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Can employees capitalize upon their role breadth self-efficacy and innovative work behaviour to enhance their prospects of promotion?

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ABSTRACT

By acknowledging the role of assessing employees' promotability in talent development and retention, along with the need to improve the understanding about its antecedents, this paper examines the impact of employees' role breadth self-efficacy on this criterion. Specifically, it builds upon the integration of previous theoretical developments regarding the motivational virtues of role breadth self-efficacy at work, with the core assumptions of Spence's signalling theory to empirically test whether innovative work behaviour acts as an underlying mechanism of the link between role breadth self-efficacy and promotability. Relying upon a time-lagged design with multisource data (employees and respective supervisors), evidence obtained from a sample of $N = 185$ software engineers supported the indirect effect of role breadth self-efficacy on supervisors' ratings of employees' promotability, via employees' innovative work behaviour. The main theoretical and applied contributions of these findings are presented and discussed in the context of human resource management.

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Introduction

An organization's success and competitive advantage are critically dependent upon its capacity to successfully attract and retain human talent. Effective succession planning and employee promotion play a critical role in this endeavour, by granting talented/high-potential employees with attainable upward mobility and stimulating career advancement prospects in the organization (Alessandri et al., 2021; Conger & Fulmer, 2003; Ng et al., 2005). In this domain, supervisors' evaluations of employee promotability, i.e., their "perception of an individual's capacities and willingness to effectively perform at higher levels" (De Pater et al., 2009, p. 299), stand as a key input for the purposes of decision-making on employees' vertical mobility, representing a meaningful predictor of actual promotions and career success (Nevicka & Sedikides, 2021; Van Scotter et al., 2000).

Despite the relevance of supervisors' evaluations of employees' promotability for both individuals and the organization, the understanding of its key antecedents and underlying mechanisms remains particularly underdeveloped in the scope of managerial and organizational research (Chan et al., 2016; Gurbuz et al., 2016; Xu et al., 2022). Furthermore, related empirical research concerning determinants of promotability has been predominantly focused on job performance appraisals and trajectories (i.e., Alessandri et al., 2021; Jawahar & Ferris, 2011). This prevalent emphasis has left other theoretically relevant variables such as political skill and status attainment (Gentry et al., 2012), employee proactivity (Li et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2022), challenging job experiences (Van Vianen et al., 2020), as well as motivational factors, like self-efficacy beliefs, conspicuously less explored (Aryee & Chu, 2012; Seibert et al.,

2017). Yet, as underlined by De Pater et al. (2009), job performance constitutes a suboptimal and non-exhaustive predictor of promotability, since performing at a higher-level position most likely implies the accomplishment of more complex and challenging job demands, which tend to require a non-equivalent array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs). Accordingly, as postulated by signalling theory (Spence, 1973), when making promotability decisions, managers tend to rely upon cues and signals of employees' credentials and potential to perform at a higher-level job in the future, instead of merely considering relevant, yet insufficient, inputs concerning individual's past and present job performance standards (Conger & Fulmer, 2003; De Pater et al., 2009; Nevicka & Sedikides, 2021).

The aim of the present study is to contribute to filling this void in the literature regarding the antecedents of promotability by focusing on employees' role breadth self-efficacy (RBSE). This construct refers to "individuals' belief in their ability to extend beyond core duties" (Parker et al., 2019, p. 232) and is theorized as a key motivational driver of employees' proactivity and enactment of positive change in the organization (Parker et al., 2006; Parker, 1998). Furthermore, this study intends to contribute to extending the scarce knowledge regarding promotability's intervening mechanisms (Li et al., 2020; Seibert et al., 2017) by submitting to empirical test the indirect effect of RBSE on supervisor-rated promotability, through employees' innovative work behaviour (IWB). Uncovering a more complete picture of promotability antecedents and underlying dynamics holds theoretical and applied relevance, given its

instrumentality in advancing promotability predictive models and, concomitantly, to enlightening organizations on how to foster their employees' employability and career success (Van Harten et al., 2021; Van Vianen et al., 2020). Accordingly, the empirical identification of employee characteristics, attitudes and behaviours that affect supervisors' ratings of promotability is crucial for theory-building regarding the type and range of employee attributes and signals underpinning supervisors' inferences of this criterion. It is also important for steering human resources management in assisting high potential employees in effectively possessing and signalling those credentials to enhance their chances of promotion (De Pater et al., 2009; Nevicka & Sedikides, 2021).

By adopting this perspective, this study is focused on RBSE as a distal antecedent of promotability under the premise that this self-efficacy construct, by capturing the level of individual's agency to perform a more challenging role, extended beyond technical duties (Parker et al., 2019; Parker, 1998), will contribute to signal the extent to which a focal employee has the capacity and the willingness, i.e., the motivational strength, to successfully undertake more complex demands in a higher-level job (D. J. Campbell, 1988). As posited by social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001, 2012) and further asserted by social cognitive career theory in the scope of its performance models (see Lent & Brown, 2019), individual self-efficacy plays a critical role in enacting, developing and sustaining employees' KSAO's deployment in prospective performance demands, including when they encompass challenging work endeavours. As emphasized by Lent and Brown (2019, p. 6), "people are prone to cease their pursuit of difficult courses of action when they doubt their competence to succeed, regardless of their objective capabilities". Building upon such insights, we argue that immediate supervisors will be particularly attentive to subordinates' RBSE manifestations throughout the development process of their work roles (Graen & Scandura, 1987; Liden et al., 1997), an important cue to infer their readiness to succeed at a higher position in the organizational hierarchy.

In keeping with this, we draw upon the integration of the premises of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001) and Parker et al. (2010) model of proactive motivation, to advocate that IWB represents a route through which RBSE translates into enhanced supervisor-rated promotability. As further developed, this self-efficacy construct is conceptually modelled and empirically supported as a key cognitive-motivational antecedent of employee innovation and other relevant pro-organizational proactive actions (Ouyang et al., 2019; Parker et al., 2006, 2010). Without neglecting the potential of other proactivity behaviours as meaningful mechanisms of the RBSE-promotability link, we focus on IWB due its significant potential to convey, in the eyes of the supervisor, a noticeable and strong behavioural signal of subordinates' motivation and capacity to deal with greater responsibility at work, enhancing their suitability for promotion (Ng & Wang, 2019; Seibert et al., 2001). Likewise, some individual performance behaviours may also signal such readiness, like "voluntarily taking on additional tasks" (for in-role performance, J. P. Campbell, 2012) or "taking the initiative to do all that is necessary to accomplish objectives even if not normally a part of

one's own duties" and accomplish goals that are more difficult and challenging than normal (for extra-role performance, i.e., the citizenship performance dimension of conscientious initiative, see Borman et al., 2001, p. 55). However, unlike in-role and extra-role performance behaviours, where valuable contributions tend to be required and expected, IWB, due to its inherent challenging, non-conforming and agentic nature (Bandura, 2012; Ng & Lucianetti, 2016), may represent a particularly visible way in which employees can demonstrate their worth in dealing with demanding and more complex work duties (Ng & Wang, 2019).

