JOURNAL OF SOCIAL, BEHAVIORAL, & HEALTH SCIENCES

Journal of Social, Behavioral, and Health Sciences
2024, Volume 18, Issue 1, Pages 332–363
https://doi.org/10.5590/JSBHS.2024.18.1.22

Original Research

WALDEN UNIVERSITY

The Pulse of Connection: Trust and Confidentiality in Internal Coaching Dynamics

Mehdi Ebrahimi, PhD
Central Queensland University, Queensland, Australia
https://orcid.org/0009-0003-7807-5045

Contact: *m.ebrahimi@skillsacademia.org*

Abstract

Internal coaching is growing in popularity across various industries and sectors, either as a standalone resource or in conjunction with external coaching and other relevant programs and initiatives. Despite the growing popularity and reported benefits, there is a substantial dearth of research on the dynamics of "internal coaching" relationships, making it one of the least explored areas in organizational coaching literature. This paper contributes to addressing the research gap by presenting the outcomes of a study that explores the coach–client relationship and captures perspectives from internal coaches, external coaches, managers, and, notably, coachees, also known as coaching clients. Employing a mixed-methods approach, this study is a segment of a larger research project and focuses specifically on a subset of data that is relevant to the objective of this paper. Informed by a comprehensive literature review and insights from scholars and practitioners, including an exploration of the working alliance in therapy, the results of this study underscore the critical significance of confidentiality and trust in internal coaching, and its findings contribute to enhancing our understanding of internal coaching dynamics, offering guidance for the development of more effective internal coaching programs or the improvement of existing strategies.

Keywords: *organizational coaching, internal coaching, coaching relationship, confidentiality, trust*

Date Submitted: December 18, 2023 | **Date Published:** October 24, 2024

Recommended Citation

Ebrahimi, M. (2024). The pulse of connection: Trust and confidentiality in internal coaching dynamics. *Journal of Social, Behavioral, and Health Sciences, 18*(1), 332–363. https://doi.org/10.5590/JSBHS.2024.18.1.22

Introduction

Organizational coaching, grounded in evidence-based practices, assumes diverse functionalities and acts as a learning and development catalyst (Rajasinghe & Allen, 2020; Wang et al., 2022), a targeted intervention for behavioral change (Knowles, 2021), a strategy for enhancing performance (Grant, 2012; King & Eaton, 1999; Sidhu & Nizam, 2020; Whitmore, 2010), and a mechanism for fostering capability building and leadership development (Bass & Riggio, 2005; Cameron & Ebrahimi, 2014; Grant & Hartley, 2013; Korotov, 2017). Other scholars describe coaching as a developing discipline (Bachkirova et al.,

Note: The author expresses gratitude to the Cooperative Research Centers (CRC) Program, an Australian Government initiative, for providing partial funding and support that was instrumental in carrying out this research project. Sincere thanks are also extended to the survey and interview participants for their valuable time and contributions.

2016), that is "an applied form of positive psychology" (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007, p. 239). Coaching entails a close association between a coach and an individual client or a group of clients, with the objective of enhancing the outcomes for the client, the organization, or both (Cannon-Bowers et al., 2023).

Internal coaching has gained consistent popularity over the past decade (McCarthy & Milner, 2020) and is provided by a coach who may also be a manager, leader, supervisor, colleague, or staff member within the same organization as "the coachee" (Coetzee et al., 2023; Frisch, 2001; St. John-Brooks, 2014), also referred to interchangeably as "the client" in the coaching context. While some authors have explored the managerial coaching approach (also known as manager-as-coach), involving a supervisor (or manager) guiding employee learning and skill development (Anderson, 2013; Ellinger et al., 2003; Tobias et al., 2024), this article opens the possibility that internal coaching extends beyond managerial roles; it is not confined to line management, as further research will explore.

Organizations have observed a burgeoning trend where a substantial number of individuals are actively participating in informal coaching or displaying a heightened enthusiasm for coaching (Abel & Nair, 2015). But, despite its growing popularity, internal coaching remains considerably underexplored, and a persistent research gap exists in the pivotal role of the coach–coachee relationship. While certain authors explored the advantages and disadvantages of internal versus external coaching (Evans-Krimme, 2023; Carey et al., 2011; Schalk & Landeta, 2017), many published papers continue to focus on external forms of coaching.

Scholars and practitioners generally agree that the coaching relationship is critical for coaching effectiveness. O'Broin and Palmer's (2010) research, for instance, suggests that trust and co-creation of the coaching relationship are key aspects of engagement in coaching. It is imperative to note, however, that despite some existing work on the importance of building trust in coaching, the current state of research faces notable challenges. First, Pandolfi (2020) suggests that the quality of research in regard to investigating trust in coaching is moderate and often relies on assessments and self-disclosures by coaches. A lack of trust may compromise internal validity, as well as introduce the potential for social desirability bias. Second—particularly in the domain of internal coaching—there is a significant limitation in investigations pertaining to trust, confidentiality, and other aspects of the coaching relationship, especially from the coachee's perspective.

The potential decrease in objectivity in internal coaching, due to the coach being part of the same organization as the coachee, underscores the significance of trust and confidentiality in the coaching relationship. The notion that "confidentiality lies at the heart of coaching relationships" (St. John-Brooks, 2014, p. 63) further emphasizes this importance. Although some researchers have examined the role of manager-as-coach (Ben-Hador, 2023; Graham et al., 2008), the challenges associated with coach–coachee dynamics impacting the effectiveness of internal coaching programs remain underexplored. In the last decade or so, promising progress has been made in the field of coaching psychology (Grant, 2011; Passmore & Lai, 2021). These developments instill hope that a more in-depth exploration of the various dimensions of the coaching relationship, influencing coaching interventions and subsequent outcomes, is on the horizon.

Traditionally, in clinical psychology and counseling, trust, objectivity, and being nonjudgmental are recognized as drivers of relationship building (Chouliara, 2024; Harrison, 2019). Practitioners often undergo comprehensive training through specialist courses and regular supervision to gain knowledge and confidence in trust building, confidentiality, and the ethical aspects of their work (Avasthi et al., 2022; Carr, 2015). Nonetheless, while workplace coaching does not address clinical issues—and can be effective for non-clinical populations (Ladegård, 2011)—it also necessitates relationship building, alongside significant considerations for confidentiality, ethics, and professionalism. Despite these considerations, aspects of internal coaching combined with the potential for a coachee's feelings of fear and anxiety in the absence of trust and confidentiality, or the lack of a constructive workplace culture and

organizational support (Rasool et al., 2021; Yip et al., 2020), require further investigation and research to promote effective internal coaching and healthy internal coaching relationships.

Employing a mixed-methods approach in this study, I explore the factors contributing to the effectiveness of internal coaching programs, with a specific focus on the intricate dynamics of coach–client relationships. Two primary research questions guide this inquiry: (1) How does internal coaching differ from external coaching; and (2) What characterizes an effective internal coaching program? This study is part of a larger research study conducted in three sequential phases; Phase 3, however, isn't directly relevant to the focus of this article.

Building on the findings of Phase 1 and Phase 2, Phase 3 delved further into the impact of workplace coaching on employee behavior. Phase 3 revealed further insights into employee motivation, behavior change, and stress. Specifically, Phase 3 involved survey research to gather more data following significant restructuring and changes that took place during and after the Phase 2 data collection, particularly within some of Australia's largest rail organizations. As this paper concentrates on exploring the coaching relationship and the importance of trust and confidentiality in internal coaching, I only report here the pertinent subset of data from Phase 1 and Phase 2.

I began the study with Phase 1, an initial quantitative phase that employed a survey instrument to collect data from rail organizations in Australia. Phase 1 served as a general scan, providing an overview of coaching activities within this sample population. Building on this foundation, Phase 2 involved a qualitative exploration and utilized semi-structured interviews for data collection. The qualitative exploration involved conducting semi-structured interviews with managers, coachees, internal coaches, and external coaches from two of the largest rail organizations. I also present here a comprehensive literature review on the topic and then zero in on a subset of results. I will connect the subsequent discussion of these findings with existing literature, representing what I consider the pulse of connection in internal coaching dynamics.

Literature Review

What is Coaching in an Organizational Context?

Given its emerging status within empirical research, workplace coaching has attracted scrutiny from critics who question its empirical underpinnings (Greif et al., 2022; Sherman & Freas, 2004). While certain literature has emphasized advancing the science of coaching (Cannon-Bowers et al., 2023), other studies, such as Forbes (2016) and Bowman et al. (2013), also explored the integration of principles from neuroscience (brain science) into organizational coaching practices. In other contexts, similar efforts to enhance the empirical underpinnings of coaching have been exemplified by the work of Abraham and Collins (2012), initiated over a decade ago. They assert that "coaching is no longer a subset of physical education or sport psychology but is rather an established vocation for research" (p. 366). As efforts to strengthen the empirical underpinnings of coaching in organizational contexts continue, coaching remains prevalent as a developmental intervention within organizations (Ebrahimi, 2024), aimed at enhancing the productivity and performance of personnel (Grover & Furnham, 2016), as well as promoting resilience and well-being in the workplace (Grant et al., 2009; Wall et al., 2021).

The definition of coaching in the organizational context varies among scholars and practitioners, primarily due to diverse practices, modalities, and orientations toward specific coaching forms or theoretical frameworks (Paul & Myers, 2021). However, Anthony Grant (2001), a prominent figure in evidence-based coaching, provides a widely accepted definition: coaching is "a collaborative, solution-focused, result-oriented, and systematic process used with normal, non-clinical populations, in which the

coach facilitates the self-directed learning, personal growth and goal attainment of the coachee" (p. 10). Building on this foundational definition, recent studies emphasize that coaching also focuses on enhancing future performance by guiding the learner through reflection, enabling the coachee to set personalized goals and identify pathways to achieve them (Richardson et al., 2024). In this sense, coaching can be considered both a collaborative and future-focused approach.

The emphasis on collaboration, solution- and future-focused approaches, and a systematic nature underscores the pivotal role of the coach, as well as the need for the process to be non-authoritarian, client-centered, systematic, and purposeful rather than informal and ad-hoc (Boak & Crabbe, 2019). Additionally, coaching skills are not inherently ingrained in many individuals (Grant, 2017), and becoming a proficient coaching practitioner requires training and the acquisition of critical knowledge and expertise (Grant & Hartley, 2013; McCarthy & Milner, 2013). As Cannon-Bowers et al. (2023) assert, clients expect coaches to be skilled and experienced.

Theoretical Background

Coaching as an industry can be linked to the 1950s and the humanistic approach to change (Allen, 2016). Carl Rogers' humanistic psychology and its person-centeredness—known as a client-centered approach to therapy (Rogers, 1965)—are grounded in the idea that people are motivated toward achieving positive development and positive functioning (Yao & Kabir, 2023).

Rogers posited that several conditions need to occur in clients for change to happen. Some of the most crucial fundamental conditions, as posited by Rogers (1951, 1967), include that two people (therapist and client) be in a psychological contract; that the client be in a state of congruence; that the therapist be congruent; that the therapist experience unconditional regard for the client; and that the client perceives to at least a nominal degree the therapists' unconditional positive regard and empathetic understanding.

In the humanistic approach, the therapist's role is to create a nonjudgmental environment that facilitates open and honest self-exploration (Yao & Kabir, 2023). Rogers' humanistic approach is understood to be an approach that encourages creating an environment and process that would encourage trust and confidentiality (Mahoney & Baker, 2002). While the humanistic approach puts precise emphasis on objectivity and respect for the client (Thorne & Sanders, 2012), Rogers also considered education and the techniques of therapists as other predictors of their effectiveness (Gentry, 1939).

