

Designing and Validation of an Integrative Coaching Psychology Intervention Program

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ABSTRACT

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Objective: This study aims to design and validate an integrative coaching psychology intervention program. Coaching psychology employs scientific and evidence-based psychological techniques to enhance life experiences, work performance, and well-being in non-clinical populations. This research integrates coherent psychological theories and models into a unified framework.

Methods and Materials: The research method was qualitative and based on grounded theory, with a statistical population of domestic and international experts in coaching psychology. Employing a qualitative grounded theory approach, the study engaged international and domestic coaching psychology experts, reaching theoretical saturation after 22 interviews. Data were gathered through checklists and semi-structured interviews, analyzed using open, axial, and selective coding to establish core categories. The data obtained from interviews were analyzed using open, axial, and selective coding methods by the researcher to construct the core categories of the research.

Findings: Accordingly, 1162 codes were initially extracted, and 995 codes were obtained after secondary coding. Finally, the validity of items was evaluated using the content validity ratio (Lawshe table) and Holsti's agreement coefficient, and thus 956 open codes were confirmed by the key research experts (n=11). The results indicate that the most important causal factors constituting the integrative coaching psychology intervention program include coaching elements, psychological approaches and theories, intervention process, questioning in the process, and relationship-building-reinforcing factors.

Conclusion: These factors can emerge by considering strategies such as coaching tools, evaluation of irrational thoughts and beliefs, evaluation during the process, evaluation of well-being indicators, personality evaluation, concept teaching, change strategies, coaching methods, change methods, intervention design, and coaching techniques. Moreover, contextual conditions and intervening factors can either restrict or facilitate these strategies. The most important results and

consequences of the integrative coaching psychology intervention program include achieving efficacy, improving performance in life, changing attitudes, sense of purpose, value-based living, self-awareness, problem-solving, and decision-making, and achieving well-being and flourishing. Coaching psychology experts can use the integrative coaching psychology intervention program to enhance individuals' and groups' performance and well-being in various life domains, including personal, academic, sports, health, and professional development.

Keywords: *Coaching psychology, Integrative Coaching, Coaching, Life Coaching, Coaching Intervention*

1. Introduction

Coaching is a rapidly emerging and evolving field in a constantly changing and complex world (Palmer & Cavanagh, 2012). It focuses on unlocking individuals' potential to maximize their performance and facilitate learning rather than merely teaching. Coaching involves a future-oriented Socratic dialogue between a facilitator (coach) and a participant (coachee), in which the coach employs open-ended questions, summarization, and reflections to enhance the coachee's self-awareness and personal responsibility (Passmore, 2020; Passmore & Theeboom, 2016). The use of coaching is increasingly recognized for enhancing performance, professional or personal development, psychological well-being, and overall life experience (Grant, 2009). Personal and life coaching centers on hope, meaning, aspirations, and future possibilities, emphasizing potential outcomes over present circumstances (Skibbins & Bergquist, 2016).

Coaching originates from the training and development model, while counseling and psychotherapy derive from the medical (treatment) model. Both fields emphasize the importance of a strong relational dynamic between the practitioner and the client, whether labeled as coachee, coach, or therapist. Coaching aims to improve individual performance across various life aspects, whereas counseling and psychotherapy primarily address mild to severe psychological disorders and illnesses. These disciplines share underpinnings in psychological theories, such as cognitive-behavioral approaches applicable to both coaching and psychotherapy. Moreover, the ethical and professional principles that govern coaching align with those in counseling and psychotherapy. As described by Grant (2003), life coaching is "a collaborative, solution-focused, and systematic process in which the coach assists normal and non-clinical clients/coachees in achieving their personal and/or professional goals and experiencing a fuller life" (Grant, 2009, 2022; Grant & Cavanagh, 2011).

Most coaching and coaching psychology programs include educational content on structuring coaching sessions, termed as "intervention processes or models" or coaching models. However, research on the benefits or utilization of structured coaching sessions remains limited. This is puzzling, considering that for many coaches, structured sessions are essential and integral to their coaching style and approach. Moreover, there has been insufficient effort to delineate the relationship between the theoretical foundations of each coaching approach and the structure of each session (Grant & Cavanagh, 2011).