By pursuing the presented aims, the current study intends to make some theoretical and applied contributions to the literature. Firstly, it extends prior research on the antecedents of supervisor-rated promotability, by empirically testing the impact of RBSE in enhancing this relevant indicator of employees' suitability for promotion within the organization, ultimately affecting their career development and employability (Van Harten et al., 2021; Van Vianen et al., 2020). Secondly, this study complements recent research efforts ascribing a pivotal role to employees' pro-organizational proactive behaviours (i.e., Li et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2022) in driving their promotability, by originally focusing on IWB. Concomitantly, it answers to previous calls in the literature to complement the compelling evidence supporting the positive impact of individuals' innovation on firm success and competitive advantage (Anderson et al., 2014), with research scrutinizing its overlooked, yet noteworthy, positive and negative repercussions for employees (Anderson et al., 2018). While some findings have showed that IWB may bring potential costs for more innovative employees, linked with increased co-worker conflict, stress levels and work detachment difficulties (e.g., Harrison & Wagner, 2016; Ng & Wang, 2019), other pieces of evidence have, likewise, revealed a bright side of IWB through its effects in eliciting optimal motivational states, work meaning, excitement and learning (Devloo et al., 2015, 2016; McCauley et al., 1999). Hence, the current study aims to contribute to this debate but develops on the bright side of IWB for its proponents, by advocating that these behaviours will strengthen their promotability and related likelihood of getting promoted. Thirdly, by adopting the lenses of signalling theory (Spence, 1973), it develops towards a better understanding of how supervisors assess their subordinates' promotability, by examining whether and to what extent they rely upon RBSE through its expression on IWB as an explicit, strong signalling mechanism to infer an employee's potential to excel in a higher job position. Besides its implications for theoretically mapping variables underpinning promotability inference, such knowledge is crucial from an applied perspective as it can assist organizations in advising their employees on how to achieve a valuable and distinctive work contribution from their supervisor's outlook, thus enhancing their promotability (De Pater et al., 2009; Nevicka & Sedikides, 2021; Xu et al., 2022).

Theoretical background

Signalling theory and supervisors' evaluations of promotability

Employees' promotability is recognized as a relevant indicator of career success and overall employability, with key implications for effective talent retention and mitigation of turnover

(Chan et al., 2016; Ng et al., 2005; Van Harten et al., 2021). Earlier conceptualizations of this criterion posit that promotability concerns “the favourability of an employee’s advancement prospects” (Greenhaus et al., 1990, p. 69) and represents “an individual’s projected performance at higher managerial levels” (London & Stumpf, 1983, p. 245), usually according to the perception of the immediate supervisor. Building upon this framework, De Pater et al. (2009) further asserted that promotability entails a forward-looking assessment of both the individual’s willingness and capacity to meet the performance demands of a higher-level job. Given that objective information regarding employees’ future performance is logically unavailable, supervisors need to inevitably infer this suitability of employees for upward mobility by relying upon focal characteristics, behaviours and attitudes displayed by respective subordinates in their current job (De Pater et al., 2009; Seibert et al., 2017). In line with related research, we build upon signalling theory (Spence, 1973) as a useful framework to reason how supervisors draw such promotability inferences given imperfect information regarding employees’ underlying “quality” or readiness, i.e., motivation and capability, to excel at a higher job position (De Pater et al., 2009; Nevicka & Sedikides, 2021).

At its core, signalling theory (Spence, 1973) applies to such decision-making scenarios between two potentially interested parties (e.g., individuals or organizations) facing a situation of information asymmetry. Specifically, one party may decide to select and, concomitantly, benefit the other in favour of potential alternatives (i.e., through hiring and promotion in the case of individuals, or establishing partnerships and investing in the case of organizations), but lacks perfect information about its “underlying quality”, i.e., prospective desirable attributes (Connelly et al., 2011; Spence, 1973). Such a situation of imperfect information triggers a signalling process where one party (the signaller) intentionally tries to communicate convincing signals of effectively having this unobservable quality, i.e., the imperceptible ability or inherent value that fulfils the other party’s (the receiver) needs or requirements. As initially illustrated by Spence (1973) in the domain of personal selection decision-making, the employing organization invariably lacks complete information about whether and to what extent applicants have the required “quality” to reciprocate, i.e., fulfil the main requirements of the open job. Therefore, the organization may rely upon the observability and strength of applicants’ educational credentials as a sign of their imperceptible or unobservable, at least to some degree, levels of ability and potential. According to this logic, the applicant (signaller) deliberately attempts to reduce this situation of information asymmetry by attaining a strong educational level and conveying (i.e., signalling) it to the prospective hiring organization (receiver). Since a solid education level tends to covariate with high ability, and is not easily attainable by lower-quality applicants, it arguably constitutes an efficacious sign to differentiate between high- and lower-quality applicants in the eyes of the hiring organization.

Thus, emitted signals constitute intervening mechanisms which establish the communication process between the signaller and the receiver, although they may vary in their efficacy in reducing the uncertainty and information asymmetry (Connelly et al., 2011; Spence, 1973). This signal efficacy is

critically dependent upon its observability or visibility, capturing the extent to which the receiver is able to clearly notice it, and its strength or fit, referring to degree to which the signal effectively correlates with the signaller’s underlying quality or key attributes that the receiver is looking for (Connelly et al., 2011; Ramaswami et al., 2010). Likewise, signalling theory also asserts that to remain positively differentiated from competitive parties, the signaller should improve their signalling effectiveness by consistently and recurrently sending efficacious signals to the receiver (Connelly et al., 2011).