Building upon earlier theories in psychology, such as Psychoanalytic Theory (Freud, 1949), which emphasizes the significance of confidentiality and trust in the analyst-client relationship, contemporary perspectives, as articulated by Forrester (2003), delve deeper into the role of confidentiality. Forrester (2003) suggests that confidentiality not only fosters trust but also creates a distinct therapeutic environment where verbal expressions are detached from everyday actions, facilitating a more nuanced exploration of emotions, such as anger or distrust, without interference. Similarly, contemporary practices in mindfulness, particularly through Jon Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, contribute to bridging theory-practice gaps by enhancing present-moment awareness and fostering non-reactive acceptance of internal experiences. These practices are known to be instrumental in creating a safe, non-judgmental coaching environment where coachees can explore their thoughts and emotions with openness and curiosity (Laff, 2023).

Stober (2006) underscores that coaching is fundamentally centered on maximizing human growth and potential, establishing a robust link to humanistic psychology. Much like humanistic psychology, coaching places considerable emphasis on fostering growth, achieving goals, and optimizing human potential and performance. As stated by Gregory and Levy (2013), coaching objectives align inherently with humanistic psychology, both endorsing a person-centered approach that prioritizes individual needs and fosters the

realization of one's fullest potential. In academic advising and similar contexts, the humanistic approach is linked to a philosophy of learning and development, emphasizing individuals as "creative beings, capable of growth and self-actualization" (Bermea, 2022, p. 3), and embracing learner autonomy and free will (Veugelers, 2011).

I now transition into the nuanced dynamics of internal versus external coaching. This transition paves the way for a more in-depth exploration of the central theme—the coach–coachee relationship in internal coaching.

Internal Versus External Coaching

There is no shortage of empirical and practitioner-published papers provided by external professional coaching practitioners that focus on external forms of coaching like executive coaching (Goldsmith, 2009; Grant, 2013; Grant et al., 2009; Kilburg, 1996; Moen & Federici, 2012; Natale & Diamante, 2005; Pandolfi, 2020; Thach & Heinselman, 1999). Many published papers, mostly—and comprehensively—focus on (1) coaching outcomes (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018; Jones et al., 2016; Nicolau, 2023; Wasylyshyn, 2007); (2) psychologically informed approaches in external forms of coaching (Cotterill & Passmore, 2018; Kauffman & Scoular, 2004; Lai & Palmer, 2019, Peltier, 2011; Ward et al., 2014); and (3) the coach–coachee relationship in executive coaching (Payne et al., 2023; Bluckert, 2005).

External Coaching

External coaching operates from a position outside of the organization. External coaching is provided by professional coaching practitioners and experts who deliver professional coaching services (Grant, 2017). The most recognized form of external coaching occurs when an executive or management-level individual receives coaching from a professional external coach (Kilburg, 1996). Executive coaching (Paul & Myers, 2021)—one prevalent type of external coaching—is known for its highly structured process (Bozer et al., 2015). It's crucial to note the diverse types of external coaching; however, it is not within the scope of this article to explore coaching typologies.

Numerous researchers delved into the coach–client relationship dynamics in external coaching, investigating various aspects of this relationship (Bozer et al., 2015; Bluckert, 2005; Stober et al., 2006). Key benefits of external coaching include objectivity (Tompkins, 2018), reduced bias, and the advantage of leveraging a wealth of diverse experiences, broader ideas, and perspectives from an external coaching expert who serves various organizations and potentially different industries (Gunderson et al., 2018; Tobias, 1996).

In terms of the coaching relationship, five specific studies in particular shed light on potential differences in coaching dynamics between internal and external coaching. These five studies include Blackman (2006), Grant (2014), Mayer et al. (2013), McNally and Lukens (2006), and Wasylyshyn (2003). The first two studies were conducted in Australia, and the latter three in the United States. Findings from all five studies suggested that objectivity is perceived as a positive aspect of external coaching.

Internal Coaching

According to Frisch (2001), internal coaching is viewed as a "one-on-one developmental intervention supported by the organization and provided by a colleague of those coached, who is trusted to shape and deliver a program yielding individual professional growth" (p. 242). In instances of internal coaching (sometimes referred to as managerial coaching), a hierarchical structure is evident in the formal relationship between subordinates and their designated supervisors (Gregory & Levy, 2010) when the direct manager coaches subordinates (Nyfoudi et al., 2022). Potential issues of subjectivity, bias, and concern about trust and confidentiality may arise for the coachee who is being coached by a manager or a trained colleague from the same or a different team, project, or department within the organization. These

issues may also be compounded by feelings of fear and anxiety if the coachee isn't fully comfortable engaging in coaching conversations with an internal coach. Each of these issues highlights the importance of establishing a professional, supportive, and trusting coaching relationship.

Internal coaches are more readily available (Carter, 2005; Tompkins, 2018), more cost-effective (Tompkins, 2018), and possess a greater understanding of an organization's culture and internal dynamics, which are all advantages. Internal coaching also creates an opportunity to shift toward a culture of learning facilitation and development while moving away from directive management styles (Jones et al., 2016).

Previous research suggests that internal coaches should cultivate a distinct perspective on their roles and relationships (Hunt & Weintraub, 2006). This implies recognizing the need for different dynamics, skillsets, and professional competency when fulfilling organizational roles compared to their functions as internal coaches. While many authors consistently highlight insufficient research exploring internal coaching (Frisch, 2002; Rock & Donde, 2008; Ali et al., 2010; Mucherjee, 2012), the case for further exploration of the key ingredients define the effectiveness of the coach–coachee relationship in internal coaching remains.

The Coaching Relationship

In the field of psychology, the therapeutic relationship is characterized as the feelings and attitudes exchanged between a therapist and a client (Gelso & Carter, 1985, 1994). Recognized as one of the best predictors of therapeutic outcomes, the coach–client relationship is referred to as the "working alliance" (Bordin, 1974; McKenna & Davis, 2009; Uckelstam et al., 2020). Building upon this foundation, Grassman et al. (2020) and Vermeiden et al. (2022) extend the notion of the working alliance to the coach–client relationship within the context of organizational coaching. According to Vermeiden et al. (2022), in the coach–coachee working alliance, "collaboration is an active process (i.e., both coach and coachee actively contribute) to negotiate and establish goals and set tasks to realize the goals mutually agreed upon, building on a bond of trust" (p. 2).

The coach–coachee relationship appears to be a multifaceted and complex aspect of coaching dynamics. The literature suggests that "coachees have a very clear view of what they value within a coaching relationship" (Passmore, 2010, p. 3). Some researchers indicated that the coach–coachee "personality fit" plays an important role in building an effective coaching relationship (de Haan et al., 2013; Scoular & Linley, 2006). Other researchers suggest that the coaching contract serves as the foundation for an effective coaching relationship (Bresser & Wilson, 2010). Some authors believe that showing genuine concern for the client and attending to the client's agenda are important to build trust in the coach–coachee relationship (Day & Blakey, 2012). But two things are very clear: Coaching conversations are confidential (de Haan et al., 2020), and coaching is a process of "joint meaning-making" between the coach and clients (Bachkirova et al., 2016), wherein the coach demonstrates genuine unconditional positive regard and refrains from judgment (Passmore, 2006; van Zyl & Stander, 2013).

In 2001, Kilburg formulated an eight-component model of coaching effectiveness. Within this model, Kilburg highlighted the central role of the coach–coachee relationship while emphasizing key elements like trust, warmth, positive regard for the coachee, tolerance, and the coachee's positive perception of challenges (Kilburg, 2001). According to St. John-Brooks (2014), the importance of researching the coaching relationship—particularly in the context of internal coaching—is evident, saying:

> The idea that internal coaches are likely to have to deal with more ethical dilemmas than external coaches equates to the notion that the role of external coach is "cleaner" than that of the

> internal coach: That is, the management of confidentiality, boundaries, and conflicts of interest is likely to be more challenging for internal coaches than for most external coaches. (p. 5)

Trust and Confidentiality

Earlier in this article, Grant's (2001) definition of coaching underscored the concept of "a collaborative, solution-focused, result-oriented, and systematic process" (p. 10) by recognizing the significance of collaboration that extends beyond coaching into various other fields, including therapy, where it is acknowledged as instrumental in advancing therapeutic progress (Ribeiro et al., 2013). Similarly, engagement is deemed crucial for facilitating progress toward individual client goals in coaching interventions (King et al., 2019). And trust, a key factor in relationship building across diverse domains (Lansing et al., 2023), is emphasized in the coaching context, where establishing a trust-based coach–client relationship is acknowledged to be intricate and challenging (Wotruba, 2016). In simple terms, trust involves a robust belief in someone or something's reliability, truth, and capability (Wilkins, 2018). It is also associated with a willingness to be vulnerable and take risks (Schoorman et al., 2007; Schiemann et al., 2019).

From a cross-disciplinary point of view, Nicollas (2021), in a seminal publication titled "Psychology in Sports Coaching," stresses the importance of an effective coach–athlete relationship as a predictor of successful coaching outcomes. This viewpoint is supported by Jowett et al. (2017) in a study conducted with 399 French athletes (277 male and 122 female) aged 15 to 34. Using "The Coach Behavior Scale for Sport," the investigation explored the correlation between the quality of the coach–athlete relationship and various behaviors that were exhibited by coaches during training and competitions. Research findings indicated that the developed coach–athlete relationship holds paramount significance for the athlete, with one contributing factor: the perceived central role coaches play in shaping athletes' sports experiences and successes. Specifically, the study found that high levels of trust, respect, and appreciation predicted low levels of negative personal rapport. Similarly, in an earlier study, Weinberg et al. (2016) conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 sport psychologists and found that the majority of participants agreed that coaches need to be mindful in choosing the types of interventions and types of feedback, foster a motivational environment, and build trust.

In the context of coaching in the workplace, the majority of published papers focus on the role of trust in executive coaching (Sztucinski, 2001; Caprioni, 2001; Bush, 2004; Kappenberg, 2008). These papers, however, often don't distinguish whether trust—as an important aspect of building an effective coach–coachee relationship—was achieved by internal coaches or external coaches. In the organizational context, van Woerkom (2010) conducted a study investigating what fosters an effective coach–coachee relationship in the context of government employees in the Netherlands. The study collected data through interviews with 35 coachees and their coaches, all of whom were managers within the same government organizations and performed the role of an internal coach as well. The study revealed two significantly important findings suggesting that (1) unconditional acceptance and respect from the coach were critical for both the coaching process and enabling change in the client; and (2) a level of distance and objectivity were necessary, while a deep personal connection and compatibility with the coach were also helpful. Woerkom's concept of unconditional acceptance aligns with humanistic psychology and person-centered therapy, which draws on Rogers' (1957) notion of "unconditional positive regard" and emphasizes the significance of establishing trust within the therapeutic relationship (Crits-Christoph et al., 2019; Greene, 2008).

Research on the role of trust, confidentiality, consent, and privacy in psychotherapeutic interventions has been extensively explored by scholars and therapists who have extensive training and supervision to ensure those aspects are fully addressed in each and all therapeutic consultations and processes (Bordin, 1979; Crits-Christoph et al., 2019; Everstine et al., 1980; Leon & Andreas, 2009). Values that dictate treatment compliance and govern the therapist–client relationship are set according to the nature of therapy that often deals with significantly sensitive clinical matters (Beutler et al., 1991). In the context of

coaching in the workplace, the literature also underscores the importance of building trust to enhance the effectiveness of coaching relationships (Bozer & Jones, 2018; Bluckert, 2005; Gan & Chong, 2015; Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007; Machin, 2010; van Woerkom, 2010).

McMahon (2018) sheds light on what the International Coaching Federation (ICF) defines as confidentiality in the context of coaching as "the coach's duty to not disclose any information obtained during the course of the coaching" (para. 1). In general, information concerning an individual's private matters, which they prefer not to disclose to others, is deemed confidential (Bos, 2020). The significance of confidentiality and trust are at the heart of many professions and disciplines, such as nursing and psychology. For example, in both nursing and psychotherapy, patients and clients have a right to do no harm (Haddad & Geiger, 2023; Paquin et al., 2019).

