



APPENDIX GA36d

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Influences of Transformational Leader as a Coach on Organizational Performance in a multinational technology firm

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I. Abstract

Title of the Research

Influences of transformational leader as a coach on organizational performance (OP) in a multinational technology firm

Problem under investigation

The increasing interest in the influences of transformational leader as a coach has heightened the need for a comprehensive research. Little is known on the influences of transformational leader as a coach on organizational performance (OP) in technology industry. This study will enrich our theoretical understanding and practical knowledge as it is an under-researched area. Although considerable research has been devoted to the study of the impacts of transformational leadership on OP, less attention has been paid to learning the influences of transformational leader as a coach on OP in the technology industry. The aim of this in-depth exploratory case study is to investigate the influences of transformational leader as a coach on OP in Oracle (a global technology firm).

The coaching industry is a relatively young profession. Most of the research on coaching has been focused on the individual and team performance level rather than at the organizational level. Based on the empirical research in coaching, it appears that the coaching practice can increase the creativity, innovation, productivity, motivation, job fulfillment of the coachees, and enhance the organizational competitiveness.

Research Plan

First, I present the theoretical background about this research proposal. Next, I provide a holistic literature review on transformational leadership, coaching, OP, and explore their inter-relationships. Then I outline the research methodology which include the research questions, qualitative research method, research design, data quality procedures, data collection, data analysis, and ethical consideration. Furthermore, I highlight the theoretical and practical implications, key contributions, limitations of this study, and conclude with further research direction.

Essential features of the study design, approach, and method

As highlighted by Creswell (2007, p.5), a good research design is critical as it covers the “entire process of research from conceptualizing a problem to writing research questions, and on to data collection, analysis, interpretation, and report writing.” This research will apply a social constructivism method and conduct based on the in-depth exploratory case-study approach.

The purposeful sampling is more effective than the snowball or random sampling as it can provide the best insights about the research question. I aim to select diverse participants across Asia so that we can have an-depth and broader cross-cultural perspective based on the informants’ first-hand experiences. I will conduct one-on-one interview with twenty-four participants and two focus groups discussion. I do not intend to adopt a large sample size as it may reduce the quality of the qualitative data analysis and it is critical to set a reasonable research boundary. This research will adopt a semi-structured interview approach. It can help to explore this complex research topic as it provides the opportunity for probing and clarifying questions.

Besides this, I also plan to employ rigorous data collection processes via multiple methods, such as observations and audiotape as both a participant and an observer, and the relevant documents (e.g., personal journal, public documents, corporate communications, and website information) instead of relying on a single data source for triangulation purpose. The goal is to make sure that the collected data is complete, thorough for qualitative data, coding, and thematic analysis. I am aware the importance of data protection and trustworthiness in this research. As a reflective writer, the four quality criteria (i.e., credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability) will be considered rigorously in this research project.

Contribution

This is the first study to investigate how and why the transactional leader serving as a coach can lead to OP via the qualitative research approach in Oracle. Getting an in-depth picture via the experiences and perceptions of the transformational leader as a coach and examine their influences on OP will enrich not only the theoretical conceptual framework on transformational leader as a coach, but also it will increase our knowledge of best practices for a transformational leader as a coach in achieving higher OP.

Keywords

Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Coaching, Managerial Coaching, Organizational Performance, Team Effectiveness

II. Critique of a Research Article

Maesko, Van Wyk & Odendaal (2019). Team coaching in the workplace: critical success factors for implementation. *Journal of Human Resource Management*, 17(0).

Introduction

The article “Team coaching in the workplace: critical success factors for implementation” written by Maseko, Van Wyk & Odendaal (2019) have presented their findings in team coaching in the workplace with South African contexts. The authors have argued that for organizational survival and growth, effective leadership is critical, yet many leaders are not sure how to lead their team and drive their performance optimally. The aim of the research is to develop a conceptual framework and identify the critical success factors for the implementation of team coaching in organizations. Although this study has highlighted the critical success factors in the pre-, during, and post-implementation stages of team coaching, there are several limitations for the paper: 1) it has focused on the workplace only, 2) small sample size with the one-sided view of team coaches only, and 3) sample bias may occur due to the purposive and snowballing techniques, and 4) the findings cannot be generalized.

Summary

Maseko, Van Wyk & Odendaal (2019) have taken a constructivist qualitative research approach to explore and collect descriptive data from seven seasoned subject matter experts in team coaching via a case study approach (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2009). The authors have conducted individual semi-structured interviews with four men and three women. Based on the coding and thematic analysis results, the authors have found that there are seven main themes: organizational culture, coaching agreement, team effectiveness, common team goals, engagement, competencies of the coach, and constraining factors. The research findings can enhance our understanding and enrich our knowledge of the complexities of team coaching within the workplace. It has also identified the key success factors for team coaching implementation in South African contexts.

