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EMPLOYEES' PERSPECTIVE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF COACHING AND ITS IMPACT ON EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE IN SAUDI ARABIA

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ABSTRACT

In an evolving and rapid world, private and public sector businesses in Saudi Arabia are growing and are in need of employees who can continuously achieve organizational goals by adapting to new required skills as well as enhancing their talents and capabilities and maintaining a sense of motivation, satisfaction, and encouragement on the job. Guaranteed high employee performance can be achieved by implementing different coaching methods, either by hiring external coaches or by training existing managers within the organization to adapt certain coaching skills and practices then applying them to manage and guide their subordinates. This study analysed the employees' perspective on the importance of coaching in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In addition, the intensity of coaching received by employees that are from various job positions and levels is measured, as well as analysed the impact on employees' performance. For this purpose, an online questionnaire has been created and distributed to 100 employees who work in different organizations around the Kingdom. The findings concluded that there are a few factors that may affect the perception of individuals on how coaching improves performance. Also, the final results of the questionnaire showed that there is a positive relationship between coaching and employees' performance. Therefore, organizations and specifically human resource (HR) professionals should consider coaching practices in order to reach organizational goals in a more effective and leading way.

INTRODUCTION

As the workplace has become increasingly competitive and fast moving, the impression of traditional performance management has turned 180 degrees [1], professionally and academically, coaching is relatively a new field and it has a

wide range of definitions. Fundamentally coaching is defined as helping people in fulfilling their potential by allowing them to recognize the things that hold them back and by helping them find their ways around them [2]. On the other hand, coaching is also defined as the focused application of skills that deliver performance improvement to the individuals work in an organization, through strong support and challenge [3].

Many organizations who integrate coaching into their practices take it as a competitive advantage against their rivals, since it is being looked at as an important business competency amongst organizations and human resource professionals. Examining the influence of coaching on subordinate performance has become a common practice [4]. Many managers believe that coaching is becoming the key to organizational success in our century, and it will be used for decades to come [2].

Schreyögg and Schmidt-Lellek [5] stated that the organization itself plays a huge role on coaching, creating a culture that enables coaching practices to be integrated into the company and to guarantee delivering coaching effectively is essential. If an organization wishes to maximize the benefits of coaching, it should focus on increasing its scope and availability to create a coaching culture that permeates throughout their workforce [6].

In order for it to be implemented correctly, coaching must be supported at the very top of the organization, but not limited to senior executives [6]. Moreover, organizations should not restrict its benefits to only a certain level of employees, because coaching is certainly beneficial for all levels of employees within and organization and all of them can benefit from it in a certain way. For coaching to be delivered consistently and effectively at all levels within the company, full focus needs to be on developing the company's internal coaching capability.

Noonan, Kelly and Pelham [7] emphasized on the importance of establishing suitable and clear key performance indicators to measure the true value of coaching. Those organizations investing most in coaching are also the most focused on return on investment. A big percentage of companies do not have a clear picture of the key performance indicators involved. Gormley and van Nieuwerburgh [8] justified that to make the process of demonstrating the value of coaching to senior management easier, an organization should create robust coaching-related metrics and link them to organizational objectives and performance. This way, senior management will understand the value of it and accept the idea by working towards adopting coaching into the company. Hence, it will also increase the likelihood that more resources will be devoted to this essential management skill.

Internationally, organizations have acknowledged the importance and effectiveness of using this method and have adopted it in various ways. Industries here in Saudi Arabia are remarkably growing day by day and fulfilling organizational goals will always be a challenge for employees, that is why awareness on coaching and international HR practices are important to adopt, because it will help organizations reach their highest achievements.

METHODOLOGY

The research design specified the methods for data collection and data analysis that determines the source of data. This research is a descriptive study that is designed to discuss the methodology that was used to verify the findings of this particular study.

Since the workforce is made of males and females, this research contained answers of both samples in order to make the findings of the survey is accurate and reach a correct conclusion.

The sample population of this research consisted of employees from public and private companies in Saudi Arabia. This specific sample population was chosen in order to meet this research's goals and objectives, and offer a more generalized and wider scale of results. The sample consisted of 100 employees that are of three different job levels (entry level, manager level and executive level).

In order to reach 100 employees with respect to them being from both private and public sectors and also being male and female, an online survey is used to collect the data since online surveys are known to be more efficient in the way of cost and time. The survey consisted of multiple-choice statements.

The statements were very clear and simple which made it easier and convenient for the participants to answer quickly. Since the concept of coaching is still fairly new in the country, many are confused the term 'coaching' with 'mentoring', and many referred to these words as being the same concept. For that reason, both terms are included in the survey to avoid any confusion and to achieve the objective of the study. To guarantee the understanding of the participants, a brief definition of the terms is provided at the beginning of the survey. Also, in order to ensure that the participants are relevant to the sample population, the questionnaire is designed to start with statement regarding if the participants have ever been coached/mentored throughout their career, and only if their response was "yes" then they would automatically be taken to the first section of the questionnaire. If their response was a "no" then the participant would automatically be moved to the third section of the survey, which is the demographic.