Jones et al. (2016) conducted a meta-analysis and found that, in the included studies, internal coaches were more effective compared to external coaches. Confidentiality and trust-building aspects of internal coaching were not investigated in their study. In a later study, Jones et al. (2018) increased assurances of confidentiality and impartiality regarding these affective issues, thereby permitting a more open exploration of affective outcomes, such as workplace well-being. Bos (2020) states, "Ultimately, confidentiality is rooted in trust" (p. 7).

In the context of coaching in organizational settings, Marshall (2006) emphasized the crucial role of client openness and motivation, highlighting that the client may be an important determinant influencing coaching outcomes. In a contrasting perspective, findings from a study by de Haan et al. (2020), utilizing a randomized control trial (RCT) to explore the effectiveness of coaching relationships, suggest that the coachees' relationship scores have limited influence on outcomes. However, according to their research, it is noteworthy that maintaining a positive rapport with the coach is associated with achieving higher overall outcomes.

Building on Marshall's (2006) insights into the pivotal role of client openness, Kretzschmar (2010) suggested that the emotional element, specifically the client feeling safe during the coaching process, may emerge as a critical factor influencing the effectiveness and outcomes of coaching. It seems that these authors suggest that clients' openness and feeling safe are critical components of engagement in coaching and healthy coaching relationships that can lead to optimal coaching outcomes. However, the conditions in which this engagement and coaching relationship can be achieved require further research.

Lowman (2012) wisely articulates that a critical part of evidence-based practice and professionalism in coaching are coaching ethics and confidentiality. What Lowman indicated is supported by other researchers in the literature. For example, Wasylyshyn (2003) carried out a study exploring indications of successful coaching engagements and found that while a majority (70%) of participants in the study indicated a strong positive interest in using internal coaches, very high negative responses (79%) were also received due to respondents' perception that conflict of interest, trust issues, and potential inability of the internal coaches to maintain confidentiality were concerning issues. Wasylyshyn (2003) suggested that, when developing and offering workplace coaching programs, organizations and coaches need to be explicit about the "what" of coaching, why it will bring value to the staff, and how it works. This emphasis on clarity and detailed structure, as suggested by Wasylyshyn, has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of internal coaching.

Positive engagement is crucial for effective coach–client dynamics, with trust playing a pivotal role in this process (Boyce et al., 2010; Graßmann et al., 2020; Robson-Kelly and Nieuwerburgh, 2016). Supporting this assumption, Gyllensten and Palmer (2007) explicitly assert that trust and transparency are vital factors in establishing an effective coaching relationship. Moreover, other studies emphasize the

significance of trust and underscore qualities such as empathy, caring, approachability, and trustworthiness as essential characteristics of a coach (Ely et al., 2010).

Frisch (2001) highlights that internal coaching involves a trusted colleague providing developmental support and guiding an individual through a coaching program to facilitate professional growth. However, Frisch does not delve into how the trust factor is specifically defined or built in internal coaching and external coaching separately. Another study briefly touches on this concept, suggesting that qualities such as trust and respect contribute to an increased level of affective connectedness between a coach and client (Jowett, 2017). Furthermore, the findings of another research study reveal that coachees who openly discussed their concerns highly trusted their coach and felt comfortable sharing confidential information (Baron & Morin, 2009).

Fear and Anxiety

Earlier in this paper, the significance of the client's openness (Marshall, 2006) and their feeling of safety (Kretzschmar, 2010) was underscored as crucial aspects of an effective coaching relationship and positive coaching outcomes. However, the organizational coaching literature has generally taken a silent approach in exploring the role of the client's anxiety and fears as potential barriers to building a strong coaching relationship. This stands in contrast to the extensive literature on the therapist–client relationship, where numerous studies have investigated, for example, how a client's fears of sharing their internal experiences may be a barrier to building an effective therapeutic relationship (Kleiven et al., 2020) or the importance of following ethical protocols in terms of informed consent, confidentiality, boundaries, and termination (Avasthi et al., 2022).

In the article "Establishing Trust with Resistant Clients," Bray (2022) emphasizes the proficiency of a licensed mental health counselor. In situations where clients display signs of nervousness or hesitation during the initial counseling sessions, the counselor skillfully seizes the moment to recognize and validate their concerns. The counselor prioritizes normalizing the therapeutic process, choosing this approach over immediately delving into assessments or intake procedures. Despite the complexity of cases dealt with in clinical contexts, it is crucial to note that coaching—even though not dealing with clinical populations—entails a similarly intricate process of building an effective coach–client relationship. The extent to which organizations and internal coaches are aware of the multifaceted nature of the coachee's engagement—including their underlying feelings and emotions—may depend on variables such as training and qualifications, the coach's experience, organizational culture, and climate.

Fields (2017) conducted a doctoral research study that delved into how executive coaches can assist employees in responding to anxiety-provoking workplace scenarios and hostile actions. Other studies explored the link between perceived abusive supervision and extreme distrust, anxiety, and fear of one's supervisor (Bugdol & Nagody-Mrozowicz, 2021; Chan & McAllister, 2014). However, research specifically focusing on coachee feelings within external and internal coaching dynamics remains limited.

While evidence from organizational behavior and psychology literature indicates that individuals may experience fear when speaking up to authority (Kish-Gephart et al., 2009) or may withhold input due to respect for their leader (Reitz & Higgins, 2021), studies also suggest that employees are motivated to share their thoughts when they perceive their supervisors as open to input (Lebel, 2016). However, the applicability of these findings to the coach–coachee relationship, particularly within the context of internal coaching dynamics, remains unclear. Further investigation is necessary to determine whether clients experience feelings of fear or anxiety and consequently refrain from opening up to an internal coach (Levitt, 2001). The current lack of substantial literature on these aspects underscores the significance of exploring this domain.

Additionally, it is imperative to address critical issues, such as unconscious dynamics in coaching conversations (Turner, 2010), as well as the impact of transference and countertransference on coaching relationship outcomes (de Haan, 2011). The success of mentoring relationships (Aihevba, 2022; Gayle, 2011) should also be addressed, and thorough exploration and investigation of these factors need to be researched by scholars, especially in relation to coachee feelings of fear and anxiety in internal coaching dynamics. This is particularly crucial in scenarios where the internal coach holds dual roles like that of a manager and a coach (McCarthy & Milner, 2020).

Methods

This study constitutes a segment of a broader research initiative employing a mixed-methods approach. The research, conducted as part of the authors' doctoral studies, fully adhered to research ethics guidelines. Ethical approval was obtained through the Institutional Review Board and Ethics Committee. In the context of internet-based, telephone, and in-person data collection, it is imperative to address ethical considerations like obtaining informed consent and ensuring data security, as highlighted by Hewson et al. (2003) and Rothwell et al. (2021). Therefore, an informed consent form was developed for the participant population in all phases, holding particular significance in the qualitative phase of data collection.

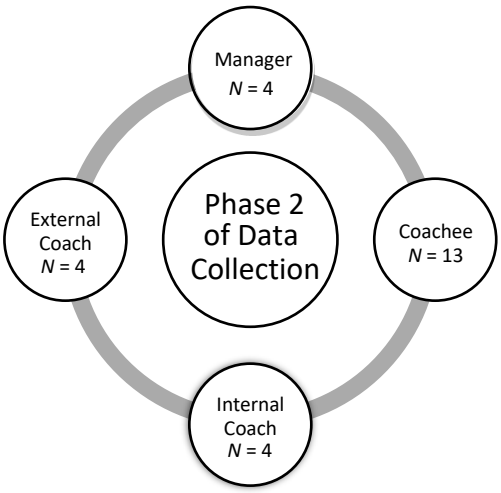
This research comprised sequential data collection phases, commencing with a quantitative phase (Phase 1) to scan existing coaching activities within Australia's rail organizations. The insights gained from this survey assisted with the development of the subsequent qualitative phase (Phase 2), employing a case study approach that involved conducting semi-structured interviews with two rail organizations. A third quantitative phase (Phase 3), exploring coaching during organizational change, is part of the larger project but isn't relevant to the current paper's focus. Therefore, as elaborated in the introduction of this paper, results from Phase 3 are excluded from the current discussion.

Phase 1 of this research targeted a potential sample of 129 rail organizations in Australia. Survey data were analyzed using SPSS, a widely recognized statistical analysis software (Almquist et al., 2020). While the bulk of the findings draw predominantly from the qualitative data obtained in Phase 2, a concise overview of relevant background information from the quantitative phase is provided below. The Phase 2 qualitative data were gathered from two major rail organizations in Australia, as illustrated in Figure 1. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders, including managers, coachees, internal coaches, and external coaches, ensuring a comprehensive data collection approach for the study's objectives.

Following the transcription of semi-structured interview data, the coding process commenced, which is an integral facet of qualitative data analysis, requiring both time and creative input (Stuckey, 2015). As Strauss (1987) stated, "the excellence of the research rests in large part on the excellence of the coding" (p. 27), and as the iterative process of coding unfolds, "its dynamic function and nonlinear directionality enables essential themes to be identified, codified, and interpreted in the service of a research study's focus and contributes to the associated literature" (Williams & Moser, 2019, p. 47).

The qualitative data in the present study underwent coding and processing. This coding and processing were facilitated by NVivo software (Zamawe, 2015). Next, I undertook a thematic analysis that involved the synthesis of codes to concisely and meaningfully summarize the research findings (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). The analysis of qualitative data involved two main steps: primary-level coding and secondary-level coding, with specific attention given to pattern coding. The main theme and sub-themes, the outcomes of the coding, and the analysis process (Saldana, 2013) are presented as the main results in the following section of this article.

Figure 1. *Semi-Structured Interview Participants Categorized Into Four Groups*



Results

Quantitative (Phase 1: A General Scan)

Phase 1 of data collection involved a broad approach to scanning rail organizations' coaching activities and was aimed at providing a comprehensive understanding of their level of coaching activities. While no formal test–retest was implemented due to the primary focus on qualitative data collection, I took steps during the survey construction process to maximize the reliability of the instrument. This included thorough piloting and feedback incorporation to minimize potential biases and ensure the clarity and comprehensiveness of the survey items.

The Phase 1 survey questionnaire was distributed to 129 rail organizations in Australia through email invitations facilitated by the Australian Railway Association (ARA). I received a total of 65 responses, yielding an overall response rate of 50.3%. The respondents consisted of 75.4% males and 24.6% females.

As presented in Table 1, the quantitative results from the initial phase, which aimed to survey perceptions and coaching activities in rail organizations, addressed the question: "Does your organization use external or internal coaches?" Results revealed that the majority of respondents reported that their organizations used a combination of internal and external coaching. Notably, while only 2% reported using external coaches exclusively, 16% indicated employing internal coaches exclusively. This finding suggests a higher inclination toward utilizing internal coaching when organizations opt for only one of the two coaching forms. It is crucial, however, to recognize that this distribution may be contingent upon several factors, including the availability of coaches, the presence of internal coaching capabilities within the organizations, the potential cost-effectiveness of internal coaches, and the specific objectives they seek to accomplish.

Table 1. *Utilization of External and Internal Coaches in Organizations*

		Frequency (*n*)	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Valid	External coaches only	2	3.1	4.2	4.2
	Internal coaches only	16	24.6	33.3	37.5
	Both external and internal coaches	30	46.2	62.5	100.0
	Total	48	73.8	100.0	
Skipped	System	17	26.2		
Total		65	100.0		

Table 2 shows results in Phase 1 and reveals that the majority of respondents (n = 40) agreed on the efficacy of coaching when both the coach and coachee actively engaged in the coaching process. This constituted over 90% agreement on the importance of coach–coachee engagement, which was followed by strong support from respondents (n = 35). This suggests that coaching works when there is good compatibility between the coach and coachee.