Assessment/Opinion

Literature review

Even though this article does not have a literature review section, the authors have explored the importance of effective leadership (Reich et al., 2008) and have provided a definition of coaching by referencing the scholarly works (Clutterbuck, 2013; Hamlin, Ellinger & Beattie, 2008; Grants, 2020; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001). They have also highlighted there is a lack of research on team coaching in organizations in South Africa. It has demonstrated the knowledge gap of team coaching in the workplace. Nevertheless, the authors have identified there are two South African studies conducted by Martiz (2012, cited in Maseko, Van Wyk & Ordeendaal, 2019, p.1) and Reid (2012, cited in Maseko, Van Wyk & Ordeendaal, 2019, p.1) that have indicated collective coaching is more effective than dyadic coaching in enhancing the effectiveness of team coaching (Maseko, Van Wyk & Ordeendaal, 2019).

One of the strengths of this article is that the authors have differentiated the differences between group coaching (Hawkins, 2014) and team coaching (Bandura & Lyons, 2017; Morgeson, DeRue & Karam, 2010). They have also noticed some organizations start to rely on team coaching to enhance organizational performance (Hackman & Wageman, 2005). Yet, the authors have argued many leaders do not know how to lead their team effectively to improve performance (Wageman, Fisher & Hackman, 2009).

In addition, the authors have done an exceptional job in highlighting the benefits of team coaching versus individual coaching by referencing the scholarly findings from 2005 to 2018 (Bandura & Lyons, 2017; Clutterbuck, 2013; Hackman & Wageman, 2005; Matsuo, 2018; Morgeson, DeRue & Karam, 2010; Peters & Carr, 2013a, 2013b). It is encouraging to see the authors included a case analysis of team coaching (Mukherjee, 2012) and identified the criticalness of executive sponsorship in ensuring successful deployment of coaching implementation in the organization (Avolio, Avey & Quisenberry, 2010).

Lincoln and Guba (1986) have highlighted the importance of trustworthiness and authenticity to meet the rigorous criteria as the researchers. This article has passed one of the most fundamental quality criteria for trustworthiness (i.e., credibility) as explained in the lecture by Professor Savelyeva (2021e). Based on the Google scholar advanced search on “team coaching in organizations in South Africa” between 1980 to 2018 in one of the most authoritative top

journals “Academy of Management,” it has returned the relevant article “Building competitive advantage from ubuntu: Management lessons from South Africa” written by Mangaliso (2001) only. In summary, the authors have done a good job in provide a broad overview of the existing South African literature on team coaching in organizations and identify the knowledge gap in effective team coaching implementation.

However, the depth of the literature review can be further enhanced. First, the authors have referred to the “Standards Australia Guidelines for Coaching in Organizations” regarding the definitions of coaching (Standards Australia, 2010a & 2010b). It will be beneficial to the readers if the authors can give a brief introduction about Standards Australia and highlight the key findings from this 174-page handbook document. They can also refer to the definition of coaching based on the well-established coaching associations, for example, Institute of Coaching, McLean, Affiliate of Harvard Medical School, and the International Coaching Federation (ICF, 2021) so that the reader can have a better understanding.

Second, the authors have mentioned performance, OP, high performance, goals, and positive organizational outcomes repeatedly in this article. However, these definitions have not been clearly defined. It is challenging for the readers to fully understand the underlying messages since these terms are not well-defined. It appears the team coaching process can release the creativity, innovation, unexplored potential talent, and leadership skills of the coachees based on the empirical research (Hawkins, 2011, 2014). If these terminologies are clearly defined, it can increase the practical contribution of this paper.

Third, I find the following messages can be improved by adding more clarity. For instance, the authors can explain better on the meaning of transformed skills, knowledge, and behavior in “team learning is evident where there are transformed skills, knowledge and behavior in the team” on page 2. In addition, the authors can enrich the meaning of culture: “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others,” and organizations by referencing the seminal works of Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov (2010, p.6 & p.341-377) on page 4. It can enhance our understanding of coaching in a cross-cultural organization.

Finally, it is worthwhile to point out that there are three inconsistencies in the References section. They are highlighted as follows: The publication year is missing in the article “Hernez-

Broome, B. & Boyce, L.A. *Advancing Executive Coaching: Setting the Course for Successful Leadership Coaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass” (Hernez-Broome & Boyce, 2010). The publication year should be 2010. Furthermore, the reference “Hernez-Broome, B. & Boyce, L.A. (2010). *Advancing Executive Coaching: Setting the Course for Successful Leadership Coaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass” cannot be found in the paper. Lastly, it is better to present it as “Common team goals” to keep the consistency with the header for the theme “Common team goal” in Table 1 on page 4 (Maseko, Van Wyk & Odendaal, 2019).