Antecedents of employees’ promotability: the relevance of RBSE

Since the inception of promotability research and throughout its more recent developments, current job performance credentials have been examined using the aforementioned logic, i.e., as a relevant signal of employee’s ability and motivation to meet performance expectations of higher and intrinsically more complex jobs (Alessandri et al., 2021; J. P. Campbell et al., 1996). Accordingly, empirical efforts have evidenced that past performance behaviours and, mostly, upward performance trends represent surrogates for promotability (Alessandri et al., 2021; Jawahar & Ferris, 2011; London & Stumpf, 1983; Van Scotter et al., 2000). Notwithstanding, as noted, past performance may not stand as the best proxy or efficacious sign of promotability, since higher-level jobs typically encompass an extended breadth and more complex duties, requiring an array of KSAOs often distinct from those underlying successful performance in the current job (Conger & Fulmer, 2003; D. J. Campbell, 1988; De Pater et al., 2009). This assumption has guided empirical research and the gradual shift of its focus towards the identification of other meaningful distal and proximal promotability predictors beyond past performance, such as challenging job experiences (Aryee & Chu, 2012; De Pater et al., 2009; Seibert et al., 2017), career adaptability (Chan et al., 2016), political skill and leadership (Gentry et al., 2012; Letwin et al., 2016), proactive behaviours (Li et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2022), personality attributes (Nevicka & Sedikides, 2021) and employees’ perceived similarity with the supervisor (Gurbuz et al., 2016).

Surprisingly, in such a promising and broad research frame, scant attention has been devoted to the influence of key motivational work factors like employees’ self-efficacy beliefs on promotability. Still, as asserted by the definition of this criterion, in addition to the employee’s capacity to meet the performance expectations of higher-level jobs, his/her willingness and motivation to exert the implied levels of effort constitutes a core aspect of promotability assessment (De Pater et al., 2009; Ng et al., 2005). Considering that motivation is a crucial determinant of success at work, irrespective of the hierarchical job level (J. P. Campbell, 1990), we intend to bring insight into this matter by examining how the employees’ RBSE motivational impetus to extend their work roles influences their immediate supervisor’s evaluations of promotability.

Consistently, as revealed by career development theory and related research (see Spurk et al., 2019; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009), self-directedness and human agency constitute pivotal drivers of career advancement and success, therefore ascribing

plausibility to the proposition that work-related self-efficacy constructs, like RBSE, will most likely favour employees' promotability and actual promotion prospects. Extant findings from both cross-sectional and longitudinal research are aligned with this rationale by mapping occupational self-efficacy beliefs as meaningful antecedents of promotability, as well as of subjective and objective career success outcomes, including career satisfaction, salary and attained hierarchical status (Abele & Spurk, 2009; Aryee & Chu, 2012; Hirschi & Jaensch, 2015). Parallel evidence at the management level also supports such merits of self-efficacy, operationalized as leadership self-efficacy, as a significant antecedent of managers' leadership effectiveness and promotability, mediating the linkage between developmental job challenges and this criterion (Seibert et al., 2017).

Despite sharing the inner and agentic nature of other self-efficacy beliefs constructs, RBSE specifically captures the extent to which employees perceive themselves as capable of performing an expanded role, comprising proactive, interpersonal, and integrative duties, beyond prescribed technical job requirements (Parker et al., 2006; Parker, 1998). These demands may consist of solving long-term problems and dealing with non-standardized tasks, setting goals and targets, suggesting work improvements in one's own and other departments and representing the work area within and outside the organization (Parker, 1998).

This study's emphasis on RBSE, rather than on other self-efficacy tenets, is based on social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2012) premise which posits that self-efficacy beliefs enhance one's feelings of control, behavioural persistence and perceived likelihood of success, mostly when aligned to goals and tasks pertaining to the domain of those beliefs. Due to its foci on capturing the individual's willingness to extend their role breadth towards managing at higher levels of responsibility and creating positive change within and across department boundaries, RBSE beliefs are arguably more aligned with the behavioural domain sampled in higher-level positions. Indeed, previous research has posited that it has stronger alignment in comparison to respective broader and narrower self-efficacy constructs like generalized self-efficacy, which focuses beyond the work setting, or task-specific self-efficacy, which strictly applies to the accomplishment of a given unitary task (Parker et al., 2006; Sonnentag & Spsychala, 2012; Van Vianen et al., 2020).

Considering these theoretical aspects ascribing relevance to RBSE as a distal antecedent of promotability and drawing upon signalling theory (Spence, 1973), we contend that supervisors will rely upon their subordinates' expressed levels of RBSE and entailed sense of confidence and agency to engage in proactive and integrative tasks, as an efficacious (both strong and noticeable) signal of motivational strength to show determination and master the critical tasks of higher-level jobs. As further developed in the next section, we argue that high RBSE employees will be more likely to prompt such a signalling mechanism in the supervisor's perception in a way that will enhance their employability prospects through their active involvement in challenging aspects of work, specifically by exhibiting innovative work behaviour and creating positive change at work (Chen et al., 2013; McCauley et al., 1999; Ng &

Wang, 2019). Indeed, this signalling process, independently of its results, is posited to inevitably take place in the frame of employees' role development throughout the interaction with their immediate supervisor (see Graen & Scandura, 1987). As this process unfolds, the supervisor "tests and assesses the member's motivations and potential" (Liden et al., 1997, p. 49) by providing the employee with duties of increasing responsibility and the opportunity to attempt unstructured tasks. The degree to which the employee confidently steps up and fulfils implied expectations turns out to be decisive in defining whether he/she will end up with a broader and more challenging role (see Graen & Scandura, 1987; Liden et al., 1997).

In addition to favouring employee promotability and actual vertical mobility for those that effectively seize promotion opportunities, the engagement in such extended roles is posited to promote all workers' career success, especially when it is conceptualized through a comprehensive meaning of personal development and need-fulfilment, i.e., individual employability (De Vos et al., 2011; Seibert et al., 2017; Van Vianen et al., 2020). As asserted in related literature, employability refers to an individual's potential to obtain a job, but also to remain employed in the labour market and seize career opportunities (De Vos et al., 2011; Fugate et al., 2004, 2021). Through its agentic influence in prompting employees' engagement in work roles with a higher variety, richness, and breadth of tasks and responsibilities, RBSE contributes to foster employees' knowledge and skills development (McCauley et al., 1999; Van Vianen et al., 2020). By stimulating these critical learning processes, RBSE enhances their human capital development, which constitutes a core dimension of individual employability (Fugate et al., 2004; see Van Harten et al., 2021 for a review of key employability dimensions and research strands).