The first section of the questionnaire consisted of 9 multiple choice statements on the intensity of coaching received by the employee. Then the second section consisted of 8 multiple choice statements which examined coaching's effect on employee's performance. Both sections' answers were given in the form of a drop-down box which provide the participants the opportunity to answer based on a specific scale started with (1) strongly agree and ended with (5) strongly disagree.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile

The pie chart in Figure 1 presented the gender of the participants involved I this study. As shown in the pie chart, 73% of the respondents are male whereas the remaining 27% are female. However, this result is not out of the

ordinary as the majority of the market here in Saudi Arabia is dominated by males.

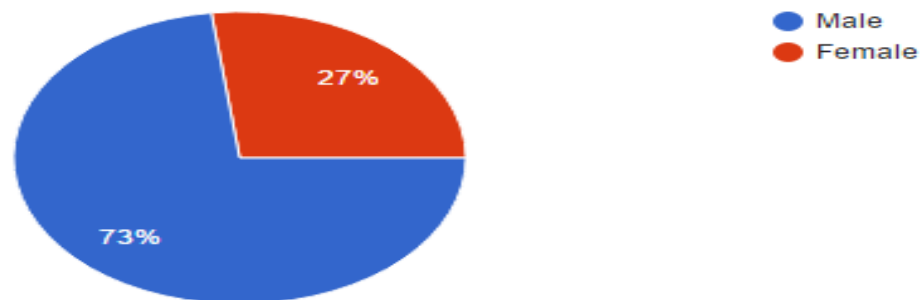


Figure 1. Gender of the participants

Based on the results for the age demographic as depicted in Figure 2, a variety of age groups are shown to have participated in this research. The results consisted of 42% of employees that are in between the age of 20 to 30, 31% who are between 31 to 40, followed by 17% who are 41 to 50 years old and 10% who are above 50 years old.

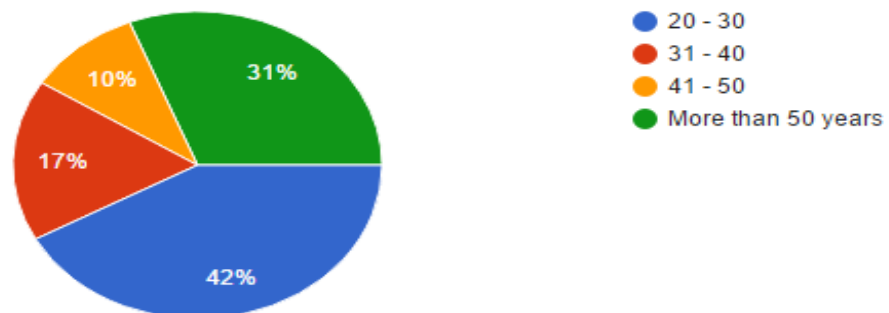


Figure 2. Age of the participants

The data on the participants' education level is charted as shown in Figure 3. Majority of them (73%) are bachelor's degree holders. 22% of the participants completed their Master's degree while only 1% of them completed PhD level and 4% are from other levels.

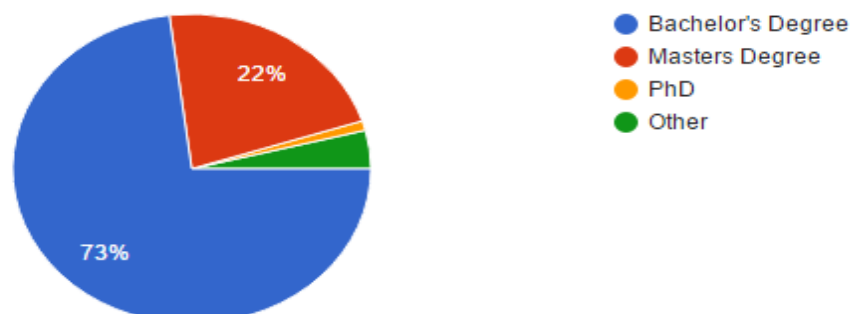


Figure 3. Education level of the participants

The results on the participants' years of working experience (refer Figure 4) revealed that most of the respondents have more than 10 years of working experience. Followed by 29% of the respondents who may have just completed their studies and started working, hence have less than 5 years of experience. 18% of them had 5 – 10 years of working experience.

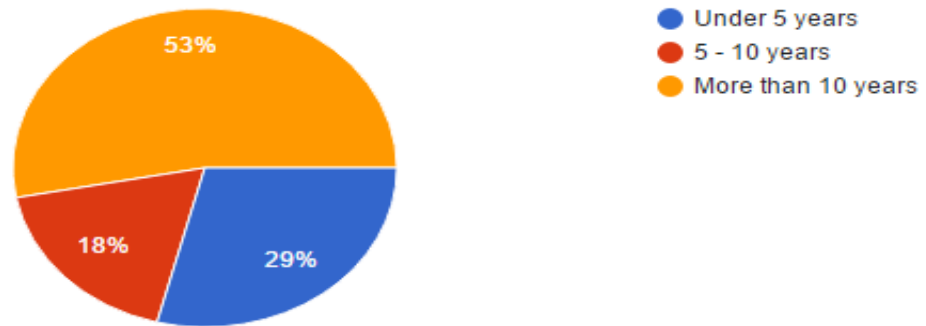


Figure 4. Participants' years of working experience

As shown in Figure 5, the data on the participants' job position indicated that majority of them have managerial level job positions. Entry level positions and executive level positions are equal in percentage (26%). a small group which covered 4% of the stated they come from other job categories. These results relatively match with the education level of the participants.

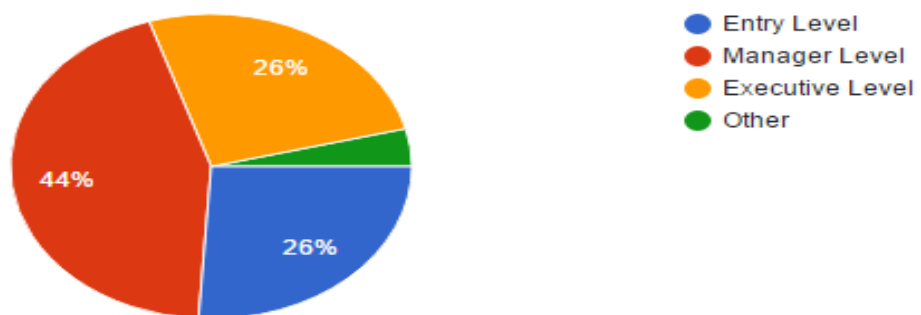


Figure 5. Participants' job position

Based on the organization which the participants worked for (refer Figure 6), the statistics indicated that 61% of the respondents currently work in the private sector. While 33% are from the public sector, followed by only 6% who are from other sectors.

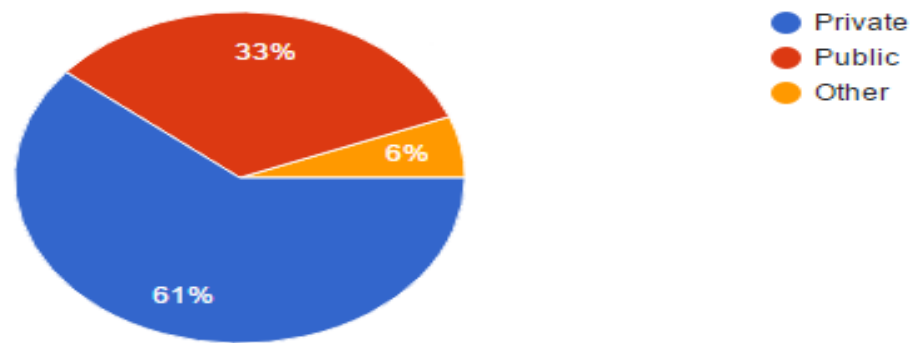


Figure 6. Participants' current organization

Intensity of coaching/mentoring received by the employee

Table 1 tabulated the survey outcome on the intensity of coaching/mentoring received by the employee/participants. Aforementioned, 9 statements are listed in this section.

For the first statement, 38.6% of the employees noted that they agreed with this statement and 30.7% strongly agreed. 20% of the employees are not sure if the statement reflected on their coach/mentors or not. These results are followed by 6.7% who disagreed with the statement and 4% strongly disagreed. These results helped to conclude that majority of the respondents received great interest from their coach/mentor regarding their careers.

'My coach/mentor has placed me in important assignments' statement had 43 participants agreeing with this statement and 22 of them strongly agreed. Those respondents who neither agree nor disagree are equal to those who disagreed with the statement. Respondents who strongly disagreed are covered by a very small percentage of 2.7%.

Offering support and guidance is a very important aspect of coaching and it will benefit the employee in many ways. The data for the third statement indicated that 56.0% of employees strongly agreed with the statement, 29.3% agreed that their coach offered them particularly support, followed by 10.7% who are not sure about the statement, and finally small percentages of 2.7% and 1.3% of those who disagreed and strongly disagreed.

For the fourth statement, the group that neither agreed nor disagreed made up the highest percentage at 40% for this statement. The second highest group is those who agreed with