Table 2. *Importance of Coach–Coachee Engagement in Coaching*

Generally speaking, when do you think that coaching works?	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
When coaching is used from the beginning of somebody's time in a new position	4	1.6%	9.1%
When the coach is good at their job	9	3.6%	20.5%
When we have measurable positive results	12	4.8%	27.3%
When there is engagement in the process by coachee	14	5.6%	31.8%
When the coachee has a clear understanding of the process, aims, or benefits	15	6.0%	34.1%
When coaching is embedded in the culture of the business or part of day-to-day procedures	18	7.2%	40.9%
When the coachee is genuinely committed to the success of the program	22	8.8%	50.0%
When the coachee genuinely wants to be coached	23	9.2%	52.3%
When the coach is genuinely committed to the success of the process	24	9.6%	54.5%
When the coach and coachee establish a clear, specific aim for the process	33	13.3%	75.0%
When there is good compatibility of coach and coachee	35	14.1%	79.5%
When there is engagement in the process by both coach and coachee	40	16.1%	90.9%
Total	249	100%	

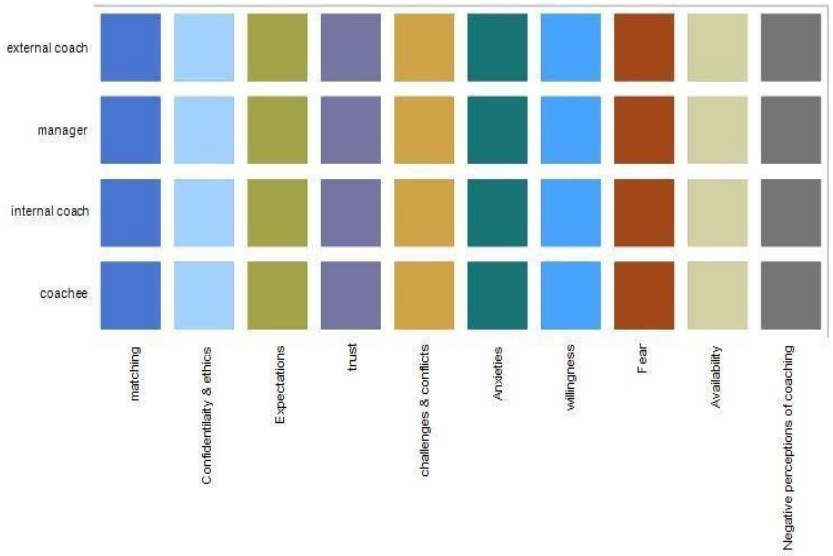
a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Qualitative (Phase 2: Semi-Structured Interviews)

The qualitative phase involved conducting two case studies through semi-structured interviews with a total of 25 participants from two prominent rail organizations in Australia. Participants were categorized into four distinct groups: managers (n = 4), coaches (n = 13), internal coaches (n = 4), and external coaches (n = 4).

The central theme of "Coaching Relationship," identified in both the quantitative results of Phase 1 and the qualitative data of Phase 2, yielded a number of sub-themes or child nodes. Figure 2 visually illustrates the quantity of all child nodes under the "Coaching Relationship" node, discerned during the qualitative data analysis in this study. Each of the four participant groups contributed valuable insights pertaining to every child node, enriching the overall understanding of the coaching relationship dynamics. However, for the purpose of this article, I am presenting below the results related to the child nodes most relevant to achieving the objective of this paper.

Figure 2. *Child Nodes Identified Under Internal Coaching Relationship Node*



Trust

An external coach emphasized trust in the coach–client relationship, noting external coaches' perceived confidentiality advantage.

> So, I've heard some amazing stuff, including some of those personal things too, and that's only because trust is so strong, so I think trust comes with the role. You walk in the door and they already have some level of that, and they don't have the same level with the people internally, necessarily, and there's definitely the confidentiality, because that's the only place that we work with them in the coaching arena. [External Coach 1]

Results show that feeling comfortable with a manager as an internal coach is also deemed helpful in providing support to employees.

> I had a great relationship with my manager and when I was told that there was some coaching available for me, I thought this is a great opportunity and he knows a lot about internal processes and sometimes spends some time giving me advice over our lunch break and he is usually available if I need help so putting it in a context and having some structure would be wonderful

> and I think I feel comfortable with this as I know he also knows my situation and where I am at and where I need some help. [Coachee 8]

The significance of trust-building through a foundation of honesty and integrity was revealed by an internal coach.

> It's quite clear to me why I trust people, and I apply those same principles, so I'll trust people who've demonstrated some honesty and integrity. If they say the information is confidential, it remains confidential. [Internal Coach 1]

A manager underscored that commitment plays a pivotal role in establishing trust and building credibility within the "internal" coach–coachee relationship.

> Internal coaches can be reliable if they show commitment towards the development of their coachee. For example, if they make an appointment, they keep that appointment, and they follow through on what they've said, that they will prepare for the next session, you know, all of these things build up credibility with the person, and know that you'll follow through. [Manager 4]

Several participants stated that structured internal coaching interventions, which are purposeful and foster capability development, lead to building trust. Participants emphasized that this trust needs to be established early in the coaching process.

> It needs to be a relationship as well as it needs to be about capability and development, because it's very much a trust environment. If you can't establish that trust environment early, then I think you limit that opportunity. [Coachee 9]

Another coachee revealed that the element of trust and an organization's readiness and capacity to offer internal coaching that ensures confidentiality are vital.

> There is a second element that is a problem, and that is trust, is that I don't think people here broadly speaking, would trust that things would be confidential, that reports wouldn't be made, that it wouldn't end up in an HR file, you know what I mean, so I think there's an element of trust. [Coachee 4]

The organization's culture may play a crucial role, influencing employees' inclination to trust internal or external coaches, reflecting the dynamics and climate within the organization.

> Then I feel depending on the culture of the organization, they will probably be more open or authentic with me than with an internal party, and I think that that's not something that's necessarily stated, but probably felt more unconsciously than anything else. [External coach 2]

There was generally widespread agreement among all participants that external coaches can establish trust more easily due to the coachees feeling comfortable that the coaches don't have any ties with their organization.

> I think the main benefit for them in having an external coach is that I am objective, I don't have alliances in the organization, they feel that they can trust me. [External coach 3]

The majority of coachees identified a potential lack of objectivity in the internal coach as a barrier to trust in the coach–coachee relationship, which affected the effectiveness of internal coaching. However, many coachees provided feedback indicating that objectivity could be attained to some extent, depending on the context.

> I would say internal coaches would have to be independent, they would need to be outside of the department, if not, it would be too subjective. [coachee 12]

Having a structured internal coaching process was something almost all participants recommended.

> So, in terms of building trust and coaching effectiveness, it can work when you have consistency or you run the program but don't just end there and you provide further support. [Internal Coach 3]

Some participants highlighted the potential benefits of internal coaching, especially during periods of significant organizational change. They emphasized the importance of objectivity in fostering trust, particularly in challenging situations that arise during periods of change.

> We are going through some major change here and you know that in this situation the more objective you are the better you can build trust. So internal coaching could be effective if that objectivity is addressed there and there is a proper structure and framework, which we don't have it unfortunately. [Manager 1]

Confidentiality

The data point to the necessity of establishing a confidentiality agreement, highlighting the crucial aspect of keeping coaching discussions within the confines of the coaching environment to foster client trust and openness.

> I was quite concerned initially in having a coach, and I wanted to understand what the confidentiality arrangements were, you know, to what extent if I was dealing with some, for me they might have seemed like insurmountable issues that I needed to talk about, I really want to be able to talk about them and know that that wasn't going back to anyone. [Coachee 2]

Results show that in the context of coaching relationships, particularly in periods of organizational change, the potential subjectivity of internal coaching presents challenges and addressing this is important.

> We are going through some major change here and you know that in this situation the more objective you are the better you can motivate your employees. So internal coaching could be effective if that objectivity is addressed there and there is a proper structure and framework, which we don't have it unfortunately. I'm not sure at this stage that we will be ready to use internal coaches, in my department anyway. [Manager 1]

Consistent with several similar pieces of feedback from participants, data revealed the importance of establishing a clear coaching protocol and structure in parallel with communicating details of the program.

> You communicate openly and clearly define what coaching is and how you are going to guarantee everyone's confidentiality in that coaching protocol. [Manager 2]

Results further point to the ease of open discourse with an external coach and the importance of coaches being non-judgmental.

> I have to say I was quite comfortable having an external person as the coach, because it just allows you, I guess, to open up a bit more because there's not that feeling that you're going to be judged or that anything that you share is going to end up somewhere else. [Coachee 5]

Another perspective from Coachee 12, who previously emphasized the importance of internal coaches originating from a different department than the coachee. This time, the coachee delves into the aspect of confidentiality, echoing the insights shared by Coachee 5.

> I would prefer someone external. Again, it's mainly around just feeling that there's that slightly higher level of confidentiality, I think. [Coachee 12]

Manager 2 highlights that the dynamics with an external coach resemble a professional therapy session, fostering openness and confidentiality.

> The benefit of external coaching is that they come baggage free, and a bit like going to a counsellor, you know, they actually really, you know, they don't know anyone that you know, they know no one that you know, and so you're a lot more open. [Manager 2]

Perceived confidentiality and objectivity of external coaches are evident in several pieces of feedback from most coachee participants.

> I think for me … the external coaches were more of a way to sort of, whatever issues I had, it could necessarily be my manager, direct manager, or it could be another Shift Supervisor, someone I can just sort of vent. I found that I could sort of say what I had to say and not have to worry about knowing that that person's going to find out. [Coachee 8]

The data indicate that confidentiality arrangements are deemed crucial at the onset of coaching interventions. Some participants suggest this holds true whether opting for an internal or external coach.

> There could be confidentiality issues with an external coach. It's just the person themself and the integrity that they hold themself in. Confidentiality is a big thing, and that goes with both the external and internal. [Coachee 3]

The preference between an internal coach and an external coach is again linked to confidentiality and objectivity.

> I've certainly had internal coaches before, mentors before, and there's always a bit of baggage [laughs] that comes with that. It's just the experience of what it is. Having the external opportunity for me has been great. That's just removed all of that. You don't get bogged down in the politics of that, you're actually able to talk about objectively. [Coachee 1]

Internal Coach 3 confirms that confidentiality protocol, ethical conduct, and genuine concern for the coachee are essential in internal coaching.

> Confidentiality and ethical conduct within a coaching relationship is absolutely essential, no matter internal or external coach. It's just it has to be there as a basic principle or the foundation upon which the coaching interaction is undertaken, care and concern for the individual. So, you know, the confidentiality, integrity, the carer, genuine care and concern for the individual. [Internal Coach 3]

External coaches, in general, gave consistent feedback that external coaching ensures coachees freely discuss organizational matters without fear of retribution.

> With an external coach, a coachee will feel like they can say almost anything about people in the organization, about processes, and all that sort of stuff, without fear of retribution, and that's also why the confidentiality is so key and so important. [External Coach 7]

Similarly, a coachee emphasizes the importance of confidentiality and trust for open communication in the coaching relationship.

> If you can't feel that you can share and express all your personal attributes to the coach, you might as well not do it because, I suppose it's a bit like a psychotherapist, you've got to be comfortable, you've got to be able to open yourself up, you've got to be able to realize that everything that you say to them is confidential and they're only going to use it to benefit you, as opposed to use it to get you fired or sacked. [Coachee 3]

Anxiety and Fear

All internal coaches and coachees emphasized the potential risks associated with a lack of clear articulation of the purpose of coaching or the absence of clarity on why it is being offered.

> And there's a lot of suspicion around coaching because I found here during the 18 months, that people think if you're coaching someone then there's a performance shortfall and this can cause fear for those who are offered mentoring or coaching. [Internal Coach 1]

Employees may feel anxious when the reason why coaching programs are offered is not communicated.

> I found here they were quite anxious and threatened by when you say *Do you want to come in onto a coach program?* the first response back was *Oh, I need to get my union*—some people—*my union rep there?* or *Do I need to get HR involved in this?"* [Coachee 8]

In addition, Coachee 3 raises concerns about lack of clarity and structure in communicating what coaching is about and expresses initial anxieties about criticism. The coachee stresses that coaching prioritizes improvement, not fault-finding.

