Title registration for a systematic review: Outcomes of workplace coaching for individuals and organizations

Niklas Frewel, Rossella Barilli, Fabio Massei, Lorenzo Avanzi

Submitted to the Coordinating Group of:

☐	Crime and Justice
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☐	Methods
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☒	Business and Management
☐	Other:

Plans to co-register:

☒	No
☐	Yes ☐ Cochrane ☐ Other
☐	Maybe

Date submitted:
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Title of the review
Outcomes of workplace coaching for individuals and organizations.
Background

Human Resource Development (HRD) activities are designed to improve development, learning, and performance focused at an individual, group, and organizational level. Bachirova, Cox, and Clutterbuck (2014) described coaching as "a human development process that involves structured, focused interaction and the use of appropriate strategies, tools and techniques to promote desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the coachee and potentially for other stakeholders". Therefore, coaching can be classified as a key HRD-related activity (Beattie et al., 2014). One of the main characteristics of coaching is that the coachee is in control of his/her learning and development. The ultimate aim of learning, training, and development is to maximize the effectiveness of an organization's human capital (Ford, Kraiger, & Merritt, 2010) by improving performance at the individual level, assuming that this will subsequently result in organizational-level improvements (Swart & Harcup, 2013). The literature on coaching has grown exponentially in the last 15 years: Whereas only 93 articles were published in the years between 1937 and 1999, the total number of articles and dissertations on coaching reached 634 in 2011 (Grant, 2013) and the number has been steadily growing ever since. Despite the huge growth in the use of coaching as a strategy for employee learning and development (ICF, 2012), there remains a paucity of scientific evidence examining its benefits for organizations, coupled with a generally poor understanding of the influencing factors of coaching success (e.g. Grant, Passmore, Cavanagh, & Parker, 2010; Bono, Purvanova, Towler, & Peterson, 2009). The central question that remains to be answered is: Does workplace coaching predict individual development and improvements in performance that would subsequently reflect on the results of an organization; and if so, under what conditions?

Relevance for practice

The practice of executive coaching has emerged as one of the top five leadership development best practices, to help leaders respond to major shifts occurring in the world of work (WanVeer & Ruthman, 2008). Many organizations make substantial investments in HRD programs hoping that these will increase productivity and be a source of competitive advantage for their organization (Fulmer, Gibbs, & Goldsmith, 2000). Business coaching is one type of HRD activity that has become very popular in recent years. In 2003, Capuzzi Simon claimed that there were tens of thousands of business coaches in the United States. Since its foundation in 1995, the International Coach Federation (ICF) has seen its member count grow to over 20,000 members in over 100 countries in 2012 and the total annual revenue from coaching is estimated at roughly $2 billion globally (ICF, 2012). Liljenstrand and Nebeker (2008) described business coaching as the fastest growing field within consulting.

The objective of this systematic review is to utilize this growing trend and look at coaching from a different angle, contrasting the approaches taken by recent meta-analyses and reviews, by assuming that coaching may take place at all levels of organizations (not only just for leaders and top-management) and can be done by not only by external coaches, but also by managers and peers within organizations. This allows us to view coaching as a more widely used organizational practice. Special attention will be given to the factors that might enhance or diminish coaching outcomes.

Objectives

The systematic review aims to answer the following questions:

Question 1: Does workplace coaching predict performance?
Note: *The analysis will be taking into account various sub-dimensions of the dependent variable*