Altogether, these aspects support the pertinence of focusing on RBSE as a meaningful distal antecedent of employee promotability and overall employability.¹

The mediating role of IWB on the link between RBSE and employees' promotability

As previously highlighted, this study empirically evaluates whether IWB represents an intervening mechanism in the link between RBSE and employees' promotability. By defining IWB as employees' deliberate behaviours implied in suggesting, championing, and implementing new and useful ideas in the workplace to benefit one's performance, the team or the whole organization (Janssen, 2001; Kanter, 1988; Anderson et al., 2018), we reason that these actions will represent an explicit behavioural signal of incumbents' underlying suitability to successfully perform at higher positions on the organizational ladder.

Drawing upon signalling theory (Spence, 1973) and Parker et al. (2010) model of proactive motivation, we argue that employees with higher RBSE are more likely to succeed with their innovative efforts, signalling their "quality" to direct supervisors, i.e., their capacity to accomplish complex and challenging demands. Prior research, albeit limited, asserts this status of IWB as an efficacious signal of an employee's capability to

perform at higher level, due to its high visibility and strength (Kanter, 1988; Ng & Wang, 2019; Seibert et al., 2001).

Specifically, IWB's high salience or observability stems from its pivotal role in enacting positive change and improving the organization's products, work methods and practices, critically contributing to its adaptability and competitiveness in the current dynamic business landscape (Anderson et al., 2018; Anderson et al., 2014). Due to these benefits, IWB is recognized as a noticeable and effective way through which employees can prove their worth and enhance their social standing within the organization (Ng & Wang, 2019). In keeping with this, recent research developments suggest that employees (i.e., as signalers) personally admit that when they "go beyond their job requirements to innovate and succeed in bringing innovation to the organization that helps it thrive, it is especially likely to draw positive attention" from their supervisors (Ng & Wang, 2019, p. 449), ultimately accomplishing a valuable and distinctive contribution to the organization (Kanter, 1988; Seibert et al., 2001).

In addition to IWB's high salience within the organization, research also implies that it could be perceived and interpreted by current supervisors as strong signal of employees' capability to undertake more demanding work endeavours (Schuh et al., 2018; Seibert et al., 2001). This signal strength comes from IWB's potential to make clear and explicit the degree to which an employee is proactively and successfully involved in creating constructive change at work (Parker & Collins, 2010), which classifies as a prototypical cluster of challenging work demands (see McCauley et al., 1999; Van Vianen et al., 2020). In contrast with prescribed tasks for which appropriate behavioural responses are prespecified, at least to some extent, challenging job demands, including those encompassed in driving innovation at work, require the capacity to deal with relatively novel and unstructured work processes (Anderson et al., 2014). Hence, they tend to drive employees to deploy and test non-routine skills and behaviours, while persisting with effort and responsibility under the uncertainty of getting proportional returns in terms of targeted goals and accomplishing innovative outcomes (Anderson et al., 2014; Ng & Wang, 2019). As such, it is plausible to advocate that supervisors are likely to rely upon employees' contributions in the successful accomplishment of innovative endeavours as a focal and informative behavioural sample to infer their capacity to perform more complex duties at a higher-level position. Accordingly, empirical research has showed that more innovative employees tend to receive higher performance ratings from their supervisors (i.e., Schuh et al., 2018), as well as achieving subjective and objective career outcomes, including career satisfaction, salary progression and actual promotions, even when the effects of political knowledge, voice and career initiative are considered (Seibert et al., 2001).

As previously noted, we postulate that employee RBSE will contribute to enacting this proximal and beneficial impact of successful IWB upon employee promotability. This assertion is based on conceptual and empirical reasons supporting the meaningful role of individual agency, i.e., self-efficacy beliefs, in prompting innovative endeavours. As noted by Ng and Lucianetti (2016, p. 14) when applying socio-cognitive theory to IWB, "to engage in innovative

behaviour, employees must possess a strong sense of agency (a desire to intentionally make things happen through their own actions; Bandura, 2001)", since "innovations demand heavy investment of effort over a long period with uncertain results" (Bandura, 1995, p. 13). Given that IWB, like other proactive actions, entails deliberately challenging the status quo and dealing with potential scepticism and risk of failure, it requires the employee to be confident in his/her capability to execute implied actions and sustain the effort towards attaining the goal of innovation, despite such obstacles and constraints (Bandura, 1997; Ng & Lucianetti, 2016). Previous empirical research has ascribed plausibility to these conceptual aspects by supporting the role of focal self-efficacy beliefs in driving individual innovation at work (Anderson et al., 2018; Ng & Lucianetti, 2016).

In this domain, RBSE has been specifically modelled as a key self-efficacy antecedent of individual innovation, due to its specific foci upon the employee's perceived ability to accomplish a range of proactive and integrative demands, targeted to enacting positive change within the organization (Parker et al., 2006; Parker, 1998). As asserted by Parker et al. (2010) model of proactive motivation, the occurrence of employee proactive behaviours is dependent upon a high level of *can-do* (i.e., self-efficacy perceptions, control appraisals and perceived costs), *reason-to* (i.e., autonomous motivation, including intrinsic, integrated and identified forms) and *energized-to* (i.e., activated positive affect states that prompt proactive goal regulation) proactive motivations. They are critical in building and supporting the employee's readiness to set and sustain proactive striving towards goals at work, despite inherent risk and uncertainty.

Accordingly, RBSE captures a key *can-do* motivational state which facilitates the engagement and persistence in undertaking IWB and akin proactive actions at work, despite their challenging and risky nature, by enhancing employees' perception of control and the likelihood of achieving success in their proactive efforts (Ouyang et al., 2019; Parker et al., 2006). Prior research has supported the significant role of RBSE in driving proactive behaviours over other self-efficacy constructs such as job self-efficacy (Ohly & Fritz, 2007), or even when other motivational drivers of employee proactivity, e.g., high-activated positive affect and desire for control, are also considered (Ouyang et al., 2019). More importantly, parallel empirical developments, albeit scarce, equally support this meaningful role of RBSE in driving overall individual innovation (Chen et al., 2013; Parker & Collins, 2010) and some of its behavioural forms, like idea suggestion (Axtell et al., 2000; Hao et al., 2018) and idea implementation (Parker et al., 2006).

In summary, by integrating the theoretical and empirical aspects highlighted, we advocate that employees with greater RBSE will be more prone to exhibiting and sustaining IWB until it flourishes into positive workplace changes and improvements. Through these demanding work accomplishments, they will signal to their supervisors the ability to deal with higher levels of responsibility and job complexity, attaining a more favourable assessment regarding their promotability credentials. Thus, we hypothesize that:

RBSE exerts a positive indirect effect on supervisors' ratings of employees' promotability, via IWB.