> I didn't know what to expect, everybody has anxieties about stuff that you don't know. Some of the anxieties were that they were going to use this against me and, you know, they were going to point out all my bad things and, you know, say *This is not good, you should be doing this, you should be doing that*. As always, they're pretty much unfounded, it's all about improving people. [Coachee 3]

Initial discomfort among coachees was attributed to the absence of a formal coaching structure and communication regarding the coach's expertise, skills, and qualifications.

> That's probably what made me a little bit anxious because when this guy came in I wasn't sure he was a life coach, career coach, or what was his education background and whether or not he has real world corporate experience himself. [Coachee 12]

Discussion and Conclusions

The Interplay of Subjectivity, Objectivity and Engagement in Coaching

A robust consensus emerged, with over 90% of survey respondents asserting that coaching worked when there was active engagement from both the coach and coachee. These findings assume particular importance as they substantiate the interplay among pivotal factors, such as trust, engagement, and confidentiality in the coaching relationship. Existing literature supports the notion that engagement is pivotal in coaching interventions (King et al., 2019), and positive engagement stands as a crucial factor for effective coach–client dynamics (Boyce et al., 2010; Graßmann et al., 2020; Robson-Kelly and Nieuwerburgh, 2016).

The initial quantitative phase of this study revealed a significant presence of both internal and external coaching in organizations. Interestingly, when organizations opted for only one approach, there was a clear preference for internal coaches. This initially appeared paradoxical, given that participants in the qualitative phase often expressed a greater inclination toward external coaching. However, this discrepancy may be attributed to several comments favoring internal coaching under specific conditions, such as when the internal coach was outside line management and when there was a clear coaching structure, formality protocols, and confidentiality agreements in place.

Furthermore, a different subset of data from the current research had previously highlighted the positive impact of coaching on enhancing positive behavioral shifts and increasing motivation. Notably, this subset specifically indicated that internal coaching might have a more pronounced contribution in boosting employee motivation. However, within the current study, quantitative results suggest a preference for internal coaching, while qualitative results, particularly regarding confidentiality and trust in the coaching relationship, favor external coaching. Therefore, I propose that if internal coaches can establish trust, they could potentially strengthen the coaching relationship and improve outcomes. Subsequent discussions will further elaborate on this point.

On the qualitative front, insights gleaned from semi-structured interviews indicate that professional external coaches are generally perceived as possessing a more objective approach to the coaching process. Some participants identified a level of subjectivity in internal coaches as a potential weakness. Intriguing associations surfaced between the perceived lack of objectivity in internal coaching and various outcomes, including the potential for diminished trust, lower engagement, reduced willingness to be coached internally, and a reluctance to engage in open communication with an internal coach. The data also suggested, however, that when an internal coach is from outside the coachee's department and maintains a level of independence, a reasonable level of perceived objectivity may be attained. The findings did not identify direct evidence to imply ineffectiveness when internal coaches coached their direct reports. Nevertheless, the findings underscored that concerns related to the subjectivity of internal coaches are prevalent among coachees, especially in the initial stages of coaching engagement.

Another noteworthy finding that emerged from qualitative results suggests that in organizations experiencing organizational changes with the potential to impact organizational dynamics, extra care must be taken to ensure objectivity in internal coaching. Since most of the findings indicated that there was no clear and formal structure around internal coaching, the significance of ensuring objectivity becomes even more imperative.

The literature is explicit about three aspects: (1) informal coaching is already prevalent in organizations, with numerous individuals demonstrating a passion for coaching their colleagues (Abel & Nair, 2015); (2) coaching supports clients during periods of organizational change (Grant et al., 2009); and (3) when individuals in an organization take on an internal coaching role, they should stress the cultivation of a distinct perspective and awareness of the nature of their role and its specific scope (Frisch, 2001; Hunt & Weintraub, 2006). The current study's findings suggest that internal coaching appears to be underway in some organizations. Given the significance of coach-client engagement and relationship in the coaching process, the awareness of professional boundaries, and the skills required for effective coaching and relationship management, along with the professionalism of internal coaches in comprehending their role and responsibilities, are of paramount importance. Equally critical is their commitment to remaining non-judgmental and objective.

Previous research indicates that client openness (Marshall, 2006) and their sense of safety (Kretzschmar, 2010) are pivotal for achieving positive coaching outcomes. The literature also emphasizes that both trust and objectivity, alongside being non-judgmental, are recognized as drivers of relationship building (Harrison, 2019). Coaching ethics is a critical facet of evidence-based practice and professionalism in

coaching (Lowman, 2012). All these elements converge on the necessity of ensuring objectivity as a part of the ethical and professional aspects of coaching required to foster a healthy coach–coachee relationship, with heightened importance given to it in the context of internal coaching.

Prioritizing Trust and Confidentiality in Internal Coaching Dynamics

Frisch (2001) observed that internal coaches face heightened scrutiny regarding confidentiality and ethical obligations, echoing de Haan et al.'s (2020) assertion that coaching conversations are inherently confidential. The coaching literature underscores the importance of effective coaches demonstrating genuine unconditional positive regard and refraining from judgment when working with clients (Passmore, 2006; van Zyl & Stander, 2013). Similarly, the psychology literature indicates that breaching confidentiality causes distress and diminishes trust (Epstein, 1994). Prior research by Machin (2010) on the nature of the internal coaching relationship revealed that "every coach and every client in the study stressed the importance of trust in their relationship" (p. 40). As established earlier in this article, exploration of coaching relationships within internal coaching contexts is notably scarce in the existing literature.

The current study's findings align with these principles, revealing further that coachees commonly express concerns about the clear establishment of confidentiality agreements in internal coaching. Coachees particularly emphasized their initial unease with internal coaching, prioritizing a clear understanding of confidentiality arrangements alongside communicating the coach's skills, education, and expertise. Other researchers have previously identified potential conflicts of interest and internal politics in the workplace as potential barriers to building healthy internal coaching relationships (Frisch, 2001; St. John-Brook, 2014). Despite these concerns, the results of the current study did not indicate any instances of trust and confidentiality breaches in the internal coaching process.

Previous literature highlights that organizations contracting professional external coaches recognize them as formally trained professionals with expertise in facilitating coaching programs in corporate settings (Hall et al., 1999; Tyler, 2000). External coaches are expected to be familiar with various coaching models and frameworks (Sue-Chan and Latham, 2004; McDermot et al., 2007) and competent in establishing and maintaining confidentiality and trust in coaching relationships (Wasylyshyn, 2003).

To address confidentiality and trust concerns in internal coaching, Gowda et al. (2021) suggest a potential mitigation strategy: Select internal coaches from different departments than those of line management or the coachee. Cavanagh and Buckley (2014) also suggest that a confidentiality agreement—prior to the commencement of coaching—can be effective for setting boundaries and protecting client interests. Joseph (2014) takes this further by indicating that the coaching–coachee relationship is strengthened based on confidentiality agreements, and the conversations that occur during coaching sessions are not supposed to be shared with the organization unless a coachee agreement has been obtained early in the contracting stages of entering into coaching.

In the current study, findings not only support the above insights from the literature but also emphasize that, regardless of whether internal coaches belong to the same department as the coachee or a different one, they must prioritize establishing confidentiality protocols. Establishing confidentiality protocols includes ensuring that internal coaches are equipped with the necessary skills to demonstrate professionalism, which requires them to be knowledgeable about coaching practice, evidence-based frameworks, and relationship-building techniques. From a theoretical perspective, for example in a humanistic approach, coaches should clearly refrain from judgment (Yao & Kabir, 2023) and maintain the confidentiality and trust essential for coaching effectiveness (Bozer & Jones, 2018; Bluckert, 2005; Gan & Chong, 2015; Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007; Machin, 2010; Rekalde et al., 2015; van Woerkom, 2010).

Moreover, Machin's (2010) study on internal coaching highlighted the pivotal role of internal coaches in building and maintaining a trusting relationship with their clients. The current study not only corroborates these findings but also emphasizes that prioritizing a sense of confidentiality and clearly communicating adherence to ethical protocols are essential elements of internal coaching interventions. These factors have the potential to foster trust within the coaching relationship, subsequently enhancing engagement in the coaching process. These findings align with previous literature, suggesting that internal coaching is most effective "when there is a high level of trust in the confidentiality of the process" (Schalk & Landeta, 2017, p. 140).

Clear Structure and Processes to Improve Engagement

The psychological literature has firmly established the "working alliance" between therapists and clients as a robust predictor of therapeutic outcomes (Bordin, 1974; McKenna & Davis, 2009; Uckelstam et al., 2020). In coaching literature, the coach–coachee working alliance involves a collaborative approach that fosters a bond of trust while actively working with clients to help them set and achieve their goals (Vermeiden et al., 2022). An integral element of the coach–coachee working alliance is the genuine concern for the client and the cultivation of trust within the relationship (Day & Blakey, 2012).

While in a therapeutic relationship, there is usually a level of formality (Lee et al., 2022), established boundaries, and a contract (Daymond & Millward, 2020), as well as clarity on competence, education, and credibility of the therapist (Webb et al., 2010)—and even how counseling psychologists reflect on their professional attire in clinical settings (Dacy & Brodsky, 1992; Halmagyi, 2019). In internal coaching, there is no common agreement among researchers about whether a clear structure, contract, and formality is deemed necessary. This may, of course, be attributed to very few studies being conducted on internal coaching. For example, Dixey (2015) engaged in detailed interviews with six sales managers, all of whom had undergone formal coach skills training. They indicated an inclination toward an informal coaching approach, although they did not explicitly label it as such. Other scholars concentrate on exploring the integration of coaching into informal organizational learning (Smetana et al., 2019).

The current study's findings underscore the imperative to establish a formal structure and framework for internal coaching, ensuring consistency in safeguarding the coach–coachee relationship and providing continuity and consistency of internal coaching initiatives. To achieve the establishment of a formal structure and framework, early clarity on confidentiality and trust-building is crucial to enhancing objectivity and upholding ethical standards in the coaching relationship, thereby augmenting engagement—and potentially the overall effectiveness of internal coaching dynamics.

In line with humanistic psychology, Rogers (1957) asserted that "any person, regardless of the setting or their belief in the nature of humans, is likely to promote positive change in another if they communicate their undoubtable unconditional positive regard for this second person" (p. 96). While findings in the current study did not provide any evidence to suggest that internal coaches did not maintain professionalism, acceptance, and confidentiality, they showed that the absence of formal and structured internal coaching interventions may potentially lead to initial pessimism and negative perceptions about internal coaching.

The Essential Imperative of Easing Coachee Apprehensions and Initial Nervousness

The qualitative findings, particularly from the coachee perspective, unveiled heightened levels of fear, anxiety, and feelings of unease when introduced to internal coaching—especially in cases lacking clear information about the internal coach's skills and expertise and the purpose of coaching. Additionally, the absence of an organizational culture that positions coaching as a strategy for individual support and employee development, rather than a tool for addressing poor performance, seemed to have contributed

to these apprehensions. It is important to note that most of these concerns, reported by coachees in the current study, were specifically associated with the period before coaching sessions began and the initial coaching sessions. Noteworthy is the valuable representation of coachees in the sample population, facilitating comprehensive insights into their perspectives and enhancing the study's findings. As emphasized earlier in this paper, reliance solely on data and self-disclosures by coaches may compromise validity and introduce potential social desirability bias (Pandolfi, 2020).

