THE IMPACT OF INSTITUTIONAL EXECUTIVE COACHING ON THE PROFESSIONAL LIVES OF LEADERS AT AN ACADEMIC MEDICAL CENTER

Whitney E. Williams[1,2], Daphne C. Watkins[2], Patricia M. Andreski[3], Michaella K. Baker[4], Laura Denton[1], Kanakadurga Singer[4,5,6]

[1]*Office of Faculty Development, University of Michigan Medical School, Ann Arbor, MI*

[2]*School of Social Work, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI*

[3]*Office of Health Equity and Inclusion, Michigan Medicine, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI*

[4]*Department of Pediatrics, University of Michigan Medical School, Ann Arbor, MI*

[5]*Department of Molecular and Integrative Physiology, University of Michigan Medical School, Ann Arbor, MI*

[6]*Office of Faculty Affairs, University of Michigan Medical School, Ann Arbor, MI*

Abstract

Despite the growing prevalence of executive coaching, empirical research on its efficacy and best practices remains an emerging field of study. Recent studies have begun to examine the outcomes of coaching interventions and the mechanisms driving these outcomes. A body of evidence suggests that executive coaching can lead to significant improvements in self-awareness, goal attainment, and leadership abilities. However, there is a call for more rigorous research to deepen the understanding of how coaching can most effectively contribute to individual and organizational success. This paper study explored the impact of institutional executive coaching on the professional lives of leaders at an academic center in the U.S. Midwest. Through an analysis of qualitative data from leaders (n=91), the study identifies six key themes emerged: 1) career advancement and development, 2) improved leadership capabilities, 3) enhanced self-awareness and reflection, 4) increased confidence and effectiveness, 5) personalized support and guidance, and 6) goal-setting and action planning. The findings suggest coaching has enabled leaders to progress in their careers, adopt more data-driven and strength-based leadership approaches, develop greater self-understanding, and enhance their confidence and overall performance. The coaching process provided leaders with personalized support and helped translate long-term goals into actionable steps. This study has implications for continued research and investment in this coaching as a powerful professional development tool, as it elucidates how coaching can benefit both individuals and organizations. Further exploration of best practices and contextual factors can help refine coaching strategies and maximize the returns on this increasingly prevalent intervention.

Keywords

Introduction

Executive coaching, a rising star in the realm of leadership development, is a carefully crafted tool designed to enhance the skills and effectiveness of individuals in leadership roles (Gan et al., 2021; Theeboom et al., 2016). Its burgeoning popularity can be attributed to its emphasis on personalized growth, a beacon of hope in the face of rapid organizational changes and intricate business landscapes. The coaching process is a bespoke journey tailored to the unique needs of each executive, offering one-on-one guidance from a seasoned coach. This relationship is designed to unlock the leader's potential, sharpen strategic thinking, and foster personal and professional growth (Hackel and Samson, 2023; Jones et al., 2016). This approach to leadership development not only sharpens the skills of leaders but also directly impacts the performance of their teams and organizations, inspiring a sense of personal growth and professional achievement.

The effectiveness of executive coaching in delivering tangible outcomes has been substantiated through a range of empirical studies. For instance, Sonesh et al. (2015a) provide evidence that executive coaching significantly improves goal attainment, increases leadership behaviors and resilience, and boosts job performance and satisfaction among leaders. Such findings underscore the role of coaching in effecting positive behavioral and attitudinal changes in executives, which can influence organizational success (Plotkina and Sri Ramalu, 2024). Furthermore, executive coaching has positively impacted individual well-being, improved work-life balance, decreased stress levels, and enhanced the quality of life for leaders (Grover and Furnham, 2016), thereby fostering empathy and care within the organizational context.

Executive coaching has emerged as a vital tool for leadership development in contemporary organizations. It is a customized developmental process for executive-level individuals to enhance their performance and address specific challenges they may face, instilling a sense of reassurance and confidence in leaders. This practical application of coaching is key to fostering professional growth (Ellinger and Ellinger, 2021; Sonesh et al., 2015b). The surge in demand for executive coaching reflects a broader recognition of the complexities faced by organizational leaders and the need for tailored support that can bridge the gap between their current capabilities and the escalating requirements of their roles. Executive coaching emphasizes a one-on-one, collaborative relationship between the coach and the leader, aiming to produce behavioral changes and enhance the leader's effectiveness within the organization's context (Chen and Rodriguez, 2020; Hackel and Samson, 2023).

Despite the growing popularity of executive coaching, empirical research on its efficacy and best practices is still in its early stages of development. Studies have begun to examine the outcomes of executive coaching interventions and the mechanisms through which these outcomes are achieved. Evidence suggests that executive coaching can significantly enhance executive functioning, including increased self-awareness, improved goal attainment, and enhanced leadership abilities. However, there is a call for more research to deepen the understanding of how *institutional* executive coaching programs can most effectively contribute to leader success. This paper aims to explore the impact of an executive coaching program, situated in an academic medical institution, on the professional lives of leaders. We also aim to identify areas requiring further exploration to enhance the coaching experience and maximize returns on investment for organizations that employ this powerful development tool.