Method

Sample and procedure

Following a predictive design, data were collected using a sample of software engineers and their immediate supervisors in two different waves. The sampled incumbents belong to a multinational information technology company which specializes in delivering customized and reliable software solutions for public and private clients worldwide. All engineers performed their duties allocated to specific software projects and their performance was formally assessed by the company, on a recurring basis, every six months. Since the current study was developed throughout one of these time frames, its two waves of data collection were separated by a six-month time lag.

In the first wave, 250 software engineers, all from the software engineering department, were invited to participate by completing an online survey during work time. The first section of the survey included a brief statement of the main research goals along with a letter of endorsement by the company's CEO and HR management, followed by an informed consent request form, emphasizing the confidentiality of all answers and their exclusive use for research purposes. Incumbents who agreed to participate were asked to provide relevant sociodemographic and work-related information in the first section of the questionnaires and instructed to complete the RBSE scale in a second section. Overall, 191 complete surveys were gathered, corresponding to a response rate of 76.4%. After six months, the second wave was implemented simultaneously with employees' performance appraisals, to collect respective supervisor ratings of the sampled incumbents' IWB and promotability. Previous research suggests that a six-month period should be sufficient to capture the effects of employees' self-efficacy beliefs (Ng & Lucianetti, 2016), including RBSE (Chen et al., 2013), on IWB and promotability (Aryee & Chu, 2012). Through HR assistance, each supervisor received an envelope containing a letter briefly explaining the main research goals, a letter of endorsement from the company board and the paper and pencil questionnaires, i.e., the IWB and promotability rating forms to assess their respective subordinates who took part in the first wave. After filling in the questionnaires, supervisors were instructed to deliver them, sealed in their envelopes, to the HR department, who later delivered them to the research team. In total, supervisor valid ratings were obtained for 185 incumbents, which corresponds to this study's final sample. Potential non-response bias was examined by computing corresponding χ^2 and t-tests to compare between these respondents ($N = 185$) and those who had not participated or obtained any supervisor ratings ($N = 65$), using available data personnel records from the company. Still, we found no significant differences ($p > .05$) in gender, age, years of organizational tenure and job type, suggesting the absence of response selectiveness in these variables. Considering the final sample

($N = 185$), 92.4% of the employees were male, with an average age of 31.05 years ($SD = 4.84$) and an average organizational tenure of 3.66 years ($SD = 2.18$). Most of the supervisors were male (89.2%), reported a mean age of 41.3 years ($SD = 6.62$) and a mean organizational tenure of 8.16 years ($SD = 5.95$).

Measures

Role breadth self-efficacy was assessed with the five items with the highest loadings from Parker's (1998) RBSE scale, following the same procedure adopted in previous research (e.g., Parker et al., 2006). Participants were instructed to report how confident would they feel carrying out a set of a set of proactive, interpersonal and integrative tasks. This five-item subscale was implemented, instead of the full 10-item scale, due to its appropriateness according to company HR subject matter experts, in representing exemplar and feasible proactive, interpersonal, and integrative elements of an extended role of software engineering in the current company. As noted by Parker's (1998), to assess RBSE the set of sampled tasks is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather "to represent important exemplar elements of an expanded role that apply across jobs and hierarchical levels" (p. 839). Sample items include "Designing new procedures for your work area" and "Making suggestions to management about ways to improve the working of your section". Responses were obtained through a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = *not at all confident* to 5 = *very confident*. Cronbach's alpha was .85.

Innovative work behaviour (IWB) of the sampled incumbents was rated by their immediate supervisor, using Janssen's (2001) nine-item unidimensional scale, which represents a commonly adopted measure of this criterion in related research (Anderson et al., 2014; Schuh et al., 2018; Woods et al., 2018). This instrument assesses the innovative work behaviours encompassed in the individual innovation process, including the actions of idea generation, promotion and implementation at work. Sample items include "Creating new ideas for new products or product improvements" and "Transforming innovative ideas into useful applications".

Despite comprising the assessment of such specific innovative behaviours, this scale captures a unidimensional construct of individual innovation, representing an additive scale of inter-related innovative actions that represents the employees' contribution for innovation endeavours in the organization (Ng & Lucianetti, 2016; Schuh et al., 2018). Supervisors were asked to rate the frequency with which each incumbent had exhibited these behaviours over the last six months, using a five-point Likert scale anchored at 1 = *Never* and 5 = *Always*. Cronbach's alpha was .91 in the current sample.

Promotability evaluations were also assessed through direct supervisor ratings using De Pater et al. (2009) two-item scale. Such evaluations are purported to reflect supervisor's projections of employees' expected performance at a higher-level job (London & Stumpf, 1983) and aim to capture employees' capability and willingness to effectively accomplish such higher-level performance demands. Hence, supervisors were instructed to rate "To what extent does this employee have

the capabilities to successfully perform in higher level jobs” and “To what extent does this employee have the ambition to perform in higher-level jobs” on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*. Cronbach’s alpha was .76.

Control variables. Consistently with previous studies, employees’ organizational tenure and age were measured to account for their potential non-trivial effects upon IWB and promotability. Organizational tenure is regarded as a proxy of individuals’ accumulated knowledge about their job and organization, which could play a role in the likelihood and appropriateness of their innovative efforts, as well as their prospects of advancement in the organization (De Pater et al., 2009; Nevicka & Sedikides, 2021; Woods et al., 2018). Employee age was also considered due to recent calls to account for its presumable impact upon employee’s career success and promotability, since older workers are posited to accumulate and transfer more resources, such as human capital, across their broader career and life span, compared to younger workers (Spurk et al., 2019).

Analyses and results

Confirmatory factor analyses

Before testing our hypothesis, confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) with maximum likelihood estimation were carried out to gather evidence regarding the construct validity and empirical distinctiveness of the scales under study. For assessing the goodness of fit of the respective models, Chi-square statistics (χ^2) and χ^2/df ratio were considered and complemented by the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) indexes. Recommended cut-off values of CFI and TLI > .90, preferably higher than .95, were adopted as supporting an adequate model fit, while SRMR and RMSEA < 0.08 or < 0.06 were also considered as indicative of an acceptable or good model fit, respectively (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kelloway, 2015). Additionally, we relied upon χ^2 difference test to determine the best-fitting model when comparing the hypothesized model with plausible alternative models (Kelloway, 2015).