Methodology

First, it is vital to learn that there are five traditional qualitative research methods i.e., narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study (Savelyeva, 2021b). The writings of Stake (1995) and Yin (2009) can help us to learn more about case study research methodology. Furthermore, Denzin & Lincoln (2000, 2005, 2011, 2018) also highlight the following qualitative approaches: design, participant observation, ethnomethodology, life history, testimonio, historical method, action and applied research, and clinical research (Creswell, 2013, p.10). As we have learned in the Qualitative Research Methods classes (Savelyeva, 2021d), there are two additional novel approaches to qualitative research design (i.e., meta-analysis and qualitative comparative analysis). These novel qualitative designs are developed from the quantitative ones (Martinez-Garcia et al., 2019; Okoli, 2015). It is encouraging to learn that qualitative and quantitative methodologies are not mutually exclusive, and they should complement to each other (Morse, 2018; Savelyeva, 2021c).

Research design

This case study has adopted a constructivist qualitative research method to examine and gather descriptive data on the implementation of “team coaching” in the workplace as a phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Yin, 2009). This research has offered the opportunity to gain an in-depth knowledge and a greater understanding of perspectives, thoughts, and insights of the coaches. The authors are fully aware that the experiences of research participants are subjective, unique, and diverse. The ontological assumption is there are multiple realities, and the epistemological assumption is aiming to study the participants as close as possible. This constructivist worldview has empowered the authors to interpret of their observations based on the interactions and observations of the participants (Creswell, 2013). The authors have first adopted an epistemological subjective view, and then followed by the ontological view to interpret knowledge based on their first-hand experience of the informants (Sieler, 2018). It is

reasonable for the authors in adopting the case study approach since they attempt to get an in-depth understanding of team coaching in the workplace (Savelyeva, 2021a; Yin, 2009). It is clear that the authors are not trying to explore the life of an individual (narrative), understand essence of the experience (phenomenology), describe & interpret a culture sharing group (ethnography), and develop a theory grounded in data from the field (ground theory).

Sampling methods

The authors have applied two non-probability sampling procedures (i.e., purposive and snowballing techniques). Obviously, convenience sampling is not appropriate in studying team coaching in the workplace since it does not allow any control over the representativeness of the participants (Babbie, 2021; Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). It is a good idea to select seven seasoned subject matter experts in team coaching based on purposive sampling with a clear boundary. However, the sample size appears to be too small. Moreover, the authors have not identified the number of participants based on the snowballing technique which can be improved.

The authors have conducted individual semi-structured interviews with four men and three women. It allows more in-depth exploration and dynamics between the interviewer and interviewee (Yin, 2009). Even though the coaching practitioners had at least 5 years of experience in public sector and private industries, it is likely that the seven informants' inputs are not enough for an in-depth understanding of team coaching in the workplace. The findings have reflected the one-sided view of the coaches only. If the executive sponsors, senior leaders, middle management, coachees, front-line staff, and human resources can be interviewed, the authors can get a more well-rounded perspective.

Types of data and data collection methods

The data collection method is effective. There have been two rounds of semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview approach is effective to get an intensive and in-depth knowledge about the participants' worldviews. It positions the researchers as a knowledge-producing participants in the process (Brinkmann, 2018). The first phase is focused on gathering in-depth and detailed information from each respondent and the second phase is designed for clarification and confirmation purpose. Saturation has been determined based on whether new information can be generated from the seven participants. These validation and saturation strategies are good practice in enhancing its creditability, confirmability,

transferability, and dependability (i.e., the four criteria of trustworthiness) as outlined by Girden & Kabacoff (2011). For ethical consideration, the agreement to record the interviews has been acquired prior to the interview which is critical to protect the participants (Silverman, 2010, 2011).

In addition, the interviews have been transcribed to provide clean data for a structural qualitative data analysis which is an exemplary practice. It is good to see not only audio recordings have prepared the authors to have complete information for in-depth analysis in case the written note is incomplete, but also a hand-written journal of personal notes has been made after each interview and the authors have listened back to the audio recordings for quality check (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). The written note is an excellent method adopted by the authors in recording their observations and reflection during and immediately after each interview.

It is positive to see the authors in applying the coding methodologies and thematic analysis as suggested by the scholar Saldana (2016). As the aims of coding are to reflect deeply on the meaning of each qualitative datum, discover patterns in the data, and develop categories and themes (Savelyeva, 2021d), it is vital to understand that “coding generates the bones of the analysis... integration will assemble those bones into a working skeleton” (Charmaz, 2006, p.45).

Results, discussion, and implications

Based on the literature review on coaching since December 2020, most of the academic papers and books are focusing on individual coaching rather than team coaching (Yip et al., 2019; De Haan, Gray & Booneywell, 2019; Watkins, 2020). We have witnessed a tremendous growth of individual coaching in the West since mid-1990s (Lam, 2016; Hawkins, 2011). Most of the coaching activities have been focused on individual via one-on-one connection rather than team-based approach (Hawkins, 2011, 2014). According to Hawkins (2011), he has observed the research in team coaching is behind at least 20 years compared with individual coaching since there is no standard definition, limited research and literature, lack of formal accreditation mechanism, and there is no globally recognized coaching development programs. Starting in early 2010s, Hawkins (2011, p.51) has discovered that there is a “growing interest in team coaching” due to the limitation of individual coaching and leadership development.