Background and Literature Review

Executive coaching has been recognized as a powerful intervention in the professional lives of leaders, resulting in enhanced leadership skills, better decision-making, and increased emotional intelligence. A study by Ely et al. (2010) highlighted the transformative effect of coaching on leadership development, inspiring leaders to strive for personal and professional growth. The personalized feedback and one-on-one interaction inherent in the coaching relationship accelerate the coachee's self-awareness and adaptability, which are critical components of effective leadership (Plotkina and Sri Ramalu, 2024). This individualized approach enables coaches to tailor their strategies to meet the specific needs of the leader, resulting in a more profound impact on their professional growth.

The influence of executive coaching extends beyond the development of individual competencies; it also has implications for the leader's organizational roles and responsibilities. Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) demonstrated that leaders often report improved team dynamics and a more cohesive work environment post-coaching engagement. The changes in the leader's enhanced communication style, conflict resolution approach, and leadership behaviors can permeate the organizational culture, fostering a

more positive and productive workplace. Furthermore, leaders equipped with new skills and perspectives are better positioned to support and develop their teams, creating a ripple effect of growth and learning within the organization (Plotkina and Sri Ramalu, 2024).

Work-life integration, an aspect integral to the overall well-being of professionals, is another area positively influenced by executive coaching. For example, Grant, Curtayne, and Burton (2009) explored the impact of coaching on work engagement and found notable improvements in the leader's well-being and job satisfaction. By working on goal-setting, time management, and prioritization, executive coaching helps leaders navigate their professional responsibilities more effectively, leading to a more balanced and fulfilling personal life (Offstein, Dufresne, and Childers Jr, 2020). Addressing these areas in the coaching relationship can also reduce stress levels and prevent burnout, thus promoting sustainability in high-performance positions.

The long-term impact of executive coaching requires further investigation. Research by Jones, Woods, and Guillaume (2016) recommended more longitudinal studies to evaluate the enduring effects of coaching over time. While immediate post-coaching evaluations are commonplace, assessing the sustainability of changes made during coaching engagements is essential to fully understanding the value proposition of executive coaching for individuals and organizations. The ongoing development and refinement of measurement tools and impact assessments will continue to shape the understanding of how executive coaching influences the professional lives of leaders and the lasting benefits they gain from such initiatives (Koonce, 2010; Sperry, 2013).

Despite its acclaimed benefits, the rapidly evolving nature of executive coaching poses a challenge for researchers and practitioners alike in developing a standardized framework for practice and evaluation. As the field grows, so does the necessity for ongoing research into the mechanisms and conditions under which executive coaching is most effective (Athanasopoulou and Dopson, 2018; Plotkina and Sri Ramalu, 2024). This paper aims to assess the impact of coaching on the professional lives of leaders and identify areas requiring further exploration to enhance the coaching experience and maximize returns on investment for individuals and organizations.

Overview of our Academic Medical Center Coaching Program

Based on a medical campus that delivers health services, education, and research, the academic institutional setting for the current study recognized the value executive coaching could bring to its administrators and faculty leaders and launched its inaugural Executive Coaching Training cohort in 2013. Several high-level leaders had been engaging external executive coaches for some time, and it was determined that launching our own executive training program could help us benefit by developing a larger number of leaders and be more cost-effective in the long term. The executive coaching training program materials were available for purchase through Linkage, Inc. and titled *The Coaching Leaders Certification Program*. Through the certification program, participants learn and then apply a four-step coaching model to obtain agreement, create alignment, develop action, and increase acceleration with their leaders. The certification program occurred over three consecutive days of in-person training, followed by five monthly webinars to reinforce the learning.

After facilitating the Linkage, Inc. program from 2013 to 2017 for eight cohorts, we realized our coaches' skills were evolving as the coaching needs of leaders became increasingly complex. An opportunity arose for the University to design its own executive coaching program, building upon the positive impact created over the years. In 2018, we collaborated with Summit Executive Advisory Group, founded by an original designer of several Linkage, Inc. leadership programs, including *The Coaching Leaders Certification Program*. This redesigned program aimed to tailor a learning experience that better suited people coaching within our organization. The redesigned program expanded on how to coach beyond a purely Socratic practice model and thoughtfully outlined the integral elements of the coaching process while nearly tripling the number of opportunities participants have to practice their new skills (Neenan, 2009).