As expected, the three-factor measurement model specifying RBSE, IWB and promotability as latent constructs showed a good fit to the data ($\chi^2 [101, N = 185] = 153.86, p < .001$; CFI = .967; TLI = .961; RMSEA = .053; SRMR = .041). Additionally, CFA results showed standardized loadings ranging from .60 to .86 for IWB items, from .66 to .85 for RBSE items, and .81 and .76 for promotability items, indicating factor validity as they are greater than .50 (Hair et al., 2019). The correlations between factors range from .22 to .53. Following Fornell and Larcker (1981), the results showed convergent validity, as the composite reliability of each scale is greater than .70 (.85 for RBSE, .93 for IWB and .76 for promotability), as well as the average variance extracted being greater than .50 in all scales (.54 for RBSE, .59 for IWB and .62 for promotability). The results also showed discriminant validity, since the average variance extracted of all the three scales is greater than the squared correlation between each pair of constructs (.05 for RBSE-promotability, .14 for RBSE-IWB, and .28 for IWB-promotability

pairs). Moreover, this three-factor model yields a significantly greater level of fit ($\Delta \chi^2 [3, N = 185] = 373.08, p < .001$) than a one-factor alternative model ($\chi^2 [104, N = 185] = 526.94, p < .001$; CFI = .738; TLI = .697; RMSEA = .149; SRMR = .132), which showed an unacceptable level of fit to the data.

To evaluate the extent to which common method variance (CMV) may represent a concern in supervisor ratings data, a CFA was conducted, specifying a baseline model which included the two correspondent theoretical constructs (i.e., IWB and promotability) and a model with the addition of a third CMV latent factor (e.g., Podsakoff et al., 2012). The fit statistics displayed for this three-factor model ($\chi^2 [42, N = 185] = 96.91, p < .001$; CFI = .956; TLI = .942; RMSEA = .084; SRMR = .047) indicate just a slight improvement in fit statistics in comparison with the baseline two-factor model ($\chi^2 [43, N = 185] = 107.54, p < .001$; CFI = .948; TLI = .933; RMSEA = .090; SRMR = .046). Regarding item loadings, they ranged from .46 to .99 and the differences of the estimates of each item loading compared with the estimates of the two-factor model without the common factor are all lower than .15, ranging from .147 to .019, indicating that the item loadings in the two models are not substantially different. The intercorrelation between factors (.47 in the model with the common factor and .53 in the model without the common factor) is also not substantially different. Taken together, these results suggest that common method bias does not seem to meaningfully account for the relationships among the variables under examination.

Hypothesis testing

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations among the variables under study. As depicted, employees’ RBSE was positive and significantly linked to supervisors’ evaluations of promotability. Likewise, IWB was also significantly correlated with this criterion. Employees’ age and organizational tenure showed positive correlations with RBSE, whilst organizational tenure was positively related to IWB.

Given that some supervisors rated more than one employee’s IWB and promotability (each supervisor rated 2.26 subordinates in average, $SD = 1.28$), the data structure obtained is nested. The intraclass coefficient ($ICC_{(1)} = .076$) indicated that supervisors account for about 8% of the variability in promotability evaluations, whereas they account for 26% of the variability in individuals’ IWB ratings ($ICC_{(1)} = .26$). Further examination of the intercept variability by estimating an unconditional means model (or null model) supported the use of multilevel analyses regarding IWB. The $-2 \text{ Log likelihood}$ ($-2LL$) value (214.77) of the model with a random intercept is

Table 1. Means, standard deviations and intercorrelations.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Sex ^a	0.08	0.27	–					
2. Age	31.05	4.84	–.10	–				
3. Organizational tenure	3.66	2.18	–.04	.32***	–			
4. RBSE	3.89	0.64	–.07	.31***	.28***	–		
5. IWB	2.79	0.79	–.03	.11	.25**	.33***	–	
6. Promotability	4.66	1.15	–.09	–.07	.10	.18*	.45***	–

N = 185. ^aMale = 0, Female = 1. RBSE = Role breadth self-efficacy, IWB = Innovative work behaviour. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

smaller than the $-2LL$ value (-219.34) of a model without a random intercept, and the difference is statistically significant ($p = .003$). Regarding promotability ratings, the difference between these two models is not statistically significant ($p = .28$). Consequently, a random intercept model was required to adequately account for the nested nature of our data due to innovative work behaviours (Bliese, 2016). Therefore, hierarchical linear modelling (HLM), computed on R, v. 4.1.3, multilevel package, v.2.7 (Bliese, 2022), was used to account for potential non-independence of supervisor ratings. Since the multilevel mediation model of this study has a 1-1-1 design (i.e., all the variables are at the individual level but nested in a level-2 unit, in this case supervisors' clusters), a single indirect effect estimate may contain both between and within cluster effects. Following Zhang et al. (2009, p. 714) who argue that "estimating a combined 1-1-1 mediation effect will always be less informative than an examination that separately estimates both effects", we used a CWC(M) approach to test the indirect effect hypothesized at the individual level. The CWC(M) (centred within context with reintroduction of the subtracted means at Level-2) was an approach explored by Kreft and De Leeuw (1998) and recommended by Zhang et al. (2009) as a technique for partitioning and simultaneously examining the two mediation effects (between and within) in 1-1-1 models. According to the CWC(M), the predictor (RBSE) and the mediator (IWB) were cluster-mean centred (CWC level-1 variables), and the corresponding level-2 variables (cluster mean of RBSE and cluster mean of IWB, respectively) were included in the equation (Zhang et al., 2009; Zigler & Ye, 2019). Moreover, to estimate the within indirect effect of RBSE on promotability evaluations via IWB, the MacKinnon et al. (2002) product of coefficients method was used, due to its appropriateness for assessing mediating effects with multilevel data (Tofghi & Thoemmes, 2014). Given that organizational tenure was positively correlated with IWB, this variable was also included as covariate in HLM analyses with IWB as dependent variable. Following the recommendation of Becker (2005), employee's age was not included in the models predicting promotability since it is not significantly correlated with this variable.

Table 2 summarizes the main results from multilevel analyses.