Today's coaches are encouraged to adopt an approach that transcends any single model or framework. They are urged to integrate various methodologies to achieve a more adaptable coaching practice (Passmore, 2020). Emerging trends in coaching psychology support the development of integrative and research-based concepts, techniques, and interventions that foster significant growth and development in individuals, groups, organizations, and communities. This integrative effort aims to be a practical discipline that "focuses on unlocking individuals' potential and capabilities, reinforcing and improving their situations based on those capabilities, increasing psychological well-being, and supporting sustainable optimal performance" (van Nieuwerburgh et al., 2018).

Numerous studies (Boyatzis et al., 2013; Chitra & Karunanidhi, 2021; Cronin & Allen, 2018; Green et al., 2006; Linley et al., 2010; Palamara et al., 2022; Song et al., 2020; Spence & Grant, 2007; Theeboom et al., 2014; Weiss et al., 2016) have highlighted the effectiveness of coaching psychology interventions and integrative coaching in enhancing well-being across various domains.

Based on the researcher's reviews, except for the study by Mortazavi Emami et al. (2022) on designing and validating a coaching pattern based on choice theory, no other pertinent research has been conducted in this field in Iran (Mortazavi Emāmi et al., 2022). Consequently, the researcher identified a gap in integrative and process-oriented coaching psychology approaches aimed at improving and enhancing

people's well-being in Iran; this identified need led to the conception of this research.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present research is qualitative and employs the grounded theory approach. It is both basic and applied in purpose. Given that the integrative coaching psychology intervention program was based on an unfamiliar paradigmatic contextual theory model, it was essential to qualitatively understand this phenomenon before proceeding to its quantitative assessment. Thus, qualitative data were initially gathered to develop and validate the tool.

Consequently, this study was undertaken to design an integrative coaching psychology intervention program. For this purpose, a qualitative grounded theory approach, specifically the systematic method outlined by Corbin & Strauss (2008), was utilized in the qualitative phase, while content validity assessment was employed in the quantitative phase to validate the program (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The participant pool for the field phase (interviews) included experts in coaching and coaching psychology from Iran, all holding at least a master's degree in psychology or counseling. It also included international experts in the field with a minimum of five years of experience and an international coaching certificate. According to Creswell (2023), the inclusion criteria targeted individuals who were well-informed about the topic and could contribute significantly to the development of a theoretical model (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Participants were selected voluntarily through purposive sampling. Those who met the inclusion criteria, specifically coaching experts, were invited to participate in the research interviews. Prior to the research, ethical considerations were strictly adhered to: interviewees gave their informed consent to participate, to be recorded in audio and video, and were briefed on the objectives of the research, the reasons for recording, and the confidentiality of the data and their identities.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Semi-Structured Interview

The interviews were scheduled and conducted after making preliminary arrangements with the participants. Due to the involvement of foreign experts, meticulous coordination and planning were required to accommodate intercontinental time differences and busy schedules. Each

session commenced with a comprehensive ten-minute overview of the research objectives and methodology. To ensure thorough documentation, all sessions were recorded in both audio and video formats, upon obtaining permission from the participants. The transcription of each interview was then based on these recordings.

The approach to managing the sessions involved starting with two to three broad questions to introduce the topic. Responses from the interviewees guided the subsequent direction of the discussion, ensuring adherence to the research theme while avoiding deviations that could sensitize participants. The researcher's checklist of questions served as a foundation for assessing the reliability of the interviews. Each session lasted between 90 to 100 minutes, concluding only after all planned questions were addressed and any emerging topics summarized.

Introductory questions

- What is coaching? Who is the coaching client? What are the coaching situations?
- What is integrative coaching psychology?
- Why do clients seek coaching?

Interview Body:

- What psychological theories and approaches form integrative coaching psychology?
- What are the key elements (theoretical concepts, components) of integrative coaching psychology?
- Where are coachees expected to reach with integrative coaching psychology? How?
- How does integrative coaching psychology view time (past, present, and future)?
- What is the role of education and teaching in integrative coaching psychology? What specific concepts are taught?
- Which intervention process or model is used for implementing integrative coaching psychology?
- What do we already know about our clients/coachees in integrative coaching psychology?
- What tools are used in integrative coaching psychology for coachee's evaluation and assessment? How and why?
- What techniques and strategies are used in implementing integrative coaching psychology?
- What environmental and contextual conditions must be present in implementing integrative coaching psychology to achieve coaching goals?