Question 2: Does workplace coaching predict affective outcomes?
Note: *The analysis will be taking into account various sub-dimensions of the dependent variable*
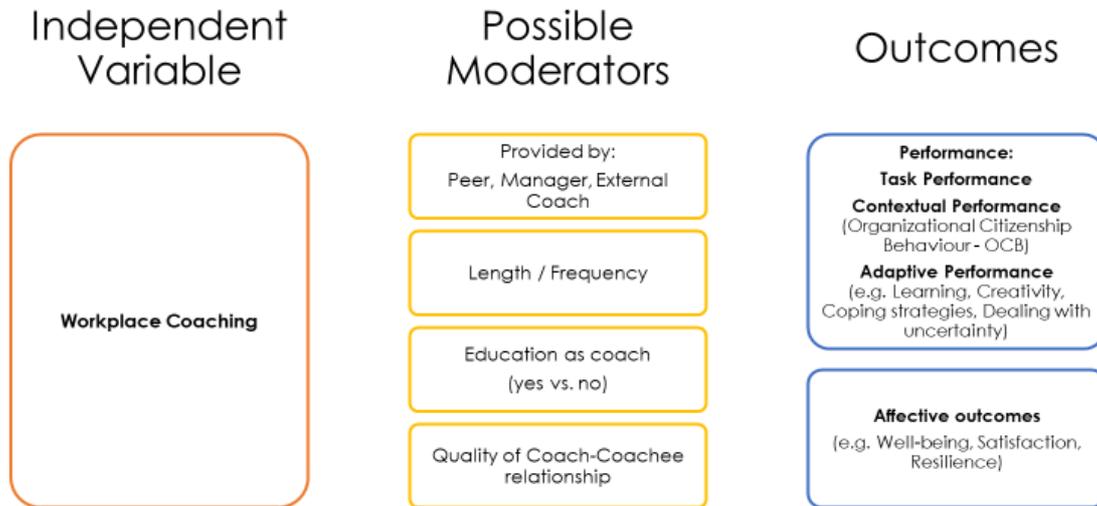
Question 3: Do certain characteristics of workplace coaching moderate the relationship between workplace coaching and outcomes?

Moderator analysis: A key component
Workplace coaching has been firmly established as important, but it is unclear when—or in which contexts—those benefits manifest. This systematic review will investigate the role of the following moderators in enhancing/diminishing associations between coaching and outcomes:
- By whom the coaching was provided (peer vs. manager vs. external coach)
- Duration of the coaching relationship
- Frequency of the coaching sessions
- Education of the coach (coaching education vs. no coaching education)
- Quality of relationship between coach and coachee
- Study design (longitudinal studies, within subject design, between subject design, randomized/non-randomized controlled studies)

Research Model

Independent Variable	Possible Moderators	Outcomes
Workplace Coaching	Provided by: Peer, Manager, External Coach	**Performance:** **Task Performance** **Contextual Performance** (Organizational Citizenship Behaviour - OCB) **Adaptive Performance** (e.g. Learning, Creativity, Coping strategies, Dealing with uncertainty)
	Length / Frequency	
	Education as coach (yes vs. no)	**Affective outcomes** (e.g. Well-being, Satisfaction, Resilience)
	Quality of Coach-Coachee relationship	

The outcome variables we utilize are defined within the criterion framework from the literatures on learning, training, and development proposed by Kraiger et al. (1993) and Kirkpatrick (1996), and as such outlined in a recent meta-analysis by Jones et al. (2016), combined with the framework on Job Performance by Sonnentag et al. (2008).

Existing reviews

The effectiveness of workplace coaching: A meta-analysis of learning and performance outcomes from coaching
Jones, Woods, & Guillaume (2016)

This study presents a meta-analysis synthesizing the existing research on the effectiveness of workplace coaching (k = 17), looking at studies that either adopt within-subjects or between-subjects designs. It explores workplace coaching provided by internal or external coaches and excludes cases of manager-subordinate and peer coaching. Furthermore, it proposes a framework of potential outcomes from coaching in organizations. The analysis indicates that coaching has positive effects on organizational outcomes overall. It further shows that effects are moderated by the type of coach (with stronger effects for internal coaches compared to external coaches) and use of single-source versus multi-source feedback (multi-source feedback results in smaller positive effects). In terms of limitations, the authors noted: (1) incomplete reporting and missing data on sample characteristics and coaching variables and (2) due to the relatively nascent nature of coaching research, the meta-analysis included a relatively small number of studies.

