

## Golf Coaches' Theories of Ability: Gender Differences and Implications for Feedback

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### Abstract

**Purpose.** Currently, 15-20% of the golfing population in the US and UK is female (NGF, 2014; Sport England, 2014). The golf industry aims to increase recreational female participation through instructional programs (International Golf Federation, 2013; North, 2007). However, the strategy's success depends on coaches' effectiveness.

**Hypothesis 1:** Golf coaches will hold a more incremental theory of golf ability (ITGA) for recreational male golfers than recreational female golfers.

**Hypothesis 2:** Golf coaches' ITGA will correlate with feedback they give to recreational female golfers.

**Hypothesis 3:** Through training, coaches' ITGA for recreational female players can be increased.

### RQ 1 and 2

#### Methods.

**Procedure.** Coaches were contacted through golf professional listservs. Survey data were anonymous and collected electronically over a month-long period.

#### Participants.

RQ 1: 197 (F = 102, M = 127)

RQ 2: 198 (F = 97, M = 101).

**Measures.** An adapted version of Dweck's Theories of Others' Scale (1999) and Rattan et al.'s Feedback Scale (2012). Plus, general demographic questions.

**Data Analysis.** A dependent sample *t*-test analyzed coaches' ITGA mean difference by gender. Multiple regression analysis tested if demographic variables predicted participants' ITGA. Pearson correlation analysis examined the relationship between coaches' ITGA for female golfers and coaches' feedback.

**Results.** Coaches differed in their ITGA for male and female golfers. See Table 1. The regression analysis indicated demographic variables predicted non-significant variance in coaches' ITGA ( $R^2 = .02$ ,  $F(2,55)=5.56$ ,  $p = .66$ ).

Table 1

*Mean Comparison of Coaches' ITGA by Gender*

	M Golfers		F Golfers		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Incremental	5.05	.80	4.94	.95	-2.42	.02*

*N* = 197. \**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01.

There were significant correlations between coaches' ITGA and feedback. As coaches' ITGA increased for female players, they endorsed significantly more controllable, and less uncontrollable feedback. See Table 2.

Table 2

*Correlation between Coaches' ITGA for Recreational Female Golfers and Feedback*

<i>Measure</i>	1	2	3
1. F-I-TOA	—		
2. F-UnC	-.22**	—	
3. F-C	.19**	-.45**	—

*N* = 198 \**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01. F-I-TOA (*I*) = Female ITGA, F-UnC = Uncontrollable feedback, F-C = Controllable feedback.

**RQ 3****Participants.**

Time 1: 123 (M = 85, F = 38)

Time 2: 74 (M = 53, F = 21).

**Procedure.** Unique participants were recruited through professional listservs then randomly assigned to a control or ITGA condition. Survey data were collected electronically over a two-month period. Control condition coaches read ball flight analysis text before completing study surveys. Manipulation condition coaches read ITGA text. Participants then completed the ITGA and feedback scales for female golfers. After 14-days, coaches completed the ITGA scale for female golfers again.

**Measures.** See RQ 1 and 2.

**Data analysis.** A two-way mixed ANOVA tested for main effects. Pearson correlation analysis tested the relationship between coaches' ITGA and female golfer feedback.

**Results.** The ANOVA indicated a significant main effect by condition ( $F(1, 72) = 11.94, p < .01, \eta^2 = .25$ ). No significant main effect by time on ITGA score was found ( $F(1, 72) = .16, p = .69, \eta^2 < .001$ ). See Table 3 for descriptive statistics. ITGA for female players correlated significantly with controllable feedback ( $r = .38, p < .01$ ) and negatively with uncontrollable feedback ( $r = -.23, p < .01$ ).

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics for Control and Manipulation Groups*

Condition	Time 1			Time 2		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Control	57	5.13	.66	39	5.05	.66
Manipulation	66	5.36	.55	35	5.34	.77

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Discussion.** Coaches held significantly less adaptive ITGA for recreational female players than male players. Furthermore, those beliefs related to coaches' feedback. If golf coaches are to successfully increase female golf participation, coach educators should prioritize the development of ITGA in coaches.

**Practical Application:** The golf industry should be introspective and turn its attention to the coaching workforce as it relies on instruction to drive female golf participation. Examples of practical recommendations include:

**PGA Programs.** PGA programs such as 'Get into Golf' and 'Get Golf Ready' provide easy entry to golf participation. However, the program's success is dependent on coaches delivering the sessions. Therefore, it is recommended that coaches receive ITGA training before delivering player development initiatives.

**PGA Training.** PGA training material should endorse ITGA throughout. Additionally, training material should include female experts and dispel gender stereotypes about who has ability, and who does not. Similar content should be used consistently throughout the golf coach training program to ensure the culture instills an incremental message that is reinforced frequently.

### References

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