The literature underscores the importance of a clear coaching relationship and impartiality to uphold ethical standards in coaching (Cavanagh & Buckle, 2014). The current study reinforces the critical nature of these internal coaching factors by following literature recommendations that involve providing specialized training and ongoing support for internal coaches—irrespective of their organizational or managerial status—and ensuring proficiency in coaching internally (Grant, 2017; McCarthy & Milner, 2020). This approach can also aid internal coaches in acquiring the necessary skills to manage their own unease or nervousness before coaching a client, which is a common experience among early-career psychologists, as suggested by Cynkar and Schwartz (2007). Addressing the initial concerns of internal coaching clients could further involve connecting back to the study's findings, emphasizing a clear structure, transparent communication of coaching's purpose, establishment of confidentiality protocols, and explicit assurance of the competence and credibility of internal coaches.

This study aimed to explore contributors to a healthy and well-functioning coach–coachee relationship in internal coaching dynamics. Derived from a larger study on effective internal coaching programs, these findings illuminate the significance of confidentiality and trust in coach–client relationships. Supporting and enhancing existing literature, the insights provide valuable distinctions between internal and external coaching relationships, offer practical benefits to organizations and practitioners, and aid in better understanding ethical conduct, engagement, trust, and confidentiality from the perspectives of coachees, internal coaches, external coaches, and managers. The nuanced understanding, derived from the qualitative phase, in particular, has some potential to inform strategies to build internal coaching capacity and optimize existing programs.

Limitations

The primary constraint in this study lies in the relatively small sample size during Phase 1 and the use of a straightforward, descriptive approach to analyze statistical data. Both phases of the study focused exclusively on a single industry within a specific country, thereby constraining the generalization of the findings to other sectors and nations. However, given the study's central focus on coaching dynamics, confidentiality, and trust, and recognizing the universal expectation for professionals to uphold qualities like honesty, truthfulness, and reliability in their professional relationships (Clark, 2008), the findings hold the potential to benefit professionals and organizations across various sectors and global contexts.

References

Abel, A. L., & Nair, S. V. (2015). The rise of coaching in organizations. In D. D. Riddle, E. R. Hoole, & E. C. D. Gullette (Eds.), *The Center for Creative Leadership handbook of coaching in organizations* (pp. 5–28). Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119207535.ch1

Abraham, A., & Collins, D. (2012). Taking the next step: Ways forward for coaching science. *Quest, 63*(4), 366–384. https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2011.10483687

Adeoye-Olatunde, O. A., & Olenik, N. L. (2021). Research and scholarly methods: Semi-structured interviews. *Journal of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy, 4*(10), 1358–1367. https://accpjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/jac5.1441

Aihevba, E. O. (2022). *Mentoring as a tool for managing talents* [Doctoral dissertation, Sheffield Hallam University]. Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive. http://shura.shu.ac.uk/33033

Ali, Y., Lewis, N., & Currier McAdams, K. (2010). Case study: Building an internal coaching capacity—The American Cancer Society coach cadre model. *Industrial and Commercial Training, 42*(5), 240–246. https://doi.org/10.1108/00197851011057528

Allen, K. (2016). Roots of coaching psychology. In *Theory, research, and practical guidelines for family life coaching* (pp. 21–38). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-29331-8_2

Almquist, Y. B., Kvart, S., & Brännström, L. (2020). A practical guide to quantitative methods with SPSS. *Research Reports in Public Health Sciences* (Preprint version 2). https://doi.org/10.17045/sthlmuni.10321829.v2

Anderson, V. (2013). A Trojan Horse? The implications of managerial coaching for leadership theory. *Human Resource Development International, 16*(3), 251–256. https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2013.771868

Athanasopoulou, A., & Dopson, S. (2018). A systematic review of executive coaching outcomes: Is it the journey or the destination that matters the most? *Leadership Quarterly, 29*(1), 70–88. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2017.11.004

Avasthi, A., Grover, S., & Nischal, A. (2022). Ethical and legal issues in psychotherapy. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry, 64*(Suppl. 1), S47–S61. https://doi.org/10.4103/indianjpsychiatry.indianjpsychiatry_50_21

Ben-Hador, B. (2023). The practice of manager as coach (MAC): Unequal power relations and their effect on feelings toward the organization. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 35*(1), 67–88. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.21497

Bermea, G. O. (2022). Humanistic advising: Applying humanistic theory to the practice of academic advising. *NACADA Review, 3*(1), 3–20. https://doi.org/10.12930/NACR-20-07

Beutler, L. E., Clarkin, J. F., Crago, M., & Bergan, J. (1991). Client-therapist matching. In C. R. Snyder and D. R. Forsyth (Eds.), *Handbook of social and clinical psychology: The health perspective* (pp. 699–716). Pergamon Press.

Blackman, A. (2006). Factors that contribute to the effectiveness of business coaching: The coachees' perspective. *The Business Review, Cambridge, 5*(1), 98–104.

Bluckert, P. (2005). Critical factors in executive coaching—the coaching relationship. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 37(7), 336–340. https://doi.org/10.1108/00197850510626785

Boak, G., & Crabbe, S. (2019). Experiences that develop leadership capabilities. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 40*(1), 97–106. https://doi.org/10.1108/LODJ-07-2018-0254

Bowman, M., Ayers, K. M., King, J. C., & Page, L. J. (2013). The neuroscience of coaching. In J. Passmore, D. B. Peterson, & T. Freire (Eds.), *The Wiley-Blackwell handbook of the psychology of coaching and mentoring*. Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118326459.ch6

Bozer, G., Joo, B.-K., & Santora, J. C. (2015). Executive coaching: Does coach–coachee matching based on similarity really matter? *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 67*(3), 218–233. https://doi.org/10.1037/cpb0000044

Bozer, G., & Jones, R. J. (2018). Understanding the factors that determine workplace coaching effectiveness: a systematic literature review. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *27*(3), 342–361. https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2018.1446946

Bray, B. (2022, June). Building trust with reluctant clients. *Counseling Today*. https://www.counseling.org/publications/counseling-today-magazine/article-archive/article/legacy/building-trust-with-reluctant-clients

Bresser, F., & Wilson, C. (2010). What is coaching? In J. Passmore (Ed.), *Excellence in coaching: The industry guide* (2nd ed., pp. 9–25). Kogan Page.

Bugdol, M., & Nagody-Mrozowicz, K. (2021). *Management, organization and fear: Causes, consequences and strategies*. Routledge.

Cameron, R., & Ebrahimi, M. (2014). Coaching in the workplace. In R. Harris & T. Short (Eds.), *Workforce development: Perspectives and issues* (253–268). Springer.

Cannon-Bowers, J. A., Bowers, C. A., Carlson, C. E., Doherty, S. L., Evans, J., & Hall, J. (2023). Workplace coaching: A meta-analysis and recommendations for advancing the science of coaching. *Frontiers in Psychology, 14*, Article 1204166. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1204166

Carey, W., Philippon, D. J., & Cummings, G. G. (2011). Coaching models for leadership development: An integrative review. *Journal of Leadership Studies, 5*(2), 51–69. https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.20204

Carr, A. (2015). *The handbook of child and adolescent clinical psychology: A contextual approach* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Carter, A. (2005). *Providing coaching internally: A literature review*. Institute for Employment Studies. https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/system/files/resources/files/mp43.pdf

Cavanagh, M., & Buckley, A. (2014). Coaching and mental health. In E. Cox, T. Bachkirova, & D. A. Clutterbuck (Eds.), *The complete handbook of coaching* (2nd ed., pp. 405–417). SAGE.

Chan, M. E., & McAllister, D. J. (2014). Abusive supervision through the lens of employee state paranoia. *Academy of Management Review, 39*(1), 44–66. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2011.0419

Chouliara, Z. (2024). Is trust an essential therapeutic goal in working with childhood sexual abuse (CSA)? A body of empirical research. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 52*(4), 761–776. https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2024.2309886

Clark, C. (2008). Confidentiality, trust, and truthfulness in professional relationships. In C. Clark & J. McGhee (Eds.), *Private and confidential? Handling personal information in the social and health services*. Policy Press Scholarship Online. https://bristoluniversitypressdigital.com/edcollchap/book/9781847423566/ch002.xml

Coetzee, M., Veldsman, T., & Odendaal, A. (2023). Problematising current coaching strategies from a worldview perspective. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology, 49*, Article 2034. https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v49i0.2034

Cotterill, S. T., & Passmore, J. (2018). Coaching research: A critical review. In S. English, J. M. Sabatine, & P. Brownell (Eds.), *Professional coaching: Principles and practice* (pp. 55–67). Springer. https://www.doi.org/10.1891/9780826180094.0006

Crits-Christoph, P., Rieger, A., Gaines, A., & Gibbons, M. B. C. (2019). Trust and respect in the patient–clinician relationship: Preliminary development of a new scale. *BMC Psychology, 7*(1), Article 91. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-019-0347-3

Cynkar, A., & Schwartz, D. (2007, September). Facing your first clients: Shake off those first-client jitters with advice from these seasoned and early-career psychologists. *gradPSYCH Magazine*. https://www.apa.org/gradpsych/2007/09/clients

Dacy, J. M., & Brodsky, S. L. (1992). Effects of therapist attire and gender. *Psychotherapy, 29*(3), 486–490. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0088555

Day, I., & Blakey, J. (2012). *Challenging coaching: Going beyond traditional coaching to face the FACTS*. Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Daymond, K., & Millward, S. (2020, April). *What do counsellors and psychotherapists mean by boundaries? Client information sheet*. British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. https://www.bacp.co.uk/media/8273/bacpboundaries-client-information-sheet-april-2020.pdf

de Haan, E. (2011). Back to basics: How the discovery of transference is relevant for coaches and consultants today. *International Coaching Psychology Review, 6*(2), 180–193. https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsicpr.2011.6.2.180

de Haan, E., Duckworth, A., Birch, D., & Jones, C. (2013). Executive coaching outcome research: The contribution of common factors such as relationship, personality match, and self-efficacy. *Consulting Psychology Journal*, *65*(1), 40–57. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031635

de Haan, E., Molyn, J., & Nilsson, V. O. (2020, June 11). New findings on the effectiveness of the coaching relationship: Time to think differently about active ingredients? *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*. https://doi.org/10.1037/cpb0000175

Dixey, A. (2015). Managerial coaching: A formal process or a daily conversation? *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, (9), 77–89. https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.217562702826474

Ebrahimi, M. (2024, January). Inside workplace coaching: A brief overview. *Skills Academia Research and Insights Collective for Excellence*. https://skillsacademia.org/articles-2024-inside-workplace-coaching

Ebrahimi, M. (2016). *Building internal coaching capacity and coaching culture to promote positive behavior change in employees in the face of corporate restructure* (Doctoral thesis, Central Queensland University).

Ellinger, A. D., Ellinger, A. E., & Keller, S. B. (2003). Supervisory coaching behavior, employee satisfaction, and warehouse employee performance: A dyadic perspective in the distribution industry. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 14*(4), 435–457. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.1078

Epstein, R. S. (1994). *Keeping boundaries: Maintaining safety and integrity in the psychotherapeutic process*. American Psychiatric Association. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1994-97425-000

Evans-Krimme, R. (2023). Internal coaching. In W.-A. Smith, E. H. Pontes, D. Magadlela, & D. Clutterbuck (Eds.), *Ethical case studies for coach development and practice: A coach's companion* (1st ed). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003404651

Everstine, L., Everstine, D. S., Heymann, G. M., True, R. H., Frey, D. H., Johnson, H. G., & Seiden, R. H. (1980). Privacy and confidentiality in psychotherapy. *American Psychologist, 35*(9), 828–840. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.35.9.828

Fields, A. B. (2017). A grounded theory study of how executive coaches help professionals deal with workplace intimidation. *The Coaching Psychologist, 13*(1), 13–21. https://doi.org/10.53841/bpstcp.2017.13.1.13

Forbes, R. L. (2016). Brain science and organizational coaching. *Contemporary Research on Organizational Management and Administration, 4*(1), 6–14. https://fuse.franklin.edu/facstaff-pub/23

Forrester, J. (2003). *Trust, confidentiality, and the possibility of psychoanalysis*. In C. D. Levin, A. Furlong, & M. K. O'Neil (Eds.), *Confidentiality: Ethical perspectives and clinical dilemmas* (pp. 19–28). Routledge.

