Willing to change	Motivation to change; Intrinsic motivation; availability for change; Mindset unsupportive of change	01, 02, 23, 24, 27, 29, 33, 35, 36, 37, 44, 47
Willing to disclose		01
Openness	Open to feedback; Open, honest dialogue engagement	01, 24, 35, 37, 42, 47
Committed to the relationship	Commitment to the process;	02, 07, 31, 36, 37
Openness to introspection	Reflective thinking	03, 24, 27
Being 'coachable'		09
Optimistic		13
Learning orientation	Willingness to learn	13, 47
Compassion and patience		13
Western cultural norms (such as power distance or uncertainty avoidance)		17, 25
Class		24
Knowledge about coaching		24
Healthy self-esteem		24
Psychological and emotional stability	Self-esteem; psychologically mature and healthy	24, 36, 42
Accepts responsibility to change	Responsibility for own learning;	27, 36
Self-awareness	Awareness of own personality	29, 36, 47
Self-discipline	Self-effectiveness	33, 36
Cognitive flexibility	Willing to consider things from different viewpoints	36, 42
Ability to trust		37, 42
Openness to influence		42

tion, no universally applied taxonomy of client factors has yet to be adopted within coaching psychology research. As a consequence, significantly overlapping constructs (such as 'openness' and 'feedback receptivity') or the same construct but to a greater degree of specificity (such as 'motivation' and 'change motivation') were used as variables across the reviewed studies.

Considering Cooper's (2008) definition of client factors, only two of the 17 statistically significant factors studied to date (age and gender) are objective factors, with the remainder classed as inferred client factors. Four of the traits contained in Costa and McCrae's (1992) five factor model of personality (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion and neuroticism), were all found to be

significant variables in one or more studies, with agreeableness the only exception. The majority of studied client factors were recognised traits within the differential psychology literature, often having established, valid measures in place.

For studies that generated qualitative data, the client factors that emerged from the data analysis as themes have been summarised in Table 4. Although it is recognised that there is a degree of interpretation involved, again attempts have been made to collate and link synonyms or significantly similar constructs. As a result, 22 client factors were identified within the eligible studies, although one of them ('Being coachable') may only serve as a broad construct to encapsulate all the other client factors detailed in Tables 3 and 4.

There are broad commonalities amongst some of the client factors within the qualitative and quantitative studies. Some are straightforward, such as the presence of 'learning goal orientation' and 'learning orientation' in the two lists. Other commonalities are more open to debate: to what extent is 'Openness to experience' in Table 3 the same inferred client factor as 'Openness', 'Openness to introspection' and 'Openness to influence', all of which featured in the included qualitative studies? Finally, whilst it is problematic to treat qualitative themes as quantitative data, it can be noted that certain coaching client factors emerged as themes across multiple studies. 'Willing to change' (12 studies), 'Openness' (six studies) and 'Committed to the relationship' (five studies) were the most frequently emergent client factors in this category of study.

Discussion

This is the first SR to examine the client factor variables identified by researchers as contributing towards the effectiveness of workplace coaching. Overall, this appears to be a disunified research field, with a high heterogeneity of client factors having been researched, suggesting that researchers in many instances are not building upon, testing or seeking to replicate existing findings. This

SR is not concerned with determining the predictive validity of these researched client factors. Rather, it is intended that systematically reviewing all coaching client factors deemed worthy of research to date would allow future researchers to be more grounded in the emergent evidence base when determining client factor variables of interest.

Design limitations

Many of the quality appraisal tools advocated for use in SRs assume that the review is restricted to quantitative studies and concerned with determining efficacy. The quality appraisal scoring system from Pluye et al. (2009) used in this SR allowed a wider range of study designs to be assessed. This scoring system suggests most of the quantitative studies were rated as relatively weak in quality, particularly those employing an experimental design. This is an issue that has been identified initially in coaching literature reviews (see Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011) and, latterly, in coaching SRs (see Athanassopoulou & Dopson, 2018; Grover & Furnham, 2016). Notwithstanding these concerns, statistically significant associations between coaching client factors and dependent variables were found in 22 of the 25 quantitative studies. Whilst many of these studies relied on self-report dependent variable measures, significant associations were consistently found across a range of different settings, geographic locations and populations.

Very few of the studies sought to control for confounding variables and very few used organisational-level outcome measures. Of those who did, Boyce, Jackson and Neal (2010) found that client commitment, alongside other non-client factor variables, positively affected the clients' judgements of the organisation's leadership development programme ($t(66) = 1.97, p < .05$); Cantrell and Hughes (2008) found that a client's personal self-efficacy positively correlated with their implementation of a new school literacy practice ($r = .48, p < .05$); McGovern et al. (2001) sought qualitative data from participants about both tangible and intangible benefits at an

organisational level. The remaining 44 eligible studies only sought data at an individual level of analysis.