Based on the context highlighted above, the authors have done an excellent job in summarizing the findings in Table 1 based on the seven main themes and their subthemes by following the coding and thematic analysis in analyzing the talk and text (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Savelyeva, 2021d). Most importantly, they have made a significant contribution in developing a systematic conceptual framework of critical success factors for the implementation of team coaching in the workplace as reflected in Figure 1 (Maseko, Van Wyk & Odendaal, 2019, p.7). The authors have examined the data provided by the participants closely and developed the themes based on the extant literature. Nevertheless, it is not clear whether the authors have applied the qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo. If not, it may be a good idea to apply this kind of analysis software since it can help us to manage data and ideas, query data, visualize data, and create report from the data (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019). The most important findings of this study are seven critical success factors for team coaching implementation with South African contexts as further described below:

Organizational culture: It enriches our knowledge of the importance of a trust, open, collaborative, organizational readiness, diversity & inclusive culture, and the criticalness of leadership sponsorship with resources allocation. This result is consistent with Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov (2010) findings which showed the importance of culture in shaping organizations' long-term success.

Coaching agreement: This agreement describes the collaboration between the client and the coach with clear goals, methods, and expected outcomes. The team coaching process should be agile and flexible (Edmonson, 2012). Effective conflict management skill is essential for an optimal team coaching result. This finding further supports the criticalness of a mutual agreement to achieve optimal team coaching results.

Team effectiveness: Alignment of organization's strategic goals, process, and collaboration to achieve team coherence. The study confirms that effective team coaching is associated with task and team performance (Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Whitmore, 2011).

Common team goal: Commitment to achieve common team goals and the benefit of continuous feedback loop. This study is consistent with the findings of Hawkins (2014)

and Wilson (2020) who have confirmed the significance of team motivation, development assessment, and coaching feedback.

Engagement: Engagement of key stakeholders especially the employees with a collaborative approach. It highlights the advantages of regular progress and post-intervention evaluations. The results are reinforcing the findings by Bass and Riggio (2006) about the importance of empowerment. It also aligns very well with the findings of Hanley-Browne (2021) and Lawrence (2021) on systemic team coaching.

Competencies of the coach: Core competencies, skills, and qualifications of the team coaches. These observations are consistent with the research results conducted by Hawkins (2011, p.139-168) and Edmonson (2012).

Constraining factors: Highlight the key constraining factors in the implementation of team coaching so that preventive measures can be adopted. It aligns with the earlier observations highlighted by Oshry (2010, cited in Passmore, 2015, p.204-205). This research has also highlighted that negative impact of lack of trust between members in team coaching (Welch, 2021).

In addition, the authors have made a good contribution to the coaching practices by identifying the different themes based on the pre-implementation, during implementation, and post-implementation phases with a systematic project approach (Saldana, 2016). It has provided a well-rounded framework for the coaching practitioners especially in South Africa. The sophisticated “team coaching” framework can enhance the coaching best practices in other cultures as well (Pollak, 2019). As highlighted by the authors that “central to team coaching is the cultivation of learning among team members. Teams provide the platform for knowledge sharing and exchange for which organizational learning becomes the product” (Maseko, Van Wyk & Odendaal, 2019, p.9). This observation is consistent with Senge (2006) who argues that effective organizational learning is one of the key strategic competitive advantages for organizations in 21st century.

Directions for future research

As this research project has focused on team coaching within the workplace and the findings reflect the silo-view of team coaches, the future research can investigate the team coaching beyond the workplace setting so that it can broaden and deepen our coaching knowledge with both cross-functional and multi-stakeholders' perspectives. Besides this, the quantitative investigations can enrich our understanding of team coaching as mixed methods may allow findings to be further elaborated and clarified (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). Finally, I do think an in-depth research of the influence of a leader as coach on individual, team, and organizational performance holistically is very beneficial for both academic and practitioner circles.

III. Research Proposal

Introduction

The increasing interest in the influences of transformational leader as a coach has heightened the need for a more comprehensive research. Little is known on the influences of transformational leader as a coach on organizational performance (OP). Although considerable research has been devoted to the study of the impacts of transformational leadership on OP, less attention has been paid to learning the influences of transformational leader as a coach on OP in the multinational technology industry. The aim of this in-depth exploratory case study is to investigate the influences of transformational leader as a coach on OP in Oracle as the unit of analysis (Yin, 2009, p.29). This study tries to examine “how and why” the transformational leader can impact the organizational performance via coaching in Asia (Yin, 2009, p.8).

