





Reflections from the Field

The effect of organizational coaching on employee voice, work motivation and innovative work behaviour: A quasi-experimental study

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Abstract

In this study, we looked into how organizational coaching can influence innovative work behaviour, employee voice, and work motivation. We used a quantitative, quasi-experimental design with a pre-post-test approach. Thirty participants from an Iranian online job agency took part in this semi-experimental study, with fifteen employees joining a ten-week face-to-face coaching program. Our findings show that organizational coaching had a significant and positive impact on employee innovative work behaviour, employee voice, and work motivation ($P < 0.05$). Consequently, organizational coaching helps employees identify their potential talents and motivates them to develop these talents with high enthusiasm and creativity.

Keywords

Human resources management, organizational coaching, work motivation, innovative work behaviour, employee voice

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Introduction

Coaching has emerged as a powerful tool for both management and personal development over the past two decades and its impact on the modern business landscape cannot be overstated. Coaching not only enhances individual and team performance, but also contributes to the overall growth, development, and success of an organization (Mihiotis & Argirou, 2016). The concept of coaching has a deep-rooted significance in the realm of management. Over the years, coaching

has garnered increasing attention from both public and private organizations as a popular method of enhancing employee performance (Gustafson et al., 2013; Walunas et al., 2021; Unwanullah, 2023). Coaching serves as a communication and development model that empowers individuals to identify strengths and weaknesses, promotes self-reflection, and focuses on activities aimed at fostering learning and development (Ellinger et al., 2009; Beattie et al., 2014; Dahling et al., 2016; Unwanullah, 2023). Once a strong rapport is established, coaches are better equipped to challenge and motivate coachees to make changes in their practices and develop new competencies, all within the framework of a strong, trusting relationship (Fontes & Russo, 2018).

In an organizational context, coaching, as described by Fontes and Russo (2018), involves a process in which a coach collaborates with individuals or teams to help them achieve their goals, enhance their performances, and develop their skills toward the organization's goals. The coach provides guidance, support, and feedback to the individual or team being coached, assisting them in identifying strengths and weaknesses, setting goals, and developing an action plan to achieve those goals. Coaching can be employed to address various issues, such as leadership development, team building, conflict resolution, and career advancement. The primary goal of coaching is to support individuals and teams in realizing their full potential and attaining success in their organizational roles (Carrell et al., 2021). Organizational coaching is described as a purposeful, structured process focused on continual development and guidance to optimize performance within the organizational context (Unwanullah, 2023; Huang, Kang, & Choi, 2023). The benefits of organizational coaching include improved morale and organizational commitment, enhanced learning and creativity, heightened motivation, increased engagement, and a culture that encourages open feedback and constructive dialogue (Dai, 2019).

Previous research has demonstrated that organizational coaching has several positive impacts on businesses. In many developing countries like Iran, undesirable work behaviours exist such as low employee motivation, lack of enthusiasm for creativity and innovation, reluctance to share knowledge, and a weak employee voice, and Organizational coaching has the potential to mitigate these issues (Dai, 2019; Chidir et al., 2022; Hwang et al., 2023). Scientists in their research stated that organizational coaching can address critical organizational variables, including innovative work behaviour, organizational voice, and employee motivation (Dai, 2019; Hwang et al., 2023; Sjarifudin & Roni, 2023). The ongoing research aims to establish the effectiveness of organizational coaching in improving these variables.

Innovative work behaviour is defined as voluntary actions by employees that exceed their job description and are not necessarily rewarded by the organization, with the aim of introducing new and useful ideas, processes, products, or procedures (De Jong & den Hartog, 2010; Botha & Steyn, 2022). Studies indicate that innovative work behaviours positively impact employee performance, human productivity, organizational performance, organizational productivity, and overall organizational growth, development, and progress (Dai, 2019; Hwang et al., 2023). According to Amabile (1996), creativity in work is defined as an individual's generation of useful ideas or products through self-exploratory tasks. Enstroem and Schmaltz (2023) argued that managerial coaching offers guidance and support to employees and enhances their capacity for creative thinking and action. Coaching assists individuals in unleashing creativity by helping them attribute meaning to their job-related tasks and adjust their roles (Cheng et al., 2022). Ali et al. (2020) found a strong association between managerial coaching and innovative work behaviour. Similarly, Blomberg et al. (2017) mentioned in their research that the model of organizational innovation interactions has been widely investigated as a fundamental model that outlines the role of managerial coaching in influencing employee innovative work behaviour. In continuation of this theory, Al Nahyan et al. (2024) discovered in their research a positive and significant relationship between managerial coaching and innovative work behaviour. Additionally, the literature review has highlighted a correlation between managerial coaching variables and employee innovative work behaviour (Bello et al., 2016; Lace, 2018; Ali et al., 2020).