Considering the qualitative studies, as Table 1 identifies, there were five of the 18 studies where no specific qualitative data analysis technique was stated to have been used. Alongside the absence of any discussion of the researcher's own reflexivity, both these facts point to concerns about the methodological rigour with which some of these studies were conducted.

Threats to reliability

Another theme that might suggest caution in drawing conclusions from the findings of the included studies concerns the range of competence of those nominally labelled as 'coach'. Many studies did not control for coach background, approach, formal qualification or experience level, whilst others provided no data about the coaches' characteristics. For studies that did state the background of the individuals facilitating the client's development, Audet and Couteret (2012) stated that very few had prior experience of coaching, Baron and Morin (2009) and Baron et al. (2011) used individuals that had completed a two-day training programme, Boyce et al. (2010) used academic instructors from within the client faculty, and McEnrue et al. (2009) and Tee et al. (2017) used participants from a peer coaching programme. In all these instances, and possibly in some of the studies where no coaching characteristics were provided, the variance in competence would act as a confounding variable in determining the influence of client factors on workplace coaching.

Another element of the research design where wide variance was observed was the number of coaching sessions undertaken by the clients. There were studies that did not provide this information. Of those that did, the shortest coaching engagement was one single coaching session (Baron & Morin, 2009; Mosteo et al., 2015) and the longest was a two-year coaching relationship (Stevens Jr, 2005). Although client factors are defined by

both Beutler et al. (2006) and Cooper (2008) as enduring and stable aspects of a person, they may have a degree of plasticity, meaning an individual's level of openness, compassion, optimism or the other factors detailed in Tables 3 and 4 may be different at the end of a coaching engagement compared to the start. Client maturation effects concurrent to the duration of the coaching intervention might threaten the validity of a study that seeks to determine whether coaching can cause personality change (Martin, Oades & Caputi, 2012), whilst the coaching may purposefully or coincidentally influence the strength of particular client traits. For example, research has sought to determine whether coaching can influence a client's self-efficacy (Baron & Morin, 2010) or emotional intelligence (Boyatzis, 2007). With such variance in the number of coaching sessions being run in this SR's eligible studies, there is therefore a risk that any studies measuring client factors at a single, post-intervention data point are not controlling for the client factor potentially being an outcome of the coaching, evolving over the duration of the coaching relationship, rather than a predictor of coaching effectiveness.

Emergent key client factors

Focusing specifically on the qualitative studies, 12 of the 22 included studies identified a theme concerning the client's willingness or motivation to change. Sometimes this was framed as its absence acting as a barrier to optimal outcomes being realised (Susing, 2016) or as its presence being an enabler (Koroleva, 2016). Other factors that emerged from qualitative data analysis in four or more separate studies were openness (six studies) and commitment to the relationship/process (five studies). Each of these three client factors were also studied as predictor variables in quantitative studies. As one of the motivations for this systematic review was to identify emerging client factor themes within the coaching research literature, this triangulation of data concerning commitment, openness and motivation to change suggests these three would have an

evidence base to justify focusing on them as predictor variables in any future experimental design seeking to identify specific client factors that might significantly influence workplace coaching outcomes.

Limitations

The central purpose of a SR is to identify all relevant research meeting predetermined eligibility criteria, so that an informed understanding can be reached about the current knowledge concerning any given topic. Where the focus of inquiry is a specific medial intervention to address a specific disease or health condition, standards terms would have been adopted across the researcher community, allowing the SR's purpose to more probably be fulfilled. Within coaching psychology, coaching is variously conceptualised (Ives, 2008) and there remains a heterogeneity of terms used to describe key stakeholders in the coaching activity. Given this, there is a probability that published studies may have researched an intervention that fits the definition of workplace coaching (Bozer & Jones, 2018) but where it has been otherwise labelled; for example, as 'mentoring'. Such studies would not have been identified at any point in the SR selection process, meaning their findings would be overlooked. There may be included studies that seemingly meet the workplace coaching definition but, because they provide vague or no information about the coaching characteristics, may have been wrongfully deemed eligible. For example, it is not stated whether the air force academic instructors in the Boyce et al. (2010) research held any positional authority over their undergraduates. In short, there is a risk of Type I and Type II errors, but this points more to the heterogeneity of terms within coaching psychology research than to any limitations in systematic reviews as a research method.