Interview conclusion:

- Do you have any more thoughts or opinions you'd like to share?
- Is there any question I didn't ask you? Please share your final thoughts.

Additionally, several important points were observed during the interviews as mentioned below:

- The interviewer mostly listened during the interviews, allowing more opportunities for the interviewees to speak and lead the conversation.
- The interviewer made the interviewees feel comfortable and allowed them to respond to questions however they wished.
- The interviewer spoke clearly throughout the interviews to prevent misunderstandings.
- The next question was asked only after ensuring that the interviewees fully expressed their opinions on the previous question.
- All questions were asked in the simplest possible way.
- During the interviews, the interviewer remained impartial to the interviewee's opinions and did not seek confirmation or denial.
- Scientifically accurate explanations were used at the beginning of the interviews to lead the interviewee into the research topic. Additionally, the interviewer remained silent to allow for easier thought processing during moments of silence from the interviewees.
- Factors such as age, gender, education level, and occupation were considered in analyzing the interviewee's responses.
- Questions that might distort the discussion from the main topic were asked in such a way that would not divert the interview from its main focus.

2.3. Data analysis

Concepts extracted from the data guided the researcher in selecting subsequent participants who could provide further insights into emerging concepts. Samples were chosen using purposive and snowball sampling methods. Initially, the sample included 22 individuals, and theoretical saturation was achieved after 19 interviews. Nonetheless, interviews continued with all 22 participants to robustly confirm theoretical saturation, marked by no emergence of new concepts or categories from the interview data.

Data collection was performed through semi-structured interviews, during which the components of the integrative

coaching program were identified and clarified. These interviews were conducted individually. After completing the interviews and processing the information from the coded interviews (open, axial, and selective coding), efforts were focused on organizing and categorizing the concepts. In this study, 1162 codes were initially extracted. After merging overlapping codes and removing duplicates, under the guidance of supervisors and advisors, 995 open codes were identified. The validity of these codes was then evaluated using the content validity ratio (Lawshe table), and their reliability was assessed using Holsti's agreement coefficient. A researcher-created questionnaire, based on these codes, was reviewed by 11 key experts in psychology, counseling, and coaching psychology, confirming 956 open codes with a CVR > 0.59 and a Holsti's agreement coefficient of 94% among experts, indicating the reliability of the results.

Furthermore, the data were validated using four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To ensure credibility, a diverse range of participants was selected, and sampling continued until data saturation was achieved, selecting the most appropriate meaning units for analysis. The internal credibility of the codes was assessed through formal validity checks, wherein a panel of experts supported the development of coding concepts or themes and also reviewed these with participants. The interview texts and extracted codes were provided to the participants, who commented on their accuracy and correctness. Any discrepancies were addressed through telephone, virtual, and email communications. The complete texts of all interviews, along with the coding and primary categories, were sent to esteemed supervisors and advisors, whose feedback was incorporated at all stages of the work, including implementation, coding, and primary category extraction.

Research auditing was conducted by an external auditor to enhance the study's stability and ensure conformability. According to Lincoln and Guba, conformability refers to the reliability of the data under similar conditions and considers changes made in the researcher's decisions during the process. Efforts were made to limit the data collection time and ensure all participants were questioned about a specific topic. Confirmability was established by providing a detailed description of the research stages, including data collection, analysis, and theme formation, which enabled validation of the research by the audience and readers. Additionally, the process was shared with several research colleagues to verify the methodology.

For data transferability, the researcher presented their dataset and textual descriptions comprehensively and in alignment with the theoretical background. Given the researcher's extensive experience in the field, spanning over fifteen years, a reasonable theoretical sensitivity was applied to identify and retrieve concepts among the data. Continuous data comparison techniques were used to establish strong connections among various data points and significantly enhance the credibility of the results. The broad range of participants' experiences in this study effectively illustrates the coaching psychology intervention program.