Coaching Eligibility and Services at our Academic Medical Center

In January 2020, we began tracking requests for executive coaching through our program. The requests for coaching engagements diminished during this period due to the pandemic. We continued to track requests during this time; however, we did not see a significant uptick in requests again until 2022. It is worth

noting that we only track coaching requests that come to our faculty development office through our online intake form (See Appendix A). We do not have a mechanism to capture the coaching that may happen within a leader's department, team, or leisure time. Therefore, we do not have a comprehensive picture of the impact coaching has had.

To be eligible for coaching through our academic medical center, leaders must be regular employees (faculty or staff) at the university (i.e., students and trainees are omitted). Since our internal coaches conduct coaching on a volunteer basis, it is crucial to consider how to maximize impact with limited resources. Therefore, to receive coaching, the leader must have responsibilities leading or managing people, although there is no minimum number of direct reports required to receive coaching. There are a small number of occasions in which a coaching intake is completed by one's leader as opposed to the person who will receive the coaching. Although rare, these instances are often associated with a disciplinary or performance improvement plan that follows a different process.

Methods

Research Design and Data Collection
The Office of Faculty Development at our academic medical center directly supported 419 dyads of coaches and coachees/leaders between 2014 and May 2024. Qualtrics surveys were emailed to coachees/leaders by the Office of Faculty Development after the coaching engagements; the coaches could also share the post-survey with their coachees/leaders. See Appendix B for the survey. The coachee/leader surveys included 19 questions, some of which were open-ended and others based on five- and seven-point L i k e r t scale responses. Examples of questions asked concentrated on whether or not their coaching had added value in regards to time invested, if they would recommend coaching to others, if they were making progress towards their goals, what leadership expectations were for their coaching, and other questions focused on impact and feedback from their coaching sessions. This paper focuses on the survey results from the coachees/leaders, primarily the open-ended section of the survey where respondents could write additional comments related to their coaching experiences. The IRB reviewed the application (HUM00174168) referenced in this paper and determined that it does not require IRB approval because it does not satisfy the definition of research under 45 CFR 46.102(d), 21 CFR 56.102(c).

Data Analysis
A systematic, qualitative data review and analysis technique conducted by two study team members was used to gauge coaching experiences. This data review and analysis technique employed a modified qualitative data management and analysis approach based on the Rigorous and Accelerated Data Reduction (RADaR) technique developed by Watkins (2017) and implemented in hundreds of qualitative studies worldwide. For the preliminary qualitative data review, two analysts worked individually and then collectively to review the qualitative data, first to gain some understanding of what was expressed by survey respondents. Analysts reviewed qualitative responses to help identify meaningful quotes that best illustrated respondents' experiences. The qualitative data analysts worked iteratively to review the data, categorize responses, and generate themes from the response categories over several weeks (Watkins, 2017). The quotes presented in the current study were selected because they represented a feeling or perception expressed by survey respondents that helped address the research question. The data team met regularly throughout the review and analysis process to discuss the identified quotes and eventually reached a consensus on which ones best addressed the research question.

Results

We present the demographic characteristics of 91 leaders (out of a possible 419) who were coached between 2018 and the spring of 2024 (Table 1). Most survey respondents self-identified as female (79.1%), while fewer identified as male (20.9%). Regarding university titles, there was almost an even split between survey respondents who identified as administrators (47.2%) and faculty (46.2%), and a smaller number of survey respondents identified as staff (6.6%). As this was an executive coaching program delivered at an academic institution and centralized on a university medical campus, 85.7% of survey respondents held positions across the medical school, and 13.2% held non-medical school positions on the central university campus.

One person did not report their home department. Respondents were asked to provide feedback regarding the content of the training, as well as how they felt the training aligned with organizational expectations and how the training benefited their professional lives. For this paper, we focused our analysis on the impact of coaching on the professional lives of the leaders who responded to the survey.

Table 1. Self-Identified Survey Respondent Demographics *(n = 91)*		
	Total	**Percent**
Gender		
Male	*19*	20.9%
Female	*72*	79.1%
Professional Title		
Administrator	*43*	47.2%
Faculty	*42*	46.2%
Staff	*6*	6.6%
Department		
Medical Campus	*78*	85.7%
Non-Medical campus	*12*	13.2%
Not Reported	*1*	1.1%

Based on the qualitative data analysis, six themes were identified that underscored the impact of coaching on the professional lives of leaders: (1) career advancement and development, (2) improved leadership capabilities, (3) enhanced self-awareness and reflection, (4) increased confidence and effectiveness, (5) personalized support and guidance, and (6) goal-setting and action planning (Figure 1). Each theme is described in more detail below, accompanied by representative quotes that further illustrate each theme.