As detailed, the 47 eligible studies used 'coaches' who ranged from having no expe-

rience to more than a decade of professional coaching work. Similarly, a wide range of coaching approaches were adopted across and within the studies. It is arguably problematic to reach conclusions about the impact a client's self-efficacy, age or extraversion might have on coaching effectiveness if the studies being compared feature someone coaching by having their first attempt at the GROW model against a trained, qualified, experienced professional that favours an existential coaching approach. For greater understanding of the role client factors might play in influencing the effectiveness of workplace coaching, a consistent approach across studies to holding other key variables constant needs to be adopted.

Finally, whilst a quality appraisal tool that purposefully accommodated a range of different study designs was sought for this SR, and whilst Pluye et al.'s (2009) scoring system highlighted consistent strengths and limitations within coaching psychology research, its scoring criteria did not have high discriminant validity. For example, all of the mixed method studies eligible for inclusion in this SR scored 100 per cent using the three criteria (Table 2), whereas a greater breadth of relevant appraisal criteria would have revealed the range of merits within and across studies more precisely. Given the marked increase in the quantity of peer-reviewed coaching studies since 2013 (Grant & O'Connor, 2019), this research field may be reaching a maturation point which justifies the creation of applied coaching psychology research-specific quality appraisal criteria. These could move away from the assumptions of medical and healthcare-normed SR tools, recognise key considerations facing anyone wishing to study an intervention with an umbrella, variously defined and practised construct yet generate discriminatory, relevant quality criteria that would allow researchers to reach informed judgements concerning the relevant merits of different coaching studies.

Implications

This SR was concerned exclusively with workplace coaching. There is an assumption that individual workplace coaching is – or should be – aligned to the development of the overall organisation (Hawkins, 2012). Whilst Matthewman (2009) explains why efforts at establishing a causal association between one-to-one coaching interventions and changes in organisational performance are problematic, the greater frequency of inclusion of organisational-level outcomes in future client factor studies may help establish a consistent correlation. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies research data at both an individual and an organisational level of analysis.

Research to determine whether client factors do contribute to workplace coaching effectiveness would need to adopt a longitudinal experimental design. Looking at the dominant emerging client factors identified in this systematic review, a future study measuring the three variables ‘commitment’, ‘openness’ and ‘motivation to change’ prior to coaching activities, and which used coaches with a consistent standard of competence, a coaching relationship of a typical number of sessions for workplace coaching and also controlled for coaching approach or technique would build on the findings from this systematic review to advance understanding of the role these three key client factors play.

For practitioners wishing to move beyond an assumption that all potential clients are equally coachable, with the inherent risks Bluckert (2006) argues this carries, Tables 3 and 4 might

serve as a helpful prompt for consideration when contracting with new clients or adopting a formulation approach to making sense of how their client is presenting (Corrie & Kovacs, 2019). Such a prompt checklist might highlight the client having a greater probability of achieving their desired outcome through alternative developmental interventions or point to enduring factors related to the client that might need to be purposefully worked through within the coaching relationship, either as barriers or enablers to coaching goal attainment.

Conclusions

This systematic review had the primary aim to determine which client factors had been researched, thus allowing a more coherent approach to building understanding of the contribution of client factors to workplace coaching effectiveness. Tables 3 and 4 have detailed all significant client factors within quantitative studies and all client factors generated as themes within qualitative studies. This reveals a wide heterogeneity of proposed and researched client factors, with ‘commitment’, ‘openness’ and ‘motivation to change’ the most widely featured. A consistency within the coaching psychology research community regarding terms used for stakeholders and variables would aid any future reviews. It is further hoped that this curating and reviewing of coaching client factor research will allow any future experimental or quasi-experimental studies to make targeted choices as to the client factors most beneficial to focus upon to advance understanding.

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Copies of a more comprehensive data extraction table and the quality scoring of the included studies, as well as a table of the studies excluded at full-text screening stage may be obtained from:

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Book review

Digital Body Language

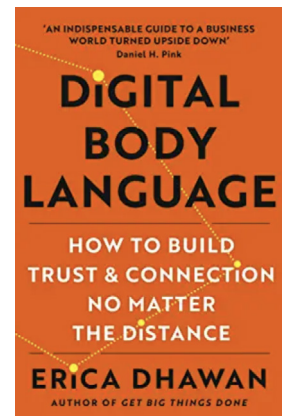
Erica Dahwan

ISBN: 1250246539, 9781250246530

Reviewed by Tia Moin

DIGITAL Body Language is written by Erica Dahwan, management development expert, professional speaker and author. She begins the book by describing her story as a first generation American-born Indian caught between two cultures feeling she belonged to neither. It was a desire to fit in and the cultural differences she experienced that sparked her interest in body language. As a communications expert, Dahwan draws on her expertise and business experience to offer a comprehensive guide to communicating in a digital world.