3. Findings and Results

Based on the results, research participants, in their interviews, refer to factors that necessitate the coaching psychology intervention program. The analysis of interviews indicates the existence of components for the underlying factors of the coaching psychology intervention program. Finally, based on the findings, the model of the integrative coaching psychology intervention program can be presented in Figure 1:

Figure 1

The integrative coaching psychology intervention program model

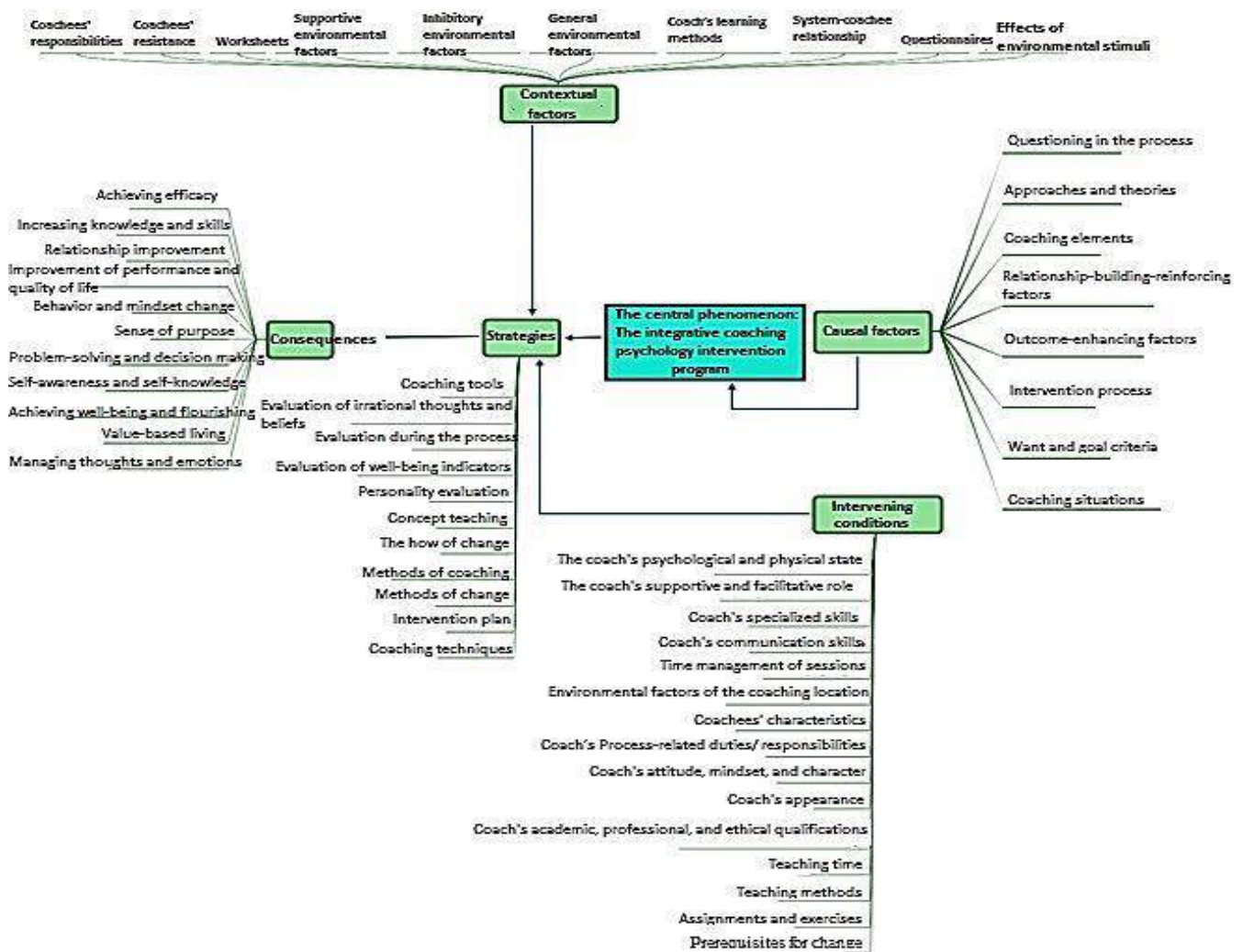


Table 1 presents the axial codes of the causal factors, contextual factors, intervening factors, strategies, and

consequences of the coaching psychology intervention program:

Table 1

Categories and Axial Codes of Integrative Coaching Psychology

Category	Axial Codes
Causal Factors	Questioning in the Process
	Approaches and Theories
	Coaching Elements
	Relationship-building-reinforcing Factors
	Outcome-enhancing Factors
	Intervention Process
	Want and Goal Criteria
Contextual Factors	Coaching Situations
	Effects of Environmental Stimuli
	Questionnaires
	System-coachee Relationship
	Coach's Learning Methods
	General Environmental Factors
	Inhibitory Environmental Factors
	Supportive Environmental Factors
	Worksheets
	Coachees' Resistance
Intervening Conditions	Coachees' Responsibilities
	Prerequisites for Change
	Assignments and Exercises
	Teaching Methods
	Teaching Time
	Coach's Academic, Professional, and Ethical Qualifications
	Coach's Appearance
	Coach's Attitude, Mindset, and Character
	Coach's Process-related Duties/Responsibilities
	Coachees' Characteristics
	Environmental Factors of the Coaching Location
	Time Management of Sessions
	Coach's Communication Skills
	Coach's Specialized Skills
	The Coach's Supportive and Facilitative Role
Strategies	The Coach's Psychological and Physical State
	Coaching Tools
	Evaluation of Irrational Thoughts and Beliefs
	Evaluation During the Process
	Evaluation of Well-being Indicators
	Personality Evaluation
	Concept Teaching
	The Way of Change
	Methods of Coaching
	Methods of Change
Consequences	Intervention Plan
	Coaching Techniques
	Achieving Efficacy
	Increasing Knowledge and Skills
	Relationship Improvement
	Improvement of Performance and Quality of Life
	Behavior and Mindset Change
	Sense of Purpose
	Problem-solving and Decision Making
	Self-awareness and Self-knowledge
	Achieving Well-being and Flourishing
	Value-based Living
	Managing Thoughts and Emotions

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings identified several key factors constituting the integrative coaching psychology intervention program, including questioning during the process, diverse approaches and theories, coaching elements, relationship-building and reinforcing factors, outcome-enhancing factors, the intervention process, criteria for wants and goals, and coaching situations. The development of the integrative coaching psychology intervention program may involve strategies such as the use of coaching tools, evaluation of irrational thoughts and beliefs, ongoing process evaluation, well-being indicators, personality assessment, concept teaching, understanding the mechanisms of change, coaching methods, modification techniques, intervention planning, and coaching techniques. These strategies are profoundly influenced by contextual conditions like environmental stimuli, questionnaires, the coach-coachee relationship, the coach's learning methods, general and specific environmental factors, and coachees' resistance and responsibilities. Furthermore, these strategies are affected by intervening factors including assignments, teaching methods, the timing of teachings, the coach's academic, professional, and ethical qualifications, appearance, mindset, character, process-related duties, coachees' characteristics, environmental factors at the coaching location, session time management, communication skills, specialized skills, and the coach's supportive and facilitative roles. These factors can either facilitate or hinder the implementation of strategies.

The consequences of implementing the integrative coaching psychology intervention program include increased efficacy, knowledge, skills, improved relationships, enhanced performance and quality of life, behavioral and mindset changes, a heightened sense of purpose, better problem-solving and decision-making, increased self-awareness and knowledge, value-based living, effective management of thoughts and emotions, and overall well-being and flourishing.

This study aligns with prior research (Kettunen & Välimäki, 2014; Passmore, 2020; Patel & van Nieuwerburgh, 2022; van Nieuwerburgh et al., 2018), which focused on cognitive, cognitive-behavioral, solution-focused, positive psychology, acceptance and commitment, and mindfulness approaches in the field of integrative coaching psychology. Moreover, this study introduced 16 additional theoretical and psychological approaches to

formulate integrative coaching psychology, previously not unified in the research literature. This includes approaches detailed by other researchers (Griffiths, 2012; Hofmann & Hayes, 2019; Mortazavi Emāmi et al., 2022; Palmer, 2007; Passmore, 2020; Van Zyl et al., 2020; Wubbolding, 2013), emphasizing the use of an intervention process and model in coaching psychology.

The approaches and theories such as positive psychology, choice theory, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), mindfulness, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), client-centered therapy, self-determination theory, neuroscience and neuroplasticity, developmental psychology, existential psychology, Adlerian psychology, social psychology, spiritual coaching, systemic coaching, solution-focused coaching, compassion-based coaching, stoicism, transformational coaching, and training on the principles of learning, collectively form a unified and integrative approach in coaching psychology. The presence of these theories and approaches indicates a shift towards more scientifically-based methods in coaching that rely on evidence-based theories and interventions.