Career Advancement and Development

The first theme, career advancement and development, suggested the coaching experience had a positive impact on survey respondents' career trajectories. Several quotes directly reference career advancement, such as *"I advanced in my career from a Chief Department Administrator (CDA) to an Associate Hospital Director (AHD) position."* Responses like these suggested that coaching had helped respondents progress to higher-level roles within their organizations. Additionally, one participant mentioned, *"I have accepted a promotion outside the organization and am successfully navigating the transition."* This quote illustrated that coaching facilitated the kind of internal career growth that enabled them to take on new opportunities outside their current organization. In short, the ability to successfully navigate career transitions highlights the role of coaching in preparing leader for advancement and growth, whether in or outside their organization.

Figure 1: Themes Outlining the Impact of Coaching on the Professional Lives of Leaders

The theme of career advancement and development was further reinforced by the overall tone of the quotes, which conveyed a sense of progress and momentum. Based on their open-ended responses to the survey, the coaching experience equipped leaders with the skills, confidence, and strategic focus needed to advance their careers and take on new challenges. This suggests that coaching played a pivotal role in facilitating the professional growth and development of the leaders involved.

Improved Leadership Capabilities

The second theme centered on enhanced leadership capabilities and highlighted leaders' approaches to leadership, as well as the improvements they could make to their leadership styles through the coaching experience. One leader noted, *"[Coaching] has changed my leadership approach to be very data-driven first..."* indicating a shift towards a more analytical and evidence-based leadership style. This theme suggested the coaching experience helped leaders identify and apply other leadership styles to their roles. This highlights the role of coaching in assisting leaders to identify and capitalize on their inherent leadership qualities, rather than attempting to conform to a one-size-fits-all leadership model. By encouraging leaders to embrace their unique strengths and abilities, the coaching likely enabled them to lead more authentically and effectively.

Furthermore, data analysis revealed that the coaching program helped leaders develop a more nuanced understanding of their leadership skills and areas for improvement. Statements like *"I have a better understanding of my strengths and areas of improvement,"* suggested the coaching program facilitated a deeper level of self-awareness and reflection, allowing leaders to continuously refine and enhance their leadership capabilities. This holistic approach to leadership development is a hallmark of effective coaching, and the quotes suggested that leaders reaped the benefits of this personalized guidance.

Enhanced Self-Awareness and Reflection

A third theme that emerged from the qualitative analysis was the leaders' enhanced self-awareness and ability to engage in reflective practice, which was facilitated by the coaching experience. Several quotes highlight the leaders' newfound capacity to *"reflect on [their] emotions and reactions to certain situations"* and *"identify triggers"* that shape their mindset and behavior. Increased self-awareness is crucial for effective leadership development because it enables leaders to recognize their own biases, emotional responses, and areas for personal growth. By gaining a deeper understanding of these internal drivers, leaders can *"shift to a more productive and clear mindset"* – an invaluable skill in navigating complex professional challenges and maintaining composure under pressure.

The quotes also suggested that coaching helped the leaders develop a better *"understanding of [their] strengths and areas of improvement."* This holistic self-assessment is crucial for leadership development, as it enables leaders to leverage their natural talents while identifying and refining areas that require further development. The supportive and nonjudgmental environment that executive coaching provides often facilitates honest self-reflection, allowing participants to openly explore their capabilities and limitations.

Increased Confidence and Effectiveness

The fourth theme suggested that the coaching experience had a profound impact on the leaders' confidence and effectiveness in their professional roles. Several quotes directly reference an increase in confidence; one leader stated, *"Coaching has given me more confidence that I have the skills I need to serve in a leadership role."* This enhanced sense of self-assurance is a critical outcome of the coaching process, as it enables leaders to take on more significant challenges and responsibilities with a heightened sense of self-belief. Furthermore, the quotes indicated that this boost in confidence translated into tangible improvements in the leader's job performance and leadership abilities. One leader noted, *"I have become more confident in my approach in my new role,"* suggesting that the coaching they received equipped them with the necessary tools and mindset to thrive in their current position. This increased confidence is likely to manifest in the leaders' communication, decision-making, and overall interactions with colleagues, resulting in greater overall effectiveness and impact within their organizations.

The leaders further reinforced their enhanced confidence and effectiveness through statements such as, *"I am a better leader and have learned to lean into my strengths."* Awareness of their improved leadership capabilities is a testament to the transformative nature of the coaching experiences, which enabled them to develop new skills and recognize and capitalize on their inherent strengths. This holistic growth in confidence and competence is a hallmark of successful coaching engagements.