Leadership is an evolving topic in both East (Hofstede, 1993; Goldstein, 2019; Srivastava, 2017) and West (Aristotle & Rackham, 1934) since Confucius and Aristotle’s times. Delong and Hill (2012) have explained why leadership matters. Rost (1991) has also explored the most effective leadership style based on numerous leadership theories if it can be tested scientifically. Ibarra and Scoular (2019) have examined the key characteristics and personality traits of a good leader as coach. Transformational leadership has been extensively studied in recent years (Bass & Bass, 2009) yet the interrelationship among transformational leadership, coaching, and OP is still not clear (Kidwell, 2005; Titus & Hoole, 2021).

On leadership, it is surprising that there is no mention of ‘leader’ and ‘mentoring’ in Oracle FY2020 Annual Report (Oracle, 2020). Yet, ‘leaders’ appear nine times and ‘mentoring’ once in Oracle FY2021 Annual Report (Oracle, 2021). The senior leadership teams also recognize the importance in selecting the effective leaders to serve as role models for an inclusive workforce in the organization. These are the leaders who listen, and who embrace diversity and inclusion culture (Oracle, 2021).

In short, the research topic is “Influences of Transformational Leader as a coach on Organizational Performance in a technology firm.”

Theoretical Background

Many studies have focused on either transformational leadership and OP and/or the impacts of transformational leadership as a coach on team effectiveness (Harvard Business Review, 2005; Hurduzeu, 2015). However, there is scant attention on the influences of transformational leadership as a coach on OP in the multinational technology industry. It is the first attempt to explore and examine the impacts of the transformational leader as a coach on OP in Oracle. The internal coaching pod has been launched in May 2021 across Asia to promote the coaching practice. As a lifelong student of leadership and a certified coach practitioner, I am ready to take a rigorous and trustworthy qualitative research approach in advancing our knowledge in this under-researched area (Guba, 1981, 1985; Silverman, 2013).

Literature Review

Leadership

There is no consensus on the most effective leadership model so far. As reflected in Table 1 on some key leadership styles, many leadership theories have emerged in the academia since the invention of the Great Man Theory in 1841 (Carlyle, 1841). Rost (1991) finds out that there are more than 200 different definitions of leadership based on the written materials between 1900 to 1990. The appearance of transformational leadership in 1978 (Burns, 2003, 2010) is a key milestone in the advancement of leadership development. The transformational leadership is one of the most popular researched theories since 1990 (Kidwell, 2005). Burns has stated the transformational leadership happens when people interact and engage with others “in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to a higher level of motivation and morality” (Burns, 2010, p.20).

For transformational leadership, there are four essential elements. They are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The transformational leaders always strive to grow the followers to their highest potential (Ivey Business School, 2012) with the ultimate goals in driving high performance beyond the expectations. Bass (1999) highlights the question on why transformational leadership is more effective than transactional leadership in different sectors (e.g., business, and educational) is not yet fully researched. Also, there is a major gap in the Literature on transformational leadership that the scholars and researchers can further investigate.

However, it is important to recognize there are criticisms against the transformational leadership as it contains several weaknesses (Northouse, 2021). It is not a perfect leadership model. For example, it lacks a clear conceptual framework and a gap between the theory and how it is measured (van Knippenberg and Sitkin, 2003). Tracey and Hinkin (1998) also find that the idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration are not clearly defined. This study will review and examine whether their criticisms are justifiable and credible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 1986; Morse, 2018).

Organizational Performance

It is crucial to realize that the effectiveness of transformational leadership can be examined not only at the individual and team level, but also be studied at the organizational level on how the transformational leaders lead the organization (Anderson & Adams, 2016, 2019). Zaleznik (2004) has suggested that we can analyze it at the individual level between employee and manager, at the group level between managers and their team, and then at the organizational level. The goals are to enhance the organizational capabilities and competencies to achieve stakeholders' benefits and long-term sustainability of the firm (Coffey, 2010).

The study will also explore the extant literature on OP. Many scholars are very interested on both leadership and OP (Nunes, 2011; Titus & Hoole, 2021). Based on the latest literature review on performance measurements, the Balanced Scorecard provides an integrative perspective in measuring the OP in four critical areas (i.e., employees, customers, internal business processes, and financial) (Dahou & Hacini, 2018; Wati & Triwiyono, 2018). There are many successful cases in deploying the Balanced Scorecard that leads to a more successful execution of a business strategy (Zorek, 2020). However, we should note that there is criticism of Balanced Scorecard as an organizational performance measurement system (Gill, 2019).

The link between transformational leadership and organizational performance

Based on the meta-analysis of 39 studies in the transformational leadership literature, Lowe, Kroeck, and Sivasubramaniam (1996) have discovered that the leader who exhibits transformational style are more effective leaders with better work results compared with those who demonstrate only transactional leadership. It is further validated by the Dumdum, Lowe, and Avolio (2002) that the transformational leadership style has been tested to correlate positively with performance outcome measures. However, there is still a gap in the literature as there is a lack of studies on transformational leadership and OP with a qualitative research

approach particularly in the technology industry. This research paper will carry the analytical lens with interpretive framework to understanding the worldviews of the participants with a cross-cultural perspective in Asia (Hodgetts, 1993a, 1993b).