Motivating staff has been one of the key concepts in human resources management. In this regard, several theoretical and empirical studies have been conducted to discuss the motivational techniques used by managers to improve individuals' performance. Therefore, motivating and satisfying employees and increasing their interest in jobs and thus meeting organizational goals are of great importance. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that managers' supportive behaviour when dealing with employees can enhance their motivation. In this study, we will use Herzberg's (1959) Motivation-Hygiene Theory as it is relevant to our research. This theory helps identify actions and organizational factors that enhance employee motivation within an organization. Specifically, in the context of this study, employees are interested in career advancement, which can be achieved through skill development and job support. According to Herzberg, these are motivating factors and in this way, if managers and supervisors use a coaching and supportive approach when dealing with team members in a work environment, employee motivation will improve. The literature shows the necessity of providing a theoretical explanation of coaching and the theories associated with it to provide an empirical and scientific view of coaching operations.

Numerous studies have focused on this particular goal. Ismail et al. (2016) investigated the role of managerial coaching in increasing employee motivation. They found that the managerial and supportive behaviours exhibited by managers toward employees can have a positive impact on their motivation. Huggill et al. (2018) examined how team coaching can be used to promote organizational health and team performance. Their findings demonstrated that when nurse supervisors adopt a coaching approach, improved relationships were created between supervisors and subordinates, increased work motivation among nurses, and enhanced organizational health. Hajizadeh et al. (2022) in their qualitative research with the aim of identifying the factors influencing coaching in operational managers of the Persian Gulf Petrochemical Company regarding the motivation of human resources, found that coaching is effective in increasing the work motivation of employees. Similarly, Fendi et al. (2022) equated work participation with employee motivation and based on the leader-member exchange (LMX) theory, defined the quality of good leadership and subordinate relationships with an attitude of mutual support, mutual trust, good and comfortable communication, and loyalty between leaders and subordinates. They also stated that such a work environment will increase work motivation and employee participation in the organization (Botero & Van Dyne, 2009).

In the modern era, numerous researchers and scientists consider the concept of 'Voice' as a significant and remarkable occurrence in the realm of organizations and the research in this area has attracted significant attention and is now a focal point of study (Botha & Steyn, 2022). Within organizations, the term 'employee voice' pertains to employees' voluntary expression of favorable beliefs about an organization. This means that as a result of fostering a positive relationship between leaders and employees, employees actively communicate their personal beliefs, thus contributing to the success and advancement of an organization (Hwang et al., 2023). In this study, we define employee voice as the discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns, and work-related information (Aryee et al., 2017). Using a coaching program provided by a leader can be crucial for providing employee support. When leaders not only acknowledge employee feedback and provide specific work-related guidance, they demonstrate their support for employee input. Encouraging employee participation offers leaders new perspectives that can contribute to process improvement and more effective operations (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). In Egan and Kim's (2013) research, it was discovered that the willingness of employees to express their thoughts and ideas about their work during their daily activities is linked to management coaching. Yuan and Wang (2017) mentioned that managerial coaching has a positive and significant impact on the employee voice. Similarly, Egan (2013) demonstrated in his research that coaching affects the employee voice, leading to employees being able to express their opinions more effectively regarding their job responsibilities and organization, and there are limited related studies associated with these findings.

Despite the widespread use of coaching in the workplace, researchers have identified two critical needs. The first is to increase conceptual clarity around coaching in the workplace and the second

is to increase empirical research on coaching (Hagen, 2012; Kim, 2014; Lawrence, 2017). The purpose of the present study is to address these needs by implementing an effective organizational coaching intervention to investigate the impact on innovative work behaviours, employee voice, and work motivation in a quasi-experimental study. The quasi-experimental research method is valuable for researchers. Advantages of this approach include the ability to be used when time, financial resources, and external credit are limited or when other methods are not enforceable (Bärnighausen et al., 2017). The aim is to provide recommendations to strengthen and promote organizational coaching in the Jobinja online job agency through a study focusing on the above variables with the aim of improving innovative work behaviour, employee voice, and work motivation of the employees. Considering the importance of organizational coaching for modern businesses, the need for research in this field is undeniable. It's important to note that after reviewing existing research, it was discovered that there is limited theoretical and experimental research on this topic internationally as well as in Iran, and most of the researchers have focused on managerial and executive coaching. As a result, the current study aims to conduct research using a statistical sample of Iranian employees and to provide solutions to address theoretical and empirical gaps in this field and to improve.