Personalized Support and Guidance

The fifth theme highlighted the importance of personalized support and guidance provided through the coaching experience. Several leaders referred to the unique role of their coach, with one stating that *"[Coach's name] was a great listener and really helped me see that many of the challenges I was facing were not unique to my situation at [my academic institution]."* This indicated that the coaching process

facilitated a safe and empathetic space for the leaders to openly discuss their professional challenges, with the coach playing a crucial role in normalizing and contextualizing their experiences. Furthermore, the quotes underscored that coaching provided a much-needed support structure during significant disruption and change periods. One leader shared *"...it was helpful to talk with someone. I was new to an area that was highly disrupted with deep cultural legacy issues and no support structure..."* This quote highlighted the coach's valuable function as a sounding board and source of guidance, particularly in times of organizational upheaval or personal transition. The coaching experience offered a stabilizing influence and a sense of community, which can be instrumental in navigating complex professional landscapes.

The personalized nature of the coaching experience was further evidenced by the leaders' appreciation for the coach's ability to tailor the experience to their individual needs. Statements like *"[Coach's name] has an excellent sense of assessing an individual's strengths and potential areas for improvement..."* suggested the coaches were able to provide targeted feedback and recommendations rather than employing a one-size-fits-all approach. This customized support enhanced leaders' engagement and investment in the coaching process, ultimately leading to more meaningful and impactful outcomes.

Goal-Setting and Action Planning

The sixth and final theme suggested that the coaching experience had been instrumental in helping leaders translate their long-term goals into short-term, actionable steps. One leader noted, *"Coaching has directly helped to distill long-term professional goals into achievable, short-term actions..."* This demonstrated the coaching process provided a structured framework for leaders to break down their aspirations into manageable, measurable steps. By facilitating this goal-setting and action planning, the coaching experience empowered some leaders to take concrete steps toward realizing their career ambitions. This structured approach helped the leaders maintain focus, overcome procrastination, and stay accountable to their own objectives. The ability to transform abstract goals into tangible, time-bound actions is a hallmark of effective coaching, as it enables leaders to maintain momentum and make meaningful progress.

Quotes derived from the qualitative data analysis indicated that the coaching experience *"helped [the leaders] craft time for introspection."* This dedicated reflection time is crucial for goal-setting and action-planning processes, as it allows the leaders to step back, assess their progress, and adjust their strategies as needed. Oftentimes, this work was done iteratively between the coach and their leaders. This cyclical approach to goal-setting and self-evaluation is vital to coaching methodology, ensuring that the leaders' efforts align with their long-term aspirations.

Discussion

This paper examined the impact of executive coaching on the professional lives of leaders. The rapidly evolving nature of the modern workplace has led to an increased demand for effective professional development tools, with executive coaching emerging as a prominent strategy for enhancing individual and organizational performance. Despite the burgeoning popularity of this intervention, empirical research on the efficacy and best practices of executive coaching is still in its early stages of development (Theeboom, Beersma, and van Vianen, 2014). Through our analysis of qualitative from 91 leaders at an academic medical center through an open-ended survey, we identified six key study themes: 1) career advancement and development, 2) improved leadership capabilities, 3) enhanced self-awareness and reflection, 4) increased confidence and effectiveness, 5) personalized support and guidance, and 6) goal-setting and action planning.

The first theme, career advancement and development, aligns with research suggesting that executive coaching can facilitate upward mobility and job transitions. Grant (2014) found that coaching helped participants set and achieve career-related goals, leading to positive changes in their professional trajectories. The theme highlights the transformative impact of executive coaching on the professional trajectories of the participants. It aligns with a growing body of research suggesting that coaching can be a powerful tool for facilitating upward mobility and successful job transitions. For example, in a comprehensive meta-analysis, Theeboom, Beersma, and van Vianen (2014) found that coaching has a positive effect on career-related outcomes, such as goal attainment and job performance. Similarly, a longitudinal study by Bozer and Sarros (2012) demonstrated that coaching helped participants set and achieve career-related goals, leading to positive changes in their professional roles and responsibilities. This evidence highlights coaching's ability to empower individuals to take proactive steps toward advancing their careers, whether through internal promotions or external job opportunities. Coaching plays

a pivotal role in enabling individuals to realize their professional aspirations and navigate the complex landscape of modern career development by providing a structured framework for goal-setting and accountability.

The second theme, improved leadership capabilities, is supported by previous studies demonstrating the impact of coaching on leadership development. Ely et al. (2010) reported that coaching enhanced executives' self-awareness, interpersonal skills, and ability to inspire and motivate others - all crucial components of effective leadership. This finding is supported by a growing body of empirical research demonstrating the positive impact of coaching on various aspects of leadership development. Numerous studies have shown that coaching can significantly enhance an individual's self-awareness, a crucial component of effective leadership. For example, a study by Dagley (2010) found that coaching helped executives develop a deeper understanding of their strengths, weaknesses, and emotional triggers, enabling them to become more self-reflective and adaptable leaders. Grant et al. (2009) also reported that coaching enhanced executives' interpersonal skills, such as their ability to inspire and motivate others – critical competencies for successful leadership. These findings suggest coaching can help individuals cultivate the essential cognitive, emotional, and social skills required to lead effectively in complex organizational environments.