Coaching

It is vital to recognize the latest literatures in coaching. Jackson (2004, cited in Bachkirova & Borrington, 2019, p.338) has argued that even though the literature on coaching practice is expanding and there are many models of coaching, some of these models are produced by the practitioners which are seldom substantiated by empirical evidence. Bachkirova and Borrington (2019) have also found that the organizational coaching continues to lag theoretically.

The coaching industry was started by W. Timothy Gallwey back in 1974 (W. Timothy Gallwey, 2001, 2015). As highlighted by Dave Ulrich, the leaders need to know the outcomes of coaching, the requirements of the one being coached, and the required skills of an effective coach (Goldsmith, Lyons & McArthur, 2012, p.xix). The coaching process can release the creativity, innovation, productivity, motivation, job fulfillment of the coachees, and enhance the organizational competitiveness (Edmonton, 2012). Based on the study conducted by Peesker et al. (2019) with 36 sales professionals in a global IT company, both sales leaders and salespeople believe that sales leader behaviors as a coach impact sales performance tremendously. However, there are no evidence to show the direct linkage between employee coaching (i.e., manager coaching individual subordinates or team) and OP. Obviously, the coaching research is still evolving at a nascent stage (Hui & Chan, 2016; Otter, 2017; Terblanche & Heyns, 2020).

In summary, I aim to explore whether effective coaching can lead to OP with qualitative research approach (Hoyt & Blascovich, 2003; Lloyd, 2005). Based on the in-house coaching platform launched by Oracle since May 2021, it provides a great platform for the researcher to examine the influences of transformational leader as a coach on OP. There is a research gap on why and how transformational leader as a coach can be more effective in achieving OP in Oracle with a cross-functional perspective. It is a worthwhile study so that this research can enrich our theoretical and practical knowledge in this understudied area.

Methodology

Research Questions

These are four key research questions in this in-depth exploratory case study.

- How can the transformational leader lead effectively as a coach in Oracle?
- Why the transformational leader as a coach can impact the organizational performance?
- What are the major similarities and differences of transformational leader as a coach in Oracle compared with another technology firm?
- How can we better equip the transformational leader to lead effectively as a coach cross-culturally?

Qualitative Research Method

This research will apply a social constructivism method and conduct based on the exploratory case-study approach (Berg, 2009; Gomm, Hammersley & Foster, 2000; Wiebe, Durepos & Mills, 2010). Based on the ontological and epistemological assumptions that the experience of participants is unique, and they perceive reality differently, this social constructionism approach prompts the researcher to study the social phenomena in detail (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). This case study is the preferred method. There are three key reasons: how and why questions are being raised, the researcher has tiny control over events, and the study concentrates on a “contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context” (Yin, 2009, p.2). It aligns very well with the recommended approach suggested by Denzin and Lincoln (2000, 2005, 2011 & 2018). The case study approach empowers the researcher to study “current, real-life cases that are in progress so that they can gather accurate information not lost by time” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.97) and learn about the paradigms (i.e., worldviews) and multiple realities of the participants. As outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018, p.104-106) on the contrasting foundational considerations of five qualitative approaches (i.e., narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, case study), the case study approach is the most appropriate method as it will enrich our knowledge of individual, team, organizational, and related phenomena through their social interactions (Yin, 2009).

Research Design

This research will be conducted based on the research onion approach outlined by Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019). As highlighted by Creswell (2007, p.5), a good research design is

critical as it covers the “entire process of research from conceptualizing a problem to writing research questions, and on to data collection, analysis, interpretation, and report writing.” On leadership, I will focus on the impacts of transformational leader as a coach on OP. On coaching, I will concentrate on the following topics (Hui, Law & Lau, 2020): adaptive performance (LePine, 2003), emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995), creativity (Zhou & George, 2001), innovation, and solution focused. On OP, I will emphasize on the following four dimensions: employee engagement, internal business alignment, customer satisfaction, and financial results (Kaplan & Norton, 1992, 1996). Moreover, the age, gender, tenure, and education level of the informants will be considered in this research as these factors do impact the worldviews of the participants. Finally, I will also explore the interrelationship between transformational leader as a coach and OP in Oracle.

Data Quality Procedures

As explained succinctly by Professor Savelyeva (2021a), “qualitative research is a mindset, and here we are making it grow.” The purposeful sampling is better than the snowball or random sampling based on the specific research topic (Creswell, 2013, p. 154-157). As I am not trying to generalize the transformational leadership and the coaching phenomena, it is logical to select the qualitative sampling approach (DeCarlo, 2018). The researcher aims to invite the participants across Asia so that we can have an in-depth, diverse, and broader cross-cultural perspective based on the first-hand experiences of the informants.