The power of coaching: a meta-analytic investigation
Sonesh et al. (2015)

Looking at the coaching literature, it is often unclear what the relative effects of coaching are on specific coaching outcomes. This study adopts meta-analytic techniques (k = 24) to investigate the predictive power of coaching on coach-coachee relationship outcomes, and coachee goal-attainment outcomes. Study designs included vary from repeated-measures (pre-post-test design), to independent groups (treatment vs. control groups), independent

groups and repeated measures as well as correlational designs. The findings suggest that coaching has stronger effects on relationship outcomes than goal-attainment outcomes. Moreover, of the goal-attainment outcomes, coaching has the strongest effect on behavioural changes as opposed to attitudinal changes. Sample type, study design, background of the coach, and number of coaching sessions all emerged as significant moderators. The two main limitations of this meta-analysis are: (1) a general lack of empirical research included in the analysis; (2) no exploration of moderating effects of some of the proposed specific relationship constructs (e.g. emergence of trust; rapport; shared understanding) due to the low frequency with which primary articles report such information.

Does coaching work? A meta-analysis on the effects of coaching on individual level outcomes in an organizational context
Theeboom, Beersma, & van Vianen (2014)

The meta-analysis presented in this article sheds light on the effectiveness of coaching within an organizational context (k = 18). It addresses the question whether coaching has an effect on five theoretically and practically relevant individual-level outcome categories: performance/skills, well-being, coping, work attitudes, and goal-directed self-regulation. The results show that coaching is significantly related to positive outcomes (performance and skills, well-being, coping, work attitudes, and goal-directed self-regulation). These findings indicate that coaching may be effective intervention in organizations. The main limitations of this study are: (1) the majority of the studies included in this meta-analysis relied on self-reports of outcome measures; (2) most studies in the meta-analysis did not measure coaching outcomes over time, making it difficult to assess the potential long-term impact of coaching interventions; (3) the findings are based on a relatively small number of studies; (4) the general lack of empirical work on coaching and its weak theoretical foundation has resulted in a large variety of coaching interventions and outcomes.

Challenges for the theory and practice of business coaching: A systematic review of empirical evidence
Blackman, Moscardo, & Gray (2016)

This article reports on a review of 111 published empirical papers investigating business coaching theory, processes, and outcomes. For their analysis, the authors divided the included studies into three groups: (1) case studies and one group post-test only designs (54 studies), (2) quasi-experimental studies that included either a one group pre-test–post-test design or a non-equivalent control group design (34 studies), (3) studies that combined coaching with other techniques (23 studies). The review identifies convergence around factors that contribute to perceived effective coaching practice and furthermore highlights a number of issues to be resolved in further research, such as determining the primary beneficiaries of coaching, the factors that contribute to coach credibility, and how the organizational and social context impacts on coaching.

Despite the rising popularity of coaching in industry, peer-reviewed empirical work has been described as scarce still one decade ago (Bono, Purvanova, Towler, & Peterson, 2009). Our work will make use of the rising research interest in the field of coaching and contribute to the understanding of the relationship between workplace coaching and practice-relevant

outcomes of interest by applying a high-quality, standardized procedure for systematic reviews with meta-analysis, in accordance with Campbell standards.

Furthermore, on a conceptual side, we will be looking at workplace coaching as a concept, which may also be applied by supervisors or peers, and on all levels of the organization, therefore broadening the scope of our literature review. Finally, we aim to make an important contribution related to the understanding of the conditions in which coaching may or may not be effective. We will therefore be looking at relevant moderators to identify relevant influencing factors.

Intervention / Independent Variable

Over the past decades coaching has been defined in numerous different ways. For the purpose of our review we will be referring to workplace coaching as a one-to-one learning and development intervention in a workplace setting that focuses on interpersonal and intrapersonal issues by utilizing a collaborative, reflective, goal-focused relationship, that aims to equip the coachees with the tools, knowledge, and opportunities they need to become more effective. Therewith, according to Feldman and Lankau (2005), coaches differ from advisers (who share their business or technical expertise), and mentors (usually more experienced employees who help protege´s). For the purpose of our systematic review, 'workplace coaching' involves the following (minimum criteria):

- The coaching relationship between coach and coachee is formalized in a coaching agreement or contract
- Focus of the coaching session is the coachees` professional and personal development
- The coachee is in control of his/her learning and development
- The coaching process has clearly defined goals
- The role of the coach is the role of a facilitator in the process, and honors the coachee as the expert in his/her work
- The coaching relationship consists of more than only one session

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Along with our research objective, we define clear inclusion and exclusion criteria, which will give a framework to the information retrieval process. As we are specifically referring to `workplace coaching` as a concept, we limit our research to studies done in organizational settings. Moreover, we will focus on Small-and Medium-sized (SMEs) companies (>10 and <250) and large corporations (>250), as we assume these types of organizations to have suitable organizational structures, and HRM practices in place to drive workplace coaching efforts. We do include employees from every gender or age and will consider individuals across all levels of the organization. We deliberately decide to exclude organizations from HealthCare, education, and politics. The decision to do so, and to primarily focus on profit-

oriented organizational settings, is because the typologies of organizations in politics, education, and HealthCare differ too greatly from our context of interest and may therefore influence the results obtained.