The third theme, enhanced self-awareness and reflection, is consistent with a well-established body of research demonstrating the coaching's ability to foster greater self-understanding in leaders. Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) conducted a comprehensive review of the coaching literature, highlighting the critical role of self-awareness in the coaching process and its subsequent impact on individual and organizational outcomes. This increased self-awareness is instrumental in enabling individuals to identify and address areas for improvement, a crucial step in facilitating meaningful personal and professional growth. Consistent with these findings, a study by Theeboom, Beersma, and van Vianen (2014) found that coaching helped participants develop a deeper understanding of their thought processes, emotional responses, and behavioral patterns, empowering them to make more informed and intentional choices. Similarly, Grant and Cavanagh (2007) reported that coaching enhanced individuals' metacognitive abilities, enabling them to monitor their learning and development more effectively. By cultivating this self-reflective capacity, coaching helps individuals to develop the self-knowledge and analytical tools necessary to continually refine their skills and address their limitations.

The fourth theme, increased confidence and effectiveness, is corroborated by a growing body of research indicating that coaching can bolster an individual's sense of self-efficacy and overall job performance. For example, Gyllensten and Palmer's (2005) study found that coaching significantly improved participants' confidence and competence and reduced stress and anxiety. This boost in self-belief and capability is a crucial outcome of the coaching process, as it empowers individuals to take on more significant challenges and responsibilities with heightened self-assurance. This enhanced confidence and effectiveness can ripple throughout an individual's career trajectory and organizational impact. A meta-analysis by Sonesh et al. (2015) revealed that coaching has a positive effect on both task performance and contextual performance (e.g., organizational citizenship behaviors), suggesting the benefits of coaching extend beyond individual-level outcomes. Similarly, Bozer et al. (2013) demonstrated that coaching increased career satisfaction and perceived career success, underscoring the far-reaching implications of the confidence and competence gained through the coaching experience. Coaching can play a vital role in enabling individuals to fully leverage their skills and make meaningful contributions within their organizations by fostering this self-assurance and professional effectiveness.

The fifth theme, personalized support and guidance, emphasizes the inherent value of the coaching relationship and the tailored nature of coaching as an intervention (Grover and Furman, 2016). A growing body of evidence suggests that the quality of the coach-coachee relationship is a crucial predictor of coaching effectiveness, underscoring the importance of personalized support throughout one's coaching journey (de Haan et al., 2016). Researchers have consistently found that the therapeutic alliance between the coach and leader, characterized by mutual trust, rapport, and collaborative engagement, is a crucial factor in determining the success of the coaching process (Boyce et al., 2010; Gessnitzer and Kauffeld, 2015). Moreover, studies have demonstrated that coaches who can adapt their style and approach to the unique needs and preferences of the leader tend to achieve better outcomes (Theeboom et al., 2014). This personalized support allows the leader to feel heard, understood, and empowered, fostering a sense of investment and commitment to the coaching engagement. By prioritizing the development of a strong, tailored coaching relationship, practitioners can maximize the transformative potential of the coaching experience for both individuals and organizations.

The final theme, goal-setting and action planning, aligns with a well-established body of research demonstrating the benefits of incorporating structured goal-setting and action planning into the coaching process. Locke and Latham's (2002) goal-setting theory has long been recognized as a foundational framework for understanding the motivational and performance-enhancing effects of setting clear, measurable goals. More recent studies have specifically examined the role of goal setting and action planning within the coaching context. For example, a meta-analysis by Spence and Oades (2011) found that coaching interventions that emphasized identifying specific, challenging goals and developing concrete action plans were more effective in facilitating positive behavioral changes and performance outcomes. Similarly, Offstein and colleagues (2020) reported that coaching approaches that encouraged leaders to break down their long-term aspirations into incremental, time-bound steps were more successful in helping individuals translate their goals into tangible achievements. By providing a structured framework for translating abstract goals into actionable steps, the coaching process empowers individuals to maintain focus, overcome procrastination, and sustain momentum in their professional development journey.

In the current study, the coaching experience enabled leaders to advance in their careers and develop, facilitating upward mobility and successful job transitions. Coaching also improved leaders' leadership capabilities, fostering enhanced self-awareness, data-driven decision-making, and the ability to leverage their unique strengths. The coaching process boosted leaders' confidence and overall effectiveness, creating a positive ripple effect on their career trajectories and organizational impact. Critically, the personalized support and guidance provided through the coaching relationship, along with the structured goal-setting and action planning, were instrumental in empowering participants to achieve their professional goals.