This case study will focus on the interactions between transformational leaders as coaches with their coachees, and their impacts on the OP (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019, p.54). The triangulation approach by using multiple methods and sources of data during the execution of this study can enhance the trustworthiness of this research project and ensure we can achieve rigorousness during the qualitative inquiry processes (Flick, 1992; Morse, 2015, 2018). The objective is to improve confidence in the findings and gain a better understanding of the multiple realities of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Collection

The case study will be conducted over 15 months. I plan to apply an inductive approach (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019; Savelyeva, 2021b). The objective is to explore the research questions through collecting appropriate and adequate data (Morse, 2018; Savelyeva,

2021a). The researcher will collect different kinds of data via multiple methods (i.e., interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual materials) for “triangulation purpose” (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p.446; Given, 2008).

The researcher will cross-check the findings from multiple sources of data (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). The objective is to improve confidence in findings and gain a better understanding of the worldviews of the participants.

Step 1. One-on-one interview (6 months): Case study of Oracle focusing on Asia within a bounded system (Stake, 1995, 2005, 2010, 2013) and well-defined edges (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Thomas, 2016). There are two phases of semi-structured interviews to getting in-depth responses based on the key research questions. It can “make better use of the knowledge-producing potentials of dialogues... and the interviewer has a greater chance of becoming visible as a knowledge-producing participant in the process itself” (Brinkmann, 2018). Saturation will be determined when no new insight is generated from the participants. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed to provide raw data for analysis purpose (Yin, 2009). The interview protocol (refer to Appendix A), field notes, journal, and audio recordings can help me to capture complete information for coding and thematic analysis. The researcher is cautious that the interview questions need to be framed properly to avoid the social desirability bias (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019).

As there are forty-four volunteers to serve as the in-house coaches in Oracle across Asia, the researcher plans to invite ten of them for their consensus in participating in this study. Furthermore, the researcher will invite ten internal coachees, two external coaching experts, and two external experienced human resources executives to participate in one-on-one interview.

Step 2. Focus group (3 months): Two sessions with two focus groups with 6 participants each (one focus group from another technology firm, the other from Oracle). Kamberelis, Dimitriadis and Welker (2018) suggest focus group is an assortment of discursive activities. The focus groups’ questions will explore the experiences and perceptions of the participants on transformational leadership, coaching, and OP.

Step 3. Observations, documents, and reports (6 months): The researcher (as an instrument) is gathering the subjective evidence from the leaders, coaches, and the coachees by observing their expressions and behaviors directly with an open-mind and unbiased view (Savelyeva, 2021a, p.10). I also plan to gather the following sources of evidence: “documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts” (Yin, 2009, p.101) as well as the public available information such as annual reports and the latest internal training materials on coaching (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The collected data must be stored safely and protected from damage (Yin, 2009, p.149).

For the one-on-one interview and the focus groups, I will focus on four major dimensions of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Avolio, 1995). In addition, there are additional interview questions in understanding the experiences and paradigms of the transformational leaders as coaches, coachees, HR executives, and coaching experts on OP and coaching as a management practice.

Data Analysis

I plan to obtain the insights through qualitative data coding and thematic analysis. It is critical to understand the coding is highly interpretive (Morse, 2018). The objective of the data analysis spiral is to create a point of view and report the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Gibbs & Flick, 2018). In addition, the thematic analysis will be conducted to discover the patterns of meaning in a dataset; help to understand people’s experiences and views (Saldana, 2016; Savelyeva, 2021d, p.112). The themes will be further analyzed across cases by using qualitative data analysis software (e.g., NVivo and artificial intelligence software) for similarities and differences among the cases (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and conclude with the “patterns” or “explanations” (Yin, 2009). I will apply the inter-rater reliability check and member checking as the validation strategies, and saturation validation, peer review, and audit trails as the verification strategies to enhance the rigorousness and trustworthiness of this study (Morse, 2018). Nevertheless, it is essential to note that trustworthiness is “never absolute proof, but by persuasion, one is compelled to accept the findings” (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, cited in Morse, 2018, p.801).

Ethical Consideration

The researcher considers the ethical issues, anonymity, and confidentiality thoroughly, and is committed to handle them cautiously in this project. It is essential that the participants are protected from any harm based on their participation in this study, and the design of this study is not based on any deception (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The participation is on a voluntary basis and the participants can discontinue at any time.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

For theoretical implication, this study will share new light on why the transformational leadership as a coach is more effective than other leadership theories. This research can add new knowledge to our understanding of transformational leader as coaches and their impacts on OP via the worldviews of the participants. There are limited studies on how coaching impacts the OP with a well-rounded theoretical framework. Also, most of the existing studies are focused on individual, group, and team levels. This study will enrich our knowledge on transformational leadership, coaching, and OP.