As can be observed in Model 1 of Table 2, RBSE was positive and significantly linked with the mediator IWB

regarding the between-cluster pathway, and positive and marginally significant linked at the within-cluster level ($a_b = 0.48$, $SE = 0.13$, $p < .001$; $a_w = 0.22$, $SE = 0.11$, $p = .06$, respectively), after controlling for the effect of organizational tenure. Model 2 of Table 2 shows a positive and significant link between the mediator and promotability criterion in both between- and within-cluster pathways ($b_b = 0.44$, $SE = 0.15$, $p = .005$; $b_w = 0.91$, $SE = 0.14$, $p < .001$, respectively), after controlling for RBSE. Following Tofghi and Thoemmes (2014), the RMediation package v. 1.1.4 (Tofghi & MacKinnon, 2011) was used to calculate the distribution of the product of the coefficients' confidence intervals (CIs). Both estimated between- and within-cluster indirect effects are statistically significant ($a_b.b_b = 0.21$, $SE = 0.095$; $a_w.b_w = 0.20$, $SE = 0.109$), since the distributions of the product of the coefficients' 95% CI for these effects are $[0.072, 0.381]$ and $[0.028, 0.385]$, respectively. As such, the statistical significance of the within-cluster indirect effect estimated supports our hypothesis. This positive and significant within indirect effect suggests that employees who have higher RBSE (than the employees' average rated by the same supervisor) are rated by the supervisor as more promotable, because they tend to show more IWB than the other individuals evaluated by the same supervisor.

Discussion

Supervisors' judgements of employees' promotability are crucial inputs for decision-making processes on actual promotion and affect individual career planning and implied retention of the top performers in an organization's workforce (Alessandri et al., 2021). Yet, comprehensive models mapping this criterion's key determinants and implied mechanisms are still lacking in the literature, due to sporadic attention devoted to uncovering its distal and proximal antecedents, beyond job performance (De Pater et al., 2009; Gurbuz et al., 2016). In this vein, despite the relevance ascribed to employee motivation in driving job success across the organizational hierarchy, research about the influence of key motivational factors at work on promotability, such as self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 2012), remains considerably underdeveloped. Building on previous conceptual and empirical research efforts ascribing pertinence to self-efficacy beliefs in enhancing promotability (e.g., Aryee & Chu, 2012; Seibert et al., 2017), our results showed that RBSE yields its positive influence upon employees' promotability through the enactment of IWB. These findings provide some theoretical contributions for advancing promotability predictive models and practical implications for human resources management practices, particularly those aiming to enhance employees' promotability, linked upward mobility and talent retention in the organization (De Pater et al., 2009; Nevicka & Sedikides, 2021).

Theoretical contributions

By supporting a positive influence of RBSE on employee promotability, as appraised by direct supervisors, our findings converge with prior propositions asserting that human agency

Table 2. Results from the hierarchical linear modelling analyses.

Outcome	Model 1	Model 2
	IWB Coefficient (SE)	Promotability Coefficient (SE)
Intercept	0.76 (0.50)	2.96 (0.69)***
Organizational tenure	0.05 (0.03)†	
RBSE (cwc)	0.22 (0.11)†	0.06 (0.16)
RBSE (cluster mean)	0.48 (0.13)***	0.12 (0.19)
IWB (cwc)		0.91 (0.14)***
IWB (cluster mean)		0.44 (0.15)**

Individual-level sample size = 185 (nested in 82 supervisors). RBSE (cwc) = cluster-mean centred role breadth self-efficacy - level 1 variable; RBSE (cluster mean) = cluster mean of role breadth self-efficacy - level 2 variable; IWB = Innovative work behaviour; IWB (cwc) = cluster-mean centred innovative work behaviour - level 1 variable; IWB (cluster mean) = cluster mean of innovative work behaviour - level 2 variable. Unstandardized coefficients are reported with standard errors in parenthesis. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$ level; * $p < .05$ level; † $p < .10$.

and self-regulation at work, as captured by occupational self-efficacy constructs, may favour employees' prospects of vertical mobility (Aryee & Chu, 2012; Hirschi & Jaensch, 2015; Seibert et al., 2017). More importantly, they expand the scope of previous research concerning this criterion's antecedents, supporting the consideration of specific self-efficacy tenets, particularly RBSE, for theory-building purposes regarding employee promotability and career success. As asserted by Parker et al. (2010) model of proactive behaviour and related research (e.g., Parker et al., 2006), RBSE captures a "can-do" cognitive-motivational state which is critical in enacting change-related behavioural patterns in the workplace, including individual innovation. The integration of these aspects with signalling theory (Spence, 1973) and with our findings showing that the influence of this self-efficacy construct on supervisors' judgements of promotability occurs via effective IWB suggests that supervisors may perceive this mechanism as a salient, strong signal of employees' credentials to perform effectively in a higher job position. In line with prior research, as well as conveying confidence and willingness to perform a broader and more proactive role, beyond its prescribed core, higher RBSE employees tend to engage more often in innovative endeavours at work, persisting with such efforts until they translate into valuable improvements in their role, team or the whole organization (Chen et al., 2013; Parker et al., 2006, 2010).

As such, our findings assign empirical plausibility to the proposition asserting that supervisors will grant stronger promotability prospects to employees who are able to capitalize upon RBSE's motivational and agentic effects to prompt successful IWBs and effectively deal with such change-related work endeavours (McCauley et al., 1999; Ng & Lucianetti, 2016). Consistently, related research has shown that challenging job experiences are relevant drivers of promotability, non-redundant with current job performance, since performing such job demands maximizes knowledge acquisition and skills development, but also signals ambition to attain a higher-level position (De Pater et al., 2009; Seibert et al., 2001, 2017; Van Vianen et al., 2020). Interestingly, as evidenced by preliminary research, employees equally perceive their own innovative efforts as an effective way to impress their supervisor and strengthen their image of competence to yield a visible and effective contribution to their organization, ultimately attaining higher performance ratings (Ng & Wang, 2019; Schuh et al., 2018).

Therefore, in addition to contributing to mapping the antecedents and implied mechanisms of promotability at work, the current study also contributes to advancing research on the bright side of innovation for employees. It suggests that effective IWB, despite its potential costs in terms of potential stress and work detachment difficulties (see Anderson et al., 2018; Ng & Wang, 2019), is likely to enhance their promotability ratings and therefore may play a role in improving their career progression in the organization, as well as their overall employability.