Study Limitations

There are a few limitations that must be acknowledged when interpreting the findings from this qualitative. First, the dynamic nature of participants' professional roles during their coaching engagement presents a significant limitation. Of the 91 leaders who responded to our survey, many experienced role transitions, promotions, or shifts in responsibilities throughout their coaching programs. These evolving professional contexts likely influenced leaders' coaching needs, goals, and perceptions of program effectiveness, making it challenging to attribute reported outcomes solely to the coaching intervention. Additionally, the non-concurrent timing of survey administration introduces potential temporal bias into our findings. Surveys were collected across different time points rather than simultaneously, meaning that participants' responses may have been influenced by varying organizational climates, policy changes, or external events occurring at the time of their survey completion. This temporal variability complicates our ability to draw consistent comparisons across leader experiences and may have introduced systematic differences in how coaching effectiveness was perceived and reported.

The inherent characteristics of qualitative research methodology also present noteworthy limitations that shape the interpretation of our findings. The subjective nature of qualitative data collection and analysis means that participant responses were filtered through their individual perspectives, experiences, and communication styles, potentially introducing bias in how coaching experiences were articulated and understood. Furthermore, the voluntary nature of survey participation may have introduced a self-selection bias, where individuals with particularly positive or negative coaching experiences were more likely to respond, thereby skewing our understanding of the overall program's impact. While strengthened by rigorous coding procedures and researcher perspectives, the interpretive analysis process remains inherently subjective and may not capture the full complexity of participants' coaching experiences. Finally, the context-specific nature of this study within the organizational culture and healthcare environment limits the generalizability of our findings to other executive coaching programs in different institutional settings or industries. Despite these limitations, our findings highlight significant implications for the future of executive coaching programs at academic medical centers and offer insights into building an effective organizational culture through coaching programs.

Conclusion

This study sought to explore the impact of executive coaching on the professional lives of leaders through an in-depth analysis of qualitative data. By presenting the multifaceted ways coaching can benefit individuals and organizations -- such as through facilitating career advancement, improving leadership

capabilities, enhancing self-awareness, and boosting confidence and effectiveness -- this study makes a valuable contribution to the growing body of literature on the impact of executive coaching. The findings underscore the personalized support and structured goal-setting provided through the coaching process as critical drivers of the observed outcomes. For organizational leaders, these findings have direct implications, as they highlight the potential for executive coaching to enhance the performance and well-being of their employees. Future research on coaching best practices and contextual factors, such as the coach-coachee relationship and organizational culture, can help refine coaching strategies and maximize the returns on this increasingly prevalent professional development investment. Continued research in this area will be crucial in guiding academic medical centers and other organizations in leveraging executive coaching to its fullest potential.

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IJBMS [Appendix_A]_Executive_Coaching_Intake_Form

Executive Coaching Intake Form

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q1 Executive Coaching Intake Form

Q2 Name of person to receive coaching:
_____

Q4 Title:
_____

Q3 Department:
_____

Q6 Unique Name:
_____

Q7 Phone Number:
_____

Q8 This person is a: o Faculty (1) o Administrator (2)

Q9 What are the needs for coaching?
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q10 It is preferred to have a coach with expertise in: o Development-focused coaching (future focused)

(1) o 360 debrief & other assessment tools (2) o Performance-focused coaching (current focused) (3) o
Transition coaching (e.g. new role, etc.) (4) o Career coaching (5) o Onboarding coaching (6) o Team
coaching (intact teams) (7) o Group coaching (8) o Diversity & Inclusion coaching (9) o Other (10)

Display This Question:
   If It is preferred to have a coach with expertise in: = Development-focused coaching (future focused)
Or It is preferred to have a coach with expertise in: = Performance-focused coaching (current focused)

Q14 Development-Focused coaching (future focused) & Performance-focused coaching (current focused)

☐ Team Dynamics (1)

☐ UMHS Organization & Cultural Climate (2)

☐ Healthcare / Business Acumen (3)

☐ Work-Life Integration (4)

☐ Developing Leaders (5)

☐ Communication Skills (6)

☐ Working with Faculty (7)

☐ Public Speaking (8)

☐ Academic Medicine (9)

☐ Strategic Planning (10)

☐ Working with Staff (11)

Display This Question:
If It is preferred to have a coach with expertise in: = Other

Q15 Looking for expertise in:
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q11 It is preferred to have an executive coach that is: ○ Internal (1) ○ External (2) ○ No preference (3)

Q23 If external coach is preferred, please provide departmental short code. NO fees will be charged without your approval.
_____

Q19 The person to receive coaching has completed a 360. ○ Yes (4)

○   No (5)

Q12 Please attach an updated biography or CV to this intake form.

Q22 Are you filling this out for yourself or on behalf of someone else?