From the practical perspective, this empirical exploratory case study of Oracle and other technology firm will enrich our understanding of the impact of transformational leadership on the OP via coaching with an integrative perspective. Since coaching is still a very young profession, the availability of in-depth research papers on coaching in technology industry with a cross-cultural perspective is scarce. This study will get both an inside-out and outside-in views on the influence of transformational leadership and the best coaching practices in creating higher organizational performance. It will enrich our understanding of the cultural impacts in business coaching.

Contributions

The researcher will provide general descriptions of the research findings. The report will draw inferences from qualitative (specific details) in this project (Mertens, 2007). This study will not only increase our understanding of the influences of transformational leader as a coach in a technology firm, but also it will deepen our knowledge whether the transformational leader as a coach can drive higher OP by improving the talents with innovation, creativity, adaptability, proactivity, growth mindset, and soft skills.

We will get a more holistic perspective on the transformational leadership as coaches' styles, traits, skills, behaviours, and their impacts in the technology industry. Not only it will broaden our insight on the best practices to be an effective transformational leader as a coach, but also it will create new insights on how to be effective coach in a diverse multi-cultural workforce in Asia (Lawrence & Moore, 2019). This study helps us to be better prepared in coping with the challenges as a transformational leader-coach in 21st century.

Finally, this research aims to generate empirical-based findings and makes theoretical and practical contributions that can advance our understanding of coaching as a management practice in both academic and practitioner circles.

Limitations

Time, budget, and manpower resources are the key constraints to make this case study to be more comprehensive. As most of the participants of this study will be invited from Oracle, the findings may not be generalized to other industries (Morse, 2018, p.800). Since we will apply the qualitative research method only, it may limit our view based on the personal experience and subjective worldview of the participants. If we can include the quantitative research methodology in this study, it will enhance the objectivity, validity and reliability as the sample size can be enlarged significantly (Savelyeva, 2021d, p.124). This mixed research approach can enhance the overall trustworthiness of this study (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Webb, 1966).

Summary

Leadership is a complex topic. Since leadership is an art, each leader needs to learn to be a better one diligently. With a growth mindset, the transformational leader can create high performing teams via coaching and enhance the organizational performance. Most importantly, the transformational leaders first need to take good care of their mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical health as it is a challenging task to lead effectively in this complex world. If the transformational leaders can navigate the challenges together with the followers effectively, it is foreseeable the workplaces can be full of happiness, trust, collaboration, resilience, and growth mindset (Boyatzis, Smith & Beveridge, 2013).

In summary, the exceptional transformational leaders by serving as human-centred coaches (Greenleaf, 1985) can make a positive difference in any organization. The key success factors

are that they need to embrace a cross-cultural, diversity & inclusion (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006), passion, and love (Seligman, 2017). I am very optimistic about the future by serving as a leader-coach.

Appendix

Table 1. Highlight of key relevant leadership theories (Adapted from Kelly, 2018)

Leadership Theory	Year	Major Publications
Great Man Theory	1841	On heroes, hero-worship, and the heroic history (Carlyle, 2017)
Situational Leadership	1969	Management of Organizational Behavior (Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 2012; Hersey, Blanchard, & Natemeyer, 1979)
Transactional Leadership	1975	Transactional based (Dansereau, Graen & Haga, 1975)
Servant Leadership	1977	Servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1985)
Transformational Leadership	1978	Leadership and performance beyond expectations (Bass, 1985a, 1985b), Leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1995; Burns, 2010)
Cross-cultural Leadership	2008	Cross-cultural leadership (Grisham & Walker, 2008)
Coaching Leadership	2019	The leader as coach (Ibarra & Scoular, 2019)

Interview Protocol

Basic information: Record the name of interviewer, interviewee, time/date/month/year, and venue of the interview

Description of project: This research is to study the influences of transformational leadership on organizational performance via coaching in a public-listed ICT organization. I plan to interview ten internal coaches, ten internal coachees, two coaching experts, and two human resources executives. The project aims to get a better understanding on how the transformational leadership impacts the organizational performance through coaching as a management practice in a technology firm.

Sample Interview Questions (Adapted from Wiginton, 2018):

1. What motivated you to join the coaching program?
2. How do you make personal improvement (communication, conflict resolution, leadership, etc.) as a direct result of coaching?
3. How do you find the coaching session can enhance the organization performance (both financial and non-financially)?

Sample Interview Questions on Transformational Leadership for the coachees (Q.4 - Q.7)
(Adapted from Bertrand, 2018):

4. Based on the past 40 years of research, transformational leaders act in a way to serve as roles models for their followers. How has your coach helped you to be a high performer?
5. One of the key strengths of transformational leaders is their motivational and inspirational skills. How has coaching helped you to be more motivated and inspirational?
6. Transformational leaders stimulate their followers' efforts to be more creative and innovative in reframing problem and finding solutions. What new knowledge and insights did you learn because of the coaching session(s)?
7. The last attribute of transformational leaders is individualized consideration. In what ways did coaching support your needs for achievement and growth?

Concluding question

8. How do you think the transformational leader act as a coach can enhance the organizational performance?

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