Freud, S. (1949). *An outline of psychoanalysis*. The Hogarth Press.

Frisch, M. H. (2001). The emerging role of the internal coach. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 53*(4), 240–250. https://doi.org/10.1037/1061-4087.53.4.240

Gan, G. C., & Chong, C. W. (2015). Coaching relationship in executive coaching: A Malaysian study. *Journal of Management Development, 34*(4), 476–493. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-08-2013-0104

Gayle, R. G. (2011). *The mentoring relationship: Co-creating personal and professional growth*. In R. H. Klein, H. S. Bernard, & V. L. Schermer (Eds.), *On becoming a psychotherapist: The personal and professional journey* (pp. 49–68). Oxford University Press.

Gelso, C. J., & Carter, J. A. (1985). The relationship in counseling and psychotherapy: Components, consequences, and theoretical antecedents. *The Counseling Psychologist, 13*(2), 155–243. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000085132001

Gelso, C. J., & Carter, J. A. (1994). Components of the psychotherapy relationship: Their interaction and unfolding during treatment. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 41*(3), 296–306. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.41.3.296

Gentry, J. R. (1939). Review of *The clinical treatment of the problem child* by C. R. Rogers [Book review]. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 23*(3), 423. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0051128

Goldsmith, M. (2009). Executive coaching: A real world perspective from a real-life coaching practitioner. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, *4*(1), 22–24.

Gowda, V., Jordan, S. G., Oliveira, A., Cook, T. S., & Enarson, C. (2021). Support from within: Coaching to enhance radiologist well-being and practice. *Academic Radiology, 29*(8), 1255–1258. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acra.2021.11.017

Graham, S., Wedman, J. F., & Garvin-Kester, B. (2008). Manager coaching skills: What makes a good coach? *Performance Improvement Quarterly, 7*(2), 81–94. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1937-8327.1994.tb00626.x

Grant, A. M. (2001). *Towards a psychology of coaching: The impact of coaching on metacognition, mental health and goal attainment* (Doctoral dissertation, Macquarie University). https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED478147.pdf

Grant, A. M. (2011). Coaching psychology. In S. J. Lopez (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of positive psychology*. Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444306002

Grant, A. M. (2012). The efficacy of coaching. In J. Passmore, D. B. Peterson, & T. Freire (Eds.), *The Wiley-Blackwell handbook of the psychology of coaching and mentoring*. Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118326459.ch2

Grant, A. M. (2013). The efficacy of executive coaching in times of organizational change. *Journal of Change Management, 14*(2), 258–280. https://doi.org/10.1080/14697017.2013.805159

Grant, A. M. (2014). Autonomy support, relationship satisfaction and goal focus in the coach–coachee relationship: Which best predicts coaching success? *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice, 7*(1), 18–38. https://doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2013.850106

Grant, A. M. (2017). The third "generation" of workplace coaching: Creating a culture of quality conversations. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice, 10*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2016.1266005

Grant, A. M., & Cavanagh, M. (2007). Evidence-based coaching: Flourishing or languishing? *Australian Psychologist, 42*(4), 239–254. https://doi.org/10.1080/00050060701648175

Grant, A. M., Curtayne, L., & Burton, G. (2009). Executive coaching enhances goal attainment, resilience, and workplace well-being: A randomized controlled study. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 4*(5), 396–407. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760902992456

Grant, A. M., & Hartley, M. (2013). Developing the leader as coach: Insights, strategies and tips for embedding coaching skills in the workplace. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice, 6*(2), 102–115. https://doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2013.824015

Graßmann, C., Scholmerich, F., & Schermuly, C. C. (2020). The relationship between working alliance and client outcomes in coaching: A meta-analysis. *Human Relations, 73*, 35–58. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726718819725

Greene, R. R. (2008). *Human behavior theory and social work practice*. Transaction Publishers.

Greif, S., Möller, H., Scholl, W., Passmore, J., & Müller, F. (2022). Coaching definitions and concepts. In S. Greif, H. Möller, W. Scholl, J. Passmore, & F. Müller (Eds.), *International handbook of evidence-based coaching: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 1–12). Springer.

Gregory, J. B., & Levy, P. E. (2010). Employee coaching relationships: Enhancing construct clarity and measurement. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice, 3*(2), 109–123. https://doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2010.502901

Gregory, J. B., & Levy, P. E. (2013). Humanistic/person-centered approaches. In J. Passmore, D. B. Peterson, & T. Freire (Eds.), *The Wiley-Blackwell handbook of the psychology of coaching and mentoring* (pp. 285–297). Wiley.

Grover, S., & Furnham, A. (2016). Coaching as a developmental intervention in organizations: A systematic review of its effectiveness and the mechanisms underlying it. *PLOS ONE, 11*(7), Article e0159137. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0159137

Gunderson, L. M., Willging, C. E., Trott Jaramillo, E. M., Green, A. E., Fettes, D. L., Hect, D. B., & Aarons, G. A. (2018). The good coach: Implementation and sustainment factors that affect coaching as evidence-based intervention fidelity support. *Journal of Children's Services, 13*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1108/JCS-09-2017-0043

Gyllensten, K., & Palmer, S. (2007). The coaching relationship: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *International Coaching Psychology Review, 2*(2), 168–177. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2007-19806-006

Haddad, L. M., & Geiger, R. A. (2023). *Nursing ethical considerations*. StatPearls. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK526054/

Halmagyi, M. (2019). "Looking the part": *A qualitative study on how counselling psychologists make sense of their professional attire* [Doctoral dissertation, University of the West of England, Bristol]. University of the West of England.

Harrison, M. G. (2019). Relationship in context: Processes in school-based counseling in Hong Kong. *Counseling and Psychotherapy Research, 19*(4), 474–483. https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12234

Hunt, J. M., & Weintraub, J. R. (2006). *The coaching organization: A strategy for developing leaders*. SAGE Publications. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452278841

Jones, R. J., Woods, S. A., & Guillaume, Y. R. F. (2016). The effectiveness of workplace coaching: A meta-analysis of learning and performance outcomes from coaching. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 89*(2), 249–277. https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12119

Jones, R. J., Woods, S. A., & Zhou, Y. (2018). Boundary conditions of workplace coaching outcomes. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 33*(7/8), 475–496. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMP-11-2017-0390

Joseph, S. (2014). The person-centered approach to coaching. In E. Cox, T. Bachkirova, & D. Clutterbuck (Eds.), *The complete handbook of coaching* (2nd ed., pp. 51–64). SAGE.

Jowett, S. (2017). Coaching effectiveness: The coach–athlete relationship at its heart. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, *16*, 154–158. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2017.05.006

Jowett, S., Nicolas, M., & Yang, S. (2017). Unravelling the links between coach behaviour and coach–athlete relationships. *European Journal of Sports and Exercise Science, 5*(3), Article 1019.

Kauffman, C., & Scoular, A. (2004). Toward a positive psychology of executive coaching. In P. A. Linley & S. Joseph (Eds.), *Positive psychology in practice* (pp. 287–302). Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470939338.ch18

Kilburg, R. R. (1996). Toward a conceptual understanding and definition of executive coaching. *Consulting Psychology Journal, 48*(2), 134–144. https://doi.org/10.1037/1061-4087.48.2.134

Kilburg, R. R. (2001). Facilitating intervention adherence in executive coaching: A model and methods. *Consulting Psychology Journal, 53*(4), 251–267. https://doi.org/10.1037/1061-4087.53.4.251

King, P., & Eaton, J. (1999). Coaching for results. *Industrial and Commercial Training, 31*(4), 145–148. https://doi.org/10.1108/00197859910275791

King, G., Schwellnus, H., Servais, M., & Baldwin, P. (2019). Solution-focused coaching in pediatric rehabilitation: Investigating transformative experiences and outcomes for families. *Physical and Occupational Therapy in Pediatrics, 39*(1), 16–32. https://doi.org/10.1080/01942638.2017.1379457

Kish-Gephart, J. J., Detert, J. R., Treviño, L. K., & Edmondson, A. C. (2009). Silenced by fear: The nature, sources, and consequences of fear at work. *Research in Organizational Behavior, 29*, 163–193. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.riob.2009.07.002

Kleiven, G. S., Hjeltnes, A., Råbu, M., & Moltu, C. (2020). Opening up: Clients' inner struggles in the initial phase of therapy. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*, Article 591146. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.591146

Korotov, K. (2017). Coaching for leadership development. In T. Bachkirova, G. Spence, & D. Drake (Eds.), *SAGE handbook of coaching* (pp. 139–158). SAGE.

Knowles, S. (2021). *Positive psychology coaching*. Springer Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-88995-1

Ladegård, G. (2011). Stress management through workplace coaching: The impact of learning experiences. *International Journal of Evidence-Based Coaching & Mentoring, 9*(1), 29–43. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2012-08457-005

Laff, R. H. (2023). *A global perspective on mindfulness-based interventions in schools* [Doctoral dissertation, Pepperdine University]. Pepperdine Digital Commons. https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/etd/1402/

Lai, Y.-L., & Palmer, S. (2019). Psychology in executive coaching: An integrated literature review. *Journal of Work-Applied Management, 11*(2), 143–164. https://doi.org/10.1108/JWAM-06-2019-0017

Lansing, A. E., Romero, N. J., Siantz, E., Silva, V., Center, K., Casteel, D., & Gilmer, T. (2023). Building trust: Leadership reflections on community empowerment and engagement in a large urban initiative. *BMC Public Health, 23*, Article 1252. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-15860-z

Lebel, R. D. (2016). Overcoming the fear factor: How perceptions of supervisor openness lead employees to speak up when fearing external threat. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 135*, 10–21. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2016.05.001

Lee, J. H. N., Chui, H., Lee, T., Luk, S., Tao, D., & Lee, N. W. T. (2022). Formality in psychotherapy: How are therapists' and clients' use of discourse particles related to therapist empathy? *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 13, Article 1018170. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2022.1018170

Levitt, H. M. (2001). Clients' experiences of obstructive silence: Integrating conscious reports and analytic theories. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy, 31*, 221–244. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1015307311143

Lowman, R. L. (2012). Coaching ethics. In J. Passmore, D. B. Peterson, & T. Freire (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell handbook of the psychology of coaching and mentoring* (pp. 5–17). Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118326459.ch5

Machin, S. (2010). The nature of the internal coaching relationship [Special issue]. *International Journal of Evidence-Based Coaching and Mentoring, 4*, 37–52.