○   Myself (1) ○ On behalf of someone else (2)

End of Block: Default Question Block

Start of Block: Block 1

Display This Question:
If Are you filling this out for yourself or on behalf of someone else? = On behalf of someone else

Q20 Please list your name, title, unique name, phone number and relationship to this person.
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Display This Question:
If Are you filling this out for yourself or on behalf of someone else? = On behalf of someone else

Q21 Have you informed the person to receive coaching that you have made this request? ○ Yes (1)
○ No (2)

End of Block: Block 1

IJBMS [Appendix_B]_Executive_Coaching_Client_Survey

Executive Coaching Client Survey

Start of Block: Default Question Block

 Thank you for participating in this survey that is measuring the value of the University of Michigan Coaching Program. We hope to gain your thoughts and opinions to improve our coaching process. This survey should take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. All answers you provide will be kept in the strictest confidentiality within the Executive Coaching Training Program within Faculty Development.

Q1 Demographic Information ○ Your Name (4) _____
○ Title (5) _____
○ Coach's Name (6) _____

Q12 Please indicate the number of coaching sessions that you have participated in:
○ 1 to 5 sessions (1) ○ 6 to 10 sessions (2) ○ 11 or more sessions (3)

Q2 How likely would you be to recommend coaching to other leaders?
○ Extremely unlikely (1) ○ Moderately unlikely (2) ○ Slightly unlikely (3) ○ Neither likely nor unlikely (4) ○ Slightly likely (5) ○ Moderately likely (6) Extremely likely (7)

Q3 The coaching I have received has been value-added in terms of time invested.
○ Strongly disagree (1) ○ Disagree (2) ○ Neither agree nor disagree (3) ○ Agree (4) Strongly agree

---

Q4 As a result of my coaching sessions, I understand how to create goals related to my development.
○ Strongly disagree (1) ○ Disagree (2) ○ Neither agree nor disagree (3) ○ Agree (4) Strongly agree

---

Q5 I am making progress   outside of my coaching sessions toward meeting my goals.
○ Strongly disagree (1) ○ Disagree (2) ○ Somewhat disagree (3) ○ Neither agree nor disagree (4) ○ Somewhat agree (5) ○ Agree (6) Strongly agree (7)

Q6 As a result of   coaching, I am developing a clearer understanding of my strengths.
 ○ Extremely unlikely (1) ○ Moderately unlikely (2) ○ Slightly unlikely (3) ○ Neither likely nor unlikely (4) ○ Slightly likely (5) ○ Moderately likely (6) Extremely likely (7)

Q7 I have experienced a positive change in my leadership behaviors due to my participation in coaching sessions. ○ Strongly disagree (1) ○ Disagree (2) ○ Somewhat disagree (3) ○ Neither agree nor disagree (4) ○ Somewhat agree (5) ○ Agree (6) Strongly agree (7)

Q8 My focus for coaching has related to the following University of Michigan Leadership Expectations (please select all that apply):

☐   Creates value for diverse communities (1)
☐   Creates a shared vision (2)
☐   Leads innovation and change (3)
☐   Promotes diverse teams (4)
☐   Collaborates and builds inclusive realtionships (5)
☐   Coaches and develops others (6)
☐   Adapts (7)
☐   Acts with courage and confidence (8)
☐   Communicates (9)
☐   Achieves results (10)
☐   Solves problems (11)
☐   Not applicable (13)

Q9 Using the following scale, please rate how helpful the following tools were to you:

	Very helpful (1)	Somewhat helpful (2)	Slightly helpful (3)	Not at all helpful (4)	N/A (5)
Coachee Development Contract (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Goal Setting Blue Print (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Goal Setting Wheel (3)	○	○	○	○	○
360 Assessment (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Autobiography (5)	○	○	○	○	○
Leadership Timeline (6)	○	○	○	○	○
Skills Inventory (7)	○	○	○	○	○

Q`10 What impact has been made on your professional life as a direct result of coaching?
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q11 What impact has been made on your organization as a direct result of coaching?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q23 What additional developmental needs do you have post-coaching?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q22
As we think about the Executive Coaching Program effectiveness and expansion we also want to support our coaches in their development. The following 4 questions are specifically about your executive coach to help identify their strengths and opportunities for improvement.

Responses from the following questions will be **de-identified**, summarized in themes and shared with your coach for purposes of their own development. We would encourage you to also consider sharing your feedback directly with your coach as they continue along their coaching journey.

Q16 What strengths did your coach demonstrate during your coaching engagement? What things did you find particularly helpful that your coach did?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q21 What areas would you suggest your coach could improve upon? What are ways the coaching engagement could become more useful?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q20 What additional feedback would you provide to your executive coach?

_____
_____

_____

_____

_____

- -

Q13 Please add any other comments you would like us to know with regards to the coaching program:
_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

- -

Q19 Would you be interested in participating in future discussions related to the effectiveness of the University of Michigan's Executive Coaching Program?

○   Yes (5)

○   No (6)

End of Block: Default Question Block