The intervention process, following a solid theoretical background, is a crucial element in integrative coaching psychology. The "Relationship (Explore, Want, Doing, Evaluation, Options, Plan) or R(E-WDEOP)" model emerged as the most comprehensive process, incorporating elements from choice coaching, positive psychology coaching, and self-determination coaching. Although questioning during the intervention process is a vital causal factor, it is not the only one; other factors are essential for a holistic integrative approach with clear theoretical underpinnings and a structured intervention process. The attention to signature strengths, conscious cognition, emotional aspects, physiological symptoms, basic psychological needs, total behavior, and core values highlights the multidimensional focus of this approach, which provides a comprehensive understanding of the individual.

The factors involved in building and reinforcing relationships within the causal and constitutive elements of coaching psychology, as well as the importance of the longevity of these relationships, underscore the critical role of relationship management in effective coaching interventions. This study contributes to the field by aligning with previous research that underscores the effectiveness of coaching psychology interventions in enhancing well-being across various domains.

5. Limitations & Suggestions

Despite its insights, this research has limitations. Conducted in the specific field of coaching psychology, its findings may not readily generalize to other forms of psychological intervention, which might differ significantly in nature and application. The inclusion criteria focused on experts with backgrounds in psychology and counseling proficient in coaching psychology, potentially overlooking contributions from professionals in other fields who may hold valuable insights into coaching or coaching psychology.

The results suggest that the integrative coaching psychology intervention program is shaped by causal conditions, intervening conditions, contextual factors, and strategic implementations. Based on these findings, several recommendations are proposed for coaches and other professionals like counselors or psychotherapists who intend to apply an integrative approach in coaching psychology:

1. It is recommended to evaluate causal conditions before implementing an integrative coaching psychology intervention program. These conditions include questioning during the process, diverse approaches and theories, essential coaching elements, relationship-building and reinforcing factors, outcome-enhancing factors, the intervention process itself, criteria for wants and goals, and the specific coaching situations that need to be addressed.

2. It is important to consider a set of general and specific factors that influence the coach's work method when implementing this program. Factors such as assignments and exercises, teaching methods, the timing of teachings, the coach's academic, professional, and ethical qualifications, appearance, attitude, mindset and character, process-related duties/responsibilities, coachees' characteristics, environmental factors at the coaching location, time management of sessions, communication skills, specialized skills, the coach's supportive and facilitative role, and the psychological and physical state of the coach are crucial and should be taken into consideration.

3. Attention to contextual factors is essential as these significantly impact the coach's methodology. These include the effects of environmental stimuli, questionnaires, the system-coachee relationship, the coach's learning methods, general and specific environmental factors, inhibitory and supportive environmental factors, worksheets, coachees' resistance, and coachees' responsibilities.

4. Coaches need various tools such as evaluations of irrational thoughts and beliefs, ongoing process evaluations,

well-being indicators, personality evaluations, concept teaching, methods of change, intervention planning, and coaching techniques to effectively implement an integrative coaching psychology intervention program.

5. Coaches are advised to conceptualize or formalize the client's case as part of their implementation strategy before beginning their intervention. This includes specifying the coachee's situation based on changeable (action plan) or unchangeable (being plan) aspects of their external environment and utilizing the intervention process outlined in this study.

6. Coaches should teach significant concepts and principles during coaching sessions, which are integral to the integrative coaching psychology intervention strategy. These include understanding the three parts of the brain; utilizing neuroplasticity for behavior change; the impact of stress on brain function and performance; mindfulness for creating new neural pathways; growth mindset; the PERMA Plus well-being model; addressing fundamental psychological needs responsibly; utilizing signature strengths; fostering values-based living; designing personal missions and visions; enhancing self-awareness, self-evaluation, and compassion; and applying various planning and coping strategies like the Wish-Outcome-Obstacle-Plan (WOOP) technique and if-then planning.

7. Researchers are encouraged to use other qualitative research methods to explore the components identified in this study further and to propose comparative models. Practically implementing the intervention program and evaluating its outcomes through a quasi-experimental study is also recommended.

The integrative coaching psychology intervention program can be employed by psychology and coaching professionals to enhance intimate relationships, life satisfaction, resilience, personal and social performance, psychological capital, happiness, flourishing, and well-being across various life domains, including personal, educational, sports, health, and professional development. Policymakers in both the private and public sectors can utilize these findings to inform initiatives in education, health, sociocultural welfare, and sports.

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Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed in this article.

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