Mahoney, K. T., & Baker, D. B., (2002). Elton Mayo and Carl Rogers: A tale of two techniques. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 60*(3), 437–450. https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.2001.1839

Marshall, M. K. (2006). *The critical factors of coaching practice leading to successful coaching outcomes* [Doctoral thesis, Antioch University]. AURA Open Access to Scholarly Research. https://aura.antioch.edu/etds/676

Mayer, A. P., Grenier, R. S., Warhol, L., & Donaldson, M. (2013). Making a change: The role of external coaches in school-based communities of practice. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 24*(3), 337–363. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.21164

McCarthy, G., & Milner, J. (2013). Managerial coaching: Challenges, opportunities and training. *Journal of Management Development, 32*(7), 768–779. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-112011-0113

McCarthy, G., & Milner, J. (2020). Ability, motivation and opportunity: Managerial coaching in practice. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources, 58*(1), 149–170. https://doi.org/10.1111/1744-7941.12219

McKenna, D. D., & Davis, S. L. (2009). Hidden in plain sight: The active ingredients of executive coaching. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice, 2*(3), 244–260. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1754-9434.2009.01143.x

McMahon, S. (2018, February 28). Private and confidential: Ethical implications. *International Coaching Federation Blog*. https://coachingfederation.org/blog/private-and-confidential

McNally, K., & Lukens, R. (2006). Leadership development: An external-internal coaching partnership. *The Journal of Nursing Administration*, *36*(3), 155–161. https://doi.org/10.1097/00005110-200603000-00010

Moen, F., & Federici, R. A. (2012). The effect from external executive coaching. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice, 5*(2), 113–131. https://doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2012.708355

Mukherjee, S. (2012). Does coaching transform coaches? A case study of internal coaching. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring, 10*(2), 76–87. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2012-20379-007

Natale, S. M., & Diamante, T. (2005). The five stages of executive coaching: Better process makes better practice. *Journal of Business Ethics, 59*, 361–374. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-005-0382-2

Nicolau, A., Candel, O. S., Constantin, T., & Kleingeld, A. (2023). The effects of executive coaching on behaviors, attitudes, and personal characteristics: A meta-analysis of randomized control trial studies. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *14*, Article 1089797. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1089797

Nyfoudi, M., Shipton, H., Theodorakopoulos, N., & Budhwar, P. (2022). Managerial coaching skill and team performance: How does the relationship work and under what conditions? *Human Resource Management Journal, 33*(2), 328–345. https://doi.org/10.1111/17488583.12443

O'Broin, A., & Palmer, S. (2010). Exploring key aspects in the formation of coaching relationships: Initial indicators from the perspective of the coachee and the coach. *Coaching, 3*(2), 124–143. https://doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2010.502902

Pandolfi, C. (2020). Active ingredients in executive coaching: A systematic literature review. *International Coaching Psychology Review, 15*(2), 6–30. https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsicpr.2020.15.2.6

Paquin, J. D., Tao, K. W., & Budge, S. L. (2019). Toward a psychotherapy science for all: Conducting ethical and socially just research. *Psychotherapy*, *56*(4), 491. https://doi.org/10.1037/pst0000271

Passmore, J. (2006). Integrative coaching. In Passmore, J. (Ed.), *Excellence in coaching: The industry guide to best practice*. Kogan Page.

Passmore, J. (2010). *Excellence in coaching: The industry guide*. Kogan Page.

Passmore, J., & Lai, Y.-L. (2021). Coaching psychology. In J. Passmore & D. Tee (Eds.), *Coaching researched: A coaching psychology reader* (Chapter 1). https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119656913.ch1

Paul, M., & Myers, T. (2021, March 3). *Umbrella summary: Coaching*. Quality improvement center for workforce development. https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/qicwdumbrella/35/

Payne, R. L., Lai, Y.-L., & McBride, K. (2023). How does executive coaching work? An investigation of the coach–coachee dyad. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, *18*(1). https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsicpr.2023.18.1.34

Peltier, B. (2011). *The Psychology of executive coaching: Theory and application*. Taylor & Francis.

Rajasinghe, D., & Allen, C. (2020). Coaching for workplace learning and development. In M. Loon, J. Stewart, & S. Nachmias (Eds.), *The future of HRD (vol. II*, pp. 77–101). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-52459-3_6

Rasool, S. F., Wang, M., Tang, M., Saeed, A., & Iqbal, J. (2021). How toxic workplace environment affects employee engagement: The mediating role of organizational support and employee wellbeing. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18*(5), Article 2294. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18052294

Reitz, M., & Higgins, J. (2021). Speaking truth to power: Why leaders cannot hear what they need to hear. *BMJ Leader, 5*, 270–273. https://doi.org/10.1136/leader-2020-000394

Rekalde, I., Landeta, J., & Albizu, E. (2015). Determining factors in the effectiveness of executive coaching as a management development tool. *Management Decision, 53*(8), 1677–1697. https://doi.org/10.1108/MD-12-2014-0666

Ribeiro, E., Ribeiro, A. P., Gonçalves, M. M., Horvath, A. O., & Stiles, W. B. (2013). How collaboration in therapy becomes therapeutic: The therapeutic collaboration coding system. *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice, 86*(3), 294–314. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8341.2012.02066.x

Richardson, D., Landreville, J. M., Trier, J., Cheung, W. J., Bhanji, F., Hall, A. K., Frank, J. R., & Oswald, A. (2024). Coaching in competence by design: A new model of coaching in the moment and coaching over time to support large scale implementation. *Perspectives on Medical Education*, *13*(1), 33–43. https://doi.org/10.5334/pme.959

Rock, D., & Donde, R. (2008). Driving organizational change with internal coaching programs: Part one. *Industrial and Commercial Training, 40*(1), 10–18. https://doi.org/10.1108/00197850810841594

Rogers, C. R. (1951). *Client-centered therapy; its current practice, implications, and theory*. Houghton Mifflin.

Rogers, C. R. (1957). The necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change. *Journal of Consulting Psychology, 21*(2), 95–103. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0045357

Rogers, C. R. (1965). Some questions and challenges facing a humanistic psychology. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 5*(1), 1–5. https://doi.org/10.1177/002216786500500101

Saldana, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.). SAGE.

Schalk, M., & Landeta, J. (2017). Internal versus external executive coaching. *Coaching, 10*(2), 140–156. https://doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2017.1310120

Schiemann, S. J., Mühlberger, C., Schoorman, F. D., & Jonas, E. (2019). Trust me, I am a caring coach: The benefits of establishing trustworthiness during coaching by communicating benevolence. *Journal of Trust Research, 9*(2), 164–184. https://doi.org/10.1080/21515581.2019.1650751

Schoorman, F. D., Mayer, R. C., & Davis, J. H. (2007). An integrative model of organizational trust: Past, present, and future. *Academy of Management Review, 32*(2), 344–354. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2007.24348410

Sherman, S., & Freas, A. (2004). The Wild West of executive coaching. *Harvard Business Review, 82*(11), 82–90. https://hbr.org/2004/11/the-wild-west-of-executive-coaching

Sidhu, G., & Nizam, I. (2020). Coaching and employee performance: The mediating effect of rewards and recognition in Malaysian corporate context. *International Journal of Management, Accounting and Economics*, *7*(1), 41–72. https://www.ijmae.com/article_114999.html

Smetana, J. B., Goris, T., & Lewis, K. (2019, July 3–5). Coaching, culture, and generational knowledge transfer. In E. Tomé & F. Kragulj (Eds.), *Proceedings of the International Conference on Theory and Applications in the Knowledge Economy TAKE* 2019 (pp. 534–544). Institute for Applied Research on Skilled Crafts and Trades (IAGF) and the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ), Vienna, Austria.

St. John-Brooks, K. (2014). *Internal coaching: The inside story*. Routledge.

Stober, D. R. (2006). Coaching from the humanistic perspective. In D. R. Stober & A. M. Grant (Eds.), *Evidence-based coaching handbook: Putting best practices to work for your clients* (pp. 17–50). Wiley.

Stober, D. R., Wildflower, L., & Drake, D. (2006). Evidence-based practice: A potential approach for effective coaching. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring, 4*(1), 1.

Strauss, A. L. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge University Press.

Stuckey, H. L. (2015). The second step in data analysis: Coding qualitative research data. *Journal of Social Health and Diabetes, 3*(1), 7–10. https://doi.org/10.4103/2321-0656.140875

Thach, L., & Heinselman, T. (1999). Executive coaching defined. *Training and Development*, *53*(3), Article 3440.

Thorne, B., & Sanders, P. (2012). *Carl Rogers* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Tobias, L. L. (1996). Coaching executives. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 48*(2), 87–95. https://doi.org/10.1037/1061-4087.48.2.87

Tobias, V., van Woerkom, M., Meyers, C., & Bauwens, R. (2024). Coaching based on signature strengths or lesser strengths? The effects of two strengths spotting interventions on managerial coaching behavior. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 25,* Article 54. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-024-00756-5

Tompkins, M. W. (2018). Coaching in the workplace. *Journal of Practical Consulting, 6*(1), 115–122. https://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/jpc/vol6iss1/JPC_6-1_Tompkins_pgs115-122.pdf

Turner, E. (2010). *Coaches' views on the relevance of unconscious dynamics to executive coaching*. *Coaching, 3*(1), 12–29. https://doi.org/10.1080/17521880902882405

Uckelstam, C.-J., Holmqvist, R., Philips, B., & Falkenström, F. (2020). A relational perspective on the association between working alliance and treatment outcome. *Psychotherapy Research, 30*(1), 13–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/10503307.2018.1516306

van Woerkom, M. (2010). The relationship between coach and coachee: A crucial factor for coaching effectiveness. In S. Billett (Ed.), *Learning through practice* (pp. 247–262). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-3939-2_14

van Zyl, L. E., & Stander, M. W. (2013). A strengths-based approach towards coaching in a multicultural environment. In J. H. D. Cornelius-White, R. Motschnig-Pitrik, & M. Lux (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary handbook of the person-centered approach* (pp. 245–257). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-7141-7_17

Vermeiden, M., Reijnders, J., van Duin, E., Simons, M., Janssens, M., Peeters, S., Jacobs, N., & Lataster, J. (2022). Prospective associations between working alliance, basic psychological need satisfaction, and coaching outcome indicators: A two-wave survey study among 181 Dutch coaching clients. *BMC Psychology, 10*, 269. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-022-00980-9

Veugelers, W. (Ed.). (2011). *Education and humanism: Linking autonomy and humanity*. Springer.

Wall, T., Cooper, C. L., & Brough, P. (Eds.). (2021). *The SAGE handbook of organizational wellbeing*. SAGE.

Wang, Q., Lai, Y.-L., Xu, X., & McDowall, A. (2022). The effectiveness of workplace coaching: A meta-analysis of contemporary psychologically informed coaching approaches. *Journal of Work-Applied Management, 14*(1), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1108/JWAM-04-20210030

Ward, G., van de Loo, E., & ten Have, S. (2014). Psychodynamic group executive coaching: A literature review. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring, 12*(1), 63–78.

Wasylyshyn, K. M. (2003). Executive coaching: An outcome study. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 55*(2), 94–106. https://doi.org/10.1037/1061-4087.55.2.94

Wasylyshyn, K. M. (2007). Executive coaching: An outcome study. In R. R. Kilburg & R. C. Diedrich (Eds.), *The wisdom of coaching: Essential papers in consulting psychology for a world of change* (pp. 79–89). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/11570-008

Webb, C. A., DeRubeis, R. J., & Barber, J. P. (2010). Therapist adherence/competence and treatment outcome: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 78*(2), 200–211. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018912

Weinberg, R., Freysinger, V., Mellano, K., & Brookhouse, E. (2016). Building mental toughness: Perceptions of sport psychologists. *The Sport Psychologist, 30*(3), 231–241. https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.2015-0090

Wilkins, C. H. (2018). Effective engagement requires trust and being trustworthy. *Medical Care, 56*(Suppl.), S6–S8. https://doi.org/10.1097/MLR.0000000000000953

Williams, M., & Moser, T. (2019). The art of coding and thematic exploration in qualitative research. *International Management Review, 15*(1), 45.

Wotruba, S. (2016). Leadership team coaching: A trust-based coaching relationship. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, *S10*, 98–109.

Yao, L., & Kabir, R. (2023). *Person-centered therapy (Rogerian therapy).* StatPearls Publishing. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36944012/

Yip, J. A., Levine, E. E., Brooks, A. W., & Schweitzer, M. E. (2020). Worry at work: How organizational culture promotes anxiety. *Research in Organizational Behavior, 40*, Article 100124. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.riob.2020.100124

Zamawe, F. C. (2015). The implication of using NVivo software in qualitative data analysis: Evidence-based reflections. *Malawi Medical Journal*, *27*(1), 13–15. https://doi.org/10.4314/mmj.v27i1.4

The *Journal of Social, Behavioral, and Health Sciences* (*JSBHS),* cosponsored by the College of Social and Behavioral Health, College of Allied Health, and College of Health Sciences and Public Policy, is a peer-reviewed, online, interdisciplinary journal focusing on theoretically based research that addresses contemporary national and international issues. *JSBHS* articles include peer-reviewed research reports, brief reports, comprehensive literature reviews, book reviews, and student research.