Consequently, these previous studies have led to the formulation of the following hypothesis:

H1. OC has a positive impact on Work Motivation (WM)

H2. OC has a positive impact on Innovation Work Behaviours (IWB)

H3. OC has a positive impact on Employee Voice (EV)

Method

Participants and Procedure

The research was conducted at the JOBINJA online job agency in Tehran, Iran, where 50 employees formed the statistical population for potential selection in the experimental research. From this pool, 30 individuals were selected by simple random sampling. The participants were then divided into two groups: the experimental group (EX; N = 15) and the control group (WL; N = 15). The researchers organized informational meetings to introduce the study's nature and objectives to all participants. It is important to note that no additional economic rewards or employee benefits were offered in exchange for their involvement in the study. Moreover, the research was conducted in accordance with ethical standards and was approved by the University Research Ethics Committee.

Measures

Innovative work behaviours

The innovative work behaviours questionnaire, developed by Janssen in 2000, is based on Scott and Bruce's (1994) model. It comprises 9 questions and assesses 3 dimensions: idea generation, idea promotion, and idea realization, using a 5-point Likert scale. The variable for innovative work behaviours has a minimum score of 9 and a maximum score of 45, a score of 27 indicates an average level of innovative work behaviour. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient obtained in our research was 0.88.

Employee voice

The organizational voice of employees questionnaire was developed and assembled by Hames (2012). This instrument comprises 18 items that assess organizational voice across three dimensions: safety, efficiency, and encouragement. Respondents provided their responses using a 5-point Likert scale. Consequently, the organizational voice variable ranges from a minimum score of 18 to a maximum score of 90. A score of 54 designated an average organizational voice level. The current study yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.84.

Work Motivation

The Iranian version of the employee work motivation questionnaire, designed by Bakhshi et al (2004) based on Herzberg's (1968) theory, consists of 40 questions that have been adapted for use in Iranian society. The questionnaire evaluates two dimensions, motivational factors and hygiene factors, to measure employee motivation using a 5-point Likert scale. This resulted in a minimum score of 40 and a maximum score of 200 for the "employee motivation" variable. A score of 120 indicates average employee job motivation. Our research yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.935. Furthermore, the reliability coefficient of the entire research questionnaire was 0.949.

Procedure

The coaching sessions implemented in this research are structured according to the International Coaching Federation (ICF) standards designed in 1995 and rooted in the GROW model (goal, reality, options, will), one of the most famous frameworks (Binti Kamarudin, 2020). The intervention period in our study was conducted over six weeks, and each participant from the experimental group underwent a total of five coaching sessions, each lasting approximately 60 minutes, and was conducted face-to-face.

Data from this longitudinal study were collected from participants via a questionnaire before the start of the intervention period (T1) and then again ten weeks later at the end (T2). Participants in the experimental group participated in the intervention, where they attended ten organizational coaching sessions once a week for approximately one hour. In addition, the coach of this study was trained by the International Coaching Federation (ICF) and qualified to implement the organizational coaching intervention program.

This frequency—biweekly sessions—was chosen because it provided sufficient time between sessions for participants to reflect, practice new strategies, and note observations or concerns in subsequent sessions. The International Federation of Coaches defines coaching protocols as a set of steps that coaches follow to guide their coachees through the coaching process. This study adhered to ethical standards and was approved by the University Research Ethics Committee.

Table 1: Description of the Organizational Coaching Intervention Program

Stage	contents
1	The initial step in the coaching process involves establishing a contract with the employee. This involved defining the objectives and scope of the coaching relationship and delineating the roles and responsibilities of both the coach and employee. It was essential for both parties to have a clear understanding of the coaching process and expected outcomes.
2	The subsequent step involved evaluating the current employee situation. This phase identified employee strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. The coach used various assessment tools, such as personality assessments and 360-degree feedback, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the employee's situation.
3	Subsequently, the focus was on defining employee goals. Both the coach and the employee collaborated to establish SMART goals that were specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound. These goals were aligned with the values and priorities of the employees.
4	The next step involves creating an action plan. The coach and employee formulated a detailed plan outlining the necessary steps to achieve the employee's goals. The plan included a timeline, milestones, and specific actions for employees to take to achieve their goals.
5	Finally, the process included providing feedback and support. The coach provided continuous feedback and support to assist the employees in staying on track and progressing toward their goals. This involved encouraging employees, challenging their assumptions, and helping them overcome obstacles.

Analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS software version 22 for descriptive and inferential statistics. Means and standard deviations were used to describe the data, and an ANCOVA was performed for inferential analysis after testing the validity of the assumptions. The significance level of the tests was considered 0.05.

Results

The statistical sample of the current research consisted of 30 employees of the Jabinja online job agency, and the questionnaires were distributed among them. Table 2 shows the frequency distribution related to the participants' sociological characteristics.

Table 2: Participant Characteristics

Variable	intervention		control	
	N	%	N	%
Gender				
Male	4	26.66	4	26.66
Female	11	73.33	11	73.33
Age in years				
21-30	12	80	11	73.33
31-40	3	20	3	20
41-50	-	-	1	6.66
Job position				
Manager	2	13.33	2	13.33
supervisor	4	26.66	2	13.33
senior specialist	2	13.33	7	46.66
senior	7	46.66	4	26.66

Table 3 presents the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for the research variables and dimensions. Therefore, it can be said that the variables of the research follow the characteristic of normality ($P > 0.05$) and therefore, parametric statistical tests were used to analyze the data obtained from the questionnaire.

Table 3: Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results for research variables

error level (α)	Sig	Dimension	Variable
0.05	0.569	Idea generation	innovative work behaviours
0.05	0.554	Idea development	
0.05	0.556	Idea realization	
0.05	0.556	Motivating factors	Work motivation
0.05	0.556	Hygiene factors	
0.05	0.524	Encouragement	Employees voice
0.05	0.661	Safety	
0.05	0.489	Efficacy	

Table 4 displays the mean and standard deviation of the research variables and their dimensions during the pre-test and post-test phases for both the control and experimental groups.

Table 4: Descriptive dimensions of research variables in pre-and post-tests in terms of group

Variable	Dimension	Pre-test		Post-test	
		Control	Experimental	Control	Experimental
		Mean(sd)	Mean(sd)	Mean(sd)	Mean(sd)
Innovative work behaviours	Total	2.333 (0.314)	2.563 (0.399)	2.718 (0.409)	3.044 (0.577)
	Idea generation	2.600 (0.566)	2.733 (0.692)	2.955 (0.485)	3.377 (1.060)
	Idea development	2.155 (0.517)	2.577 (0.760)	2.622 (2.722)	3.155 (0.834)
	Idea realization	2.244 (0.695)	2.377 (0.517)	2.577 (0.781)	2.600 (0.798)
Work motivation	Total	2.500 (0.473)	2.366 (0.282)	2.613 (0.425)	2.853 (0.356)
	Motivating factors	2.466 (0.569)	2.320 (0.470)	2.573 (0.477)	3.000 (0.495)
	Hygiene factors	2.522 (0.555)	2.400 (0.402)	2.653 (0.750)	2.7.6 (0.608)
Employees voice	Total	2.444 (0.274)	2.507 (0.374)	2.4.7 (0.271)	3.148 (0.316)
	Encouragement	2.433 (0.600)	2.588 (0.537)	2.300 (0.468)	2.944 (0.638)
	Safety	2.433 (0.518)	2.411 (0.449)	2.411 (0.338)	3.211 (0.646)
	Efficacy	2.466 (0.581)	2.522 (0.603)	2.511 (0.420)	3.288 (0.464)

Based on the information presented in the table, it is evident that there were variations in the average scores of the post-test variables when compared with the pre-test scores within the experimental group. Furthermore, to conduct covariance analysis, the research hypotheses were evaluated by analyzing the differences between the pre-test and post-test values of the dependent variables in both the experimental and control groups.