Outcomes

The outcome variables we utilize are defined within the criterion framework from the literatures on learning, training, and development proposed by Kraiger et al. (1993) and Kirkpatrick (1996), and as such outlined in a recent meta-analysis by Jones et al. (2016), combined with the framework on Job Performance by Sonnentag et al. (2008).

Primary Outcomes:
- Performance: task performance, contextual performance (organizational citizenship behaviour), adaptive performance (e.g. learning, creativity, coping strategies, dealing with uncertainty)
- Affective outcomes: e.g. well-being, satisfaction, resilience

Study designs

Eligible study designs include longitudinal studies, within subject design, between subject design, randomized/non-randomized controlled studies.

Eligible studies can be published in any language as long as they meet all other eligibility criteria. The search will be carried out in Italian, Spanish, English and German.

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Review authors

Lead review author: The lead author is the person who develops and co-ordinates the review team, discusses and assigns roles for individual members of the review team, liaises with the editorial base and takes responsibility for the on-going updates of the review.

Name: Niklas Frewel

Title: Master of Science,
Work – Organizational and Personnel Psychology, University of Valencia

Affiliation:

Address: Hauptwachstrasse 8

City, State, Province or County: Bamberg

Post code: 96047

Country: Germany

Phone: +491734513875

Email: frewel.niklas@gmail.com

Co-author:

Name: Rossella Barilli

Title: Master of Science,
Work and Organizational Psychology, University of Bologna

Affiliation:

Address: Hauptwachstrasse 8

City, State, Province or County: Bamberg

Post code: 96047

Country: Germany

Phone: +4915161043237

Email: rossella.barilli92@gmail.com

Co-author:

Name: Fabio Massei

Title: Doctor
Ph.D. program: "Social, Developmental and Organizational Psychology", focused on Work and Organizational Psychology.

Affiliation:

Address: Dr-Hans-Ehard-Strasse 18

City, State, Province or County: Bamberg

Post code: 96049

Country: Germany

Phone: 004915110652970

Email: massei.fabio@gmail.com

Co-author:

Name: Lorenzo Avanzi

Title: Doctor

Ph.D. program: "Social, Developmental and Organizational Psychology", focused on Work and Organizational Psychology.

Affiliation: Department of Psychology and Cognitive Science – University of Trento

Address: Corso Bettini, 31

City, State, Province or County: Rovereto (Tn)

Post code: 38068

Country: Italy

Phone:

Email: lorenzo.avanzi@unitn.it

Roles and responsibilities

Niklas Frewel will lead the different analytical stages of the review, bringing in her applied expertise in HR consulting. Throughout all stages of the review, Niklas Frewel and Rossella Barilli will closely collaborate and will be in charge of content-related discussions and coordinate the review's data analysis and interpretation stages.

Lorenzo Avanzi and Fabio Massei, given their passion and strong background in advanced statistical methods, will contribute heavily in the statistical analysis of the systematic review. They will moreover, where possible, provide feedback and needed support throughout all stages of the systematic review.

An advisory team consisting of content experts will be installed to provide the team with feedback and support. In addition, if needed, experts in the area of information retrieval, systematic review methods or statistical analysis can be consulted.

Support

The systematic review team may need support from a librarian/information retrieval specialist to design and carry out the systematic search process.

Funding

We do not receive any funding, nor we intend to apply for any.

Potential conflicts of interest

None to disclose

Preliminary timeframe

Note, if the protocol or review is not submitted within six months and 18 months of title registration, respectively, the review area is opened up for other authors.

- Date you plan to submit a draft protocol: October 2018
- Date you plan to submit a draft review: October 2019