Practical implications

Our findings also provide some applied implications for human resources and related career planning and succession. By

showing that RBSE is conducive to higher employee promotability ratings via IWB, these findings imply that organizations may benefit from stronger levels of individual innovation and promotability by targeting human resources policies towards the development of RBSE in their workforce. Similarly to other self-efficacy tenets, RBSE represents a malleable state that can be nurtured by granting employees the opportunity for enactive mastery (i.e., stimulating repeated performance success in challenging duties) and exposure to vicarious experiences, by ensuring that they witness their counterparts successfully accomplishing demanding tasks (Bandura, 1986; Van Vianen et al., 2020). In addition, providing social support via verbal persuasion, especially from the supervisor, through the expression of confidence in their competence to master difficult tasks, and promoting positive feelings during those undertakings instead of buffering potential stress and insecurity, represent other ways to strengthen employees' RBSE (Bandura, 1986; Parker, 1998; Van Vianen et al., 2020). To sum up, from a human-resources management perspective, the intervention should focus on designing enriched jobs, expanding the breadth of training and positively involving and empowering employees in recursive organizational improvement and change initiatives (Parker et al., 2006; Parker, 1998). Yet, as emphasized in previous literature, to effectively increase individuals' RBSE, such initiatives should effectively enhance employees' job mastery, responsibility and decision-making latitude, instead of simply adding non-challenging and routine tasks to their current work role (De Pater et al., 2009; Parker et al., 2006; Wu & Parker, 2017).

Thus, through RBSE enhancement, the organization may benefit from a more innovative workforce and increase the likelihood of having incumbents to promote to higher-level jobs, rather than predominantly relying on external candidates, enhancing its human talent development and retention rate. In tandem, employees can strengthen their overall contribution to the organization and impress their supervisors by actively partaking in innovative endeavours at work, ultimately signalling their readiness to deal with challenging job demands at a higher level of responsibility (Schuh et al., 2018; Seibert et al., 2001; Xu et al., 2022).

Limitations and directions of future research

Despite relying on a time-lagged design to test our hypotheses, with a six-month interval between predictor and criterion measures collected from different sources, i.e., the employees and their supervisors, respectively, the current study has some shortcomings. One such limitation stems from the concomitant measurement of the mediator, i.e., IWB, and the criterion, i.e., promotability, in a single data point, when the hypothesized model logically assumes that the assessment of IWB precedes the appraisal of this outcome. Still, from a theoretical perspective, this precedence is implicitly present in the assessment process underlying supervisors' promotability inferences, which suggests that even though both variables were measured using the same data point, there is a higher likelihood of supervisors relying upon IWB to infer employee promotability, rather the reverse. As asserted through the application of signalling theory to this matter, supervisors tend to rely upon past

signals (behaviours and attitudes) displayed by the employees to infer their future promotability, implying a forward-thinking process where past IWB is processed as a signal and input of employee's suitability to accomplish performance demands in a future higher-level job (De Pater et al., 2009; Nevicka & Sedikides, 2021; Seibert et al., 2001). Still, a reverse effect specifying that supervisors may rate employees as more innovative, depending on the extent to which they previously assume that focal employees are more promotable, i.e., like a self-fulfilling prophecy, despite being less likely according to the promotability inferences' advocated logic, cannot be ruled out in face of this methodological limitation, and it deserves further attention in future research. Another limitation stems from the non-inclusion of other employee behaviours that have the potential to convey the capacity to undertake challenging work endeavours and, thereby, signal readiness for promotion. These would include other proactive forms, like voice and taking charge (see Li et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2022) as well as specific performance actions (e.g., citizenship performance behaviours encompassed in the dimension of conscientious initiative, Borman et al., 2001). The addition of these aspects in further research will allow a more thorough examination of the degree to which they may work together to signal employees' promotability, from the direct supervisor's outlook.

A further limitation concerns the fact that our findings refer to a single job of software engineering pertaining to one organization. Despite the advantages of controlling for potential job contextual effects, like the level of job complexity, reliance upon this specific and high-complexity job prevents the generalization of obtained findings to other levels of job complexity. Thus, future research is needed to bring further insights into whether and to what extent the RBSE influences promotability and whether the mediating role of IWB in this link is contingent to more complex jobs, where incumbents are often granted more autonomy and decision-making latitude (D. J. Campbell, 1988), including when it comes to innovation at work (Anderson et al., 2018).

Similarly, our findings are also uninformative about the extent to which the beneficial role of RBSE in promotability – through prompted IWB – also occurs when innovation is not encouraged and rewarded as an important work goal by the supervisor and the organization. In such cases, employees might not capitalize upon their RBSE to take the risks of bringing about change and innovation (Schuh et al., 2018; Ng & Wang, 2019). As some research has found, employees, especially those with lower levels of intrinsic interest in innovation, are less likely to innovate when they perceive low performance – reward expectancy in exhibiting IWB and when it is not clearly valued by the organization (Anderson et al., 2014; Shin et al., 2016). Likewise, as reported by Crant et al. (2017), the level of employee – subordinates congruence in terms of shared proactive, change-related and innovative goals clearly has an impact on determining whether supervisors will react positively or negatively towards subordinates' IWB, the latter occurring in the face of incongruent employee – supervisor innovation goals. Moreover, supervisors who perceive themselves as being more proactive (i.e., score higher in proactive personality) are more likely to appreciate and reward subordinates' proactive and other change-related behaviours, such as

IWB, than more passive supervisors (Fuller et al., 2012). Hence, future research should bring insight to this area by scrutinizing whether these factors may also act as boundary conditions of the influence of RBSE on promotability, via IWB. Accordingly, they may represent relevant cues about which sort of work situations are more likely to reveal a bright side of innovation for employees, i.e., enhanced motivational states, performance and promotability ratings (see Devloo et al., 2016; Schuh et al., 2018) or to trigger its dark side via work stress, detachment difficulties and conflict (Harrison & Wagner, 2016; Ng & Wang, 2019).

Note

1. In a previous version of the manuscript, we hypothesized a direct and positive effect of RBSE on employee promotability, under the rationale that subordinates' levels of RBSE will inform the immediate supervisor about their willingness and confidence to meet more complex and integrative demands. We thank the reviewers for noting that, as a psychological inner state, which was assessed from subordinates' self-perspective, RBSE will always need to become explicitly expressed, i.e., through an overt and relevant behavioural signalling mechanism, in order to transfer to the supervisor's perception and inform his/her further inference of the employee's promotability. Due to the plausibility of this logic and its close alignment with signalling theory, we suppressed the hypothesis positing a RBSE-promotability direct effect, to focus on the indirect influence of employee RBSE on supervisor-rated promotability via IWB, as described in the next section.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Data availability statement

Data that support the findings of this study are available from the authors, upon reasonable request. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1359432X.2023.2178905>

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