Table 5: Analysis of Covariance result (ANCOVA)

variable	Dimension	source	ss	df	Ms	F	Sig.	η^2	Levene test		F Test	
									F	Sig.	F	Sig.
Innovative work behaviours	Total	Group	1.002	1	1.02	4.000	0.000	0.129	0.484	0.503	0.198	1.745
		Error	6.765	47	0.251	-	-	-				
	Idea Generation	Group	3.634	1	3.634	6.272	0.000	0.185	0.122	0.610	0.369	0.837
		Error	15.639	27	0.579	-	-	-				
	Idea Development	Group	2.769	1	2.769	4.592	0.000	0.145	0.765	0.0191	0.356	0.883
		Error	16.281	27	0.603	-	-	-				
	Idea realization	Group	3.018	1	3.018	5.815	0.000	0.120	0.833	0.045	0.168	2.345
		Error	14.028	27	0.519	-	-	-				
Work motivation	Total	Group	2.364	1	2.364	28.482	0.000	0.779	0.354	0.889	0.353	0.896
		Error	2.250	27	0.083	-	-	-				
	Motivating factors	Group	1.190	1	1.190	5.004	0.034	0.156	0.252	1.370	0.941	0.006
		Error	6.424	27	0.238	-	-	-				
	Hygiene factors	Group	6.000	1	6.000	27.270	0.000	0.745	0.444	1.427	0.300	1.117
		Error	5.995	27	0.222	-	-	-				
Employee voice	Total	Group	4.111	1	4.111	45.632	0.000	0.628	0.757	0.097	0.734	0.118
		Error	2.432	27	0.090	-	-	-				
	Encouragement	Group	3.061	1	3.061	9.423	0.005	0.259	0.216	1.601	0.071	3.532
		Error	8.770	27	325.	-	-	-				
	Safety	Group	4.748	1	4.748	17.717	0.000	0.396	0.767	0.090	0.066	3.675
		Error	7.236	27	268.	-	-	-				
	Efficacy	Group	4.661	1	6.000	24.794	0.000	0.479	0.316	1.042	0.095	3.005
		Error	5.075	27	0.222	-	-	-				
	Total variables	Group	0.673	1	0.673	15.284	0.001	0.361	0.284	1.194	0.864	0.03
		Error	1.189	27	0.44	-	-	-				

According to Table 5, ANCOVA, F, and Levene's test values for all variables were significant, homogeneous, and equal ($P < 0.05$), therefore, to better understand the significant differences between any groups we use post hoc Bonferroni test that according to Table 6, shows that there was a significant difference between the control and experimental group for the IWB, WM, and EV.

Table 6: Pairwise comparison of means using Bonferroni's post hoc test for research variables

variable	Group (I)	mean	Group (J)	Mean differences	SE	sig
Innovative work behaviours	Experience	3.074	control	0.385	0.193	0.000
	control	2.689	Experience	-0.385	0.193	0.000
Work motivation	Experience	3.150	control	1.222	0.193	0.000
	control	2.406	Experience	-1.222	0.193	0.000
Employees voice	Experience	3.074	control	0.744	0.193	0.000
	control	2.689	Experience	-0.744	0.193	0.000

Based on Table 4 and the Bonferroni test, there was a clear difference in average scores for innovative work behaviours (0.385), work motivation (1.222), and Employees voice (0.744) between the experimental group (undergoing organizational coaching intervention) and the control group (no intervention).

Discussion

The present study contributes to the growing empirical literature on OC in human resource management systems by evaluating the effects of OC intervention on IWB, WM, and EV, and the results confirmed all the hypotheses of this research. This study suggests that organizational coaching may be a promising and effective intervention for increasing employees' IWB, WM, and EV and an important complement to organizational-based interventions. Research has revealed that coaching-based interventions lead to significant positive changes in 21st-century employees of

different generations. Therefore, we recommend incorporating coaching as a growth strategy in HRM systems. It is important to note that after the experiment was completed, all the coaching materials were transferred to the control group of employees to address the effects of the lost opportunities. There are two practical implications of this study: First, every employee in a human resource management system can benefit from training and guidance from a coach to improve their IWB, WM, EV, and other competencies. Second, managers should be given the opportunity to learn coaching. Coaching is a way of life that promotes remarkable performance and achievement and provides opportunities to guide their personal goals. This field deals with the definition of the desired future and the means to achieve it by raising the level of the trainer's awareness and developing personal and professional skills to achieve the goals. Finally, by using new methods such as coaching, organizations can prepare employees and implement transformation plans toward their goals.

Given constraints such as limited time, inability to follow-up, and reliance solely on questionnaires as means of measuring research variables, it is important to approach the generalization of data and results with caution. To contribute to a broader understanding of coaching science, researchers are advised to expand their studies by implementing coaching interventions in different organizational contexts and with larger employee populations.

Ethics statement

The research involving human participants was thoroughly reviewed and approved by the University Research Ethics Committee of Islamic Azad University Central Tehran Branch. The studies were meticulously conducted in strict accordance with local legislation and institutional requirements. Notably, all participants provided both oral and written informed consent to participate in this research.

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