While this book wasn't written with a coach or coaching psychologist in mind, it is directed to working professionals and therefore would be relevant for coaches who work with professionals. Anyone who has pondered the etiquette of signing off a text message compared with doing so on an email, or wondered about the acceptable length of time for replying to a message received digitally will find value in the content. Dahwan's astute understanding of digital messages and communication will shed some light on the intricacies and nuances of communication in this digital age. What does it mean when someone uses an ellipsis? How many exclamation marks are acceptable? What about the use of emojis? And, what kind of impact might this all have on a person's perceived credibility? As coaches, many of us are aware of the importance of our perceived credibility (Bozer et al., 2014).



'With this book as your guide, you'll be able to create new norms of collaboration and behavior that reduce misunderstandings and enable you to lead with more clarity.' (p.12)

The book combines research with Dahwan's practical anecdotes and stories as a management development consultant making the content easy to read and follow. Each chapter ends with a summary and practical tips.

With the rise of technology use in delivering coaching, coaches are more frequently engaging in digital communication with clients (Passmore & Evans-Krimme, 2021). As someone who has personally used email communication for coaching, I have not yet experimented with instant chat tools. I am aware (and suitably wary) of the potential for misinterpretation using these mediums (Lattie et al., 2019). Working with international and diverse clients requires an understanding of cultural nuances in communication. The digital landscape is another layer of complexity that this book has brought to my attention with skills that are translatable to the core skills of listening and empathy valued as coaches. As Dahwan aptly describes;

'reading carefully is the new listening'
(p.92) *'and writing clearly is the new empathy'*
(p.93)

Many coaches and psychologists can reasonably claim to have well-developed listening skills. However, Dahwan explains that digital listening

skills are an entirely new skill set. Dahwan draws attention to the experiences and perspective of digital natives (people who have grown up immersed in the world of digital communication), she explains digital communication etiquette according to this generation. Communication norms for digital natives appear to be markedly different to that of older generations. For example she describes;

'when a phone call comes in, we treat it like a bomb that's set to detonate on the sidewalk. We feel vulnerable, unready, and even invaded, especially if we haven't already established a relationship with another person via email.' (p.51)

Reading the book as someone who *is not* a digital native who much prefers voice communication over chat or text, it was enlightening to understand the potential impact of a preference to pick up the phone to speak to someone in person. Face-to-face communication (either in person or by video) may be a common medium through which to deliver coaching; however, could instant chat and email coaching yield different outcomes for the digital native generation? Indeed, digital coaching could be conceptualised as distinct from traditional coaching (Kanatouri, 2020).

The author structures the book according to four main *laws* of digital communication; Valuing Visibly, Communicating Carefully, Collaborating Confidently and Trust Totally.

Valuing visibly emphasises the art of careful attention to reading, sending and scheduling as akin to the art of listening. The author offers detailed insights into the insecurities and doubts that often occur from what isn't communicated (e.g. brevity, delays), as well as those arising from what is communicated (e.g. formality, passive-aggressive). Something as simple as having read receipt on in instant chat software (often a default setting) could be interpreted as passive-aggressive if one takes a long time to reply; therefore taking no action does not protect anyone from miscommunication.

Communicating carefully, relates to some of the questions I outlined at the start of this review in relation to what is being said and how – the use

of punctuation, language, emojis as well as what channels are being used, who is being copied in, what expectations are being created and how aligned this is between key stakeholders. With so many options available there is ample opportunity for miscommunication to occur. As we enter a hybrid working world these are laws worth understanding and mastering.

The final two stages; Collaborating Confidently and Trust Totally describe evolutions of digital communication where people assume the best intentions from others and create an environment of trust and psychological safety, where people can communicate with integrity and authentically, leading to empowerment and alignment. As we evolve into this new pandemic world, the current question that many face is how to make hybrid working effective? Dahwan has some useful tips, for example;

'Collaborating confidently means prioritizing thoughtfulness while reducing groupthink behavior. What does that look like? Well, it might mean allowing the one remote member of a team to moderate a live meeting, creating a sense of inclusion and also reducing the bias we tend to have toward teammates who are physically present in the room.' (p.16)

Developing social intelligence in how coaches engage with digital apps, systems and technology has never been more important, as people attempt to embrace hybrid working arrangements and there are more and more 'digital natives' entering the workforce. Reading the book has brought to my attention that digital etiquette is a matter worthy of my attention and that reverting to old methods can be catastrophic. For anyone who shares aspirations to evolve into this new world as an effective and ethical coach who considers the cultural worldview of clients, this book offers great insight into a cultural movement that might otherwise be overlooked – that of digital natives.

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Passmore, J. (2010). A grounded theory study of the coachee experience: The implications for training and practice in coaching psychology. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 5(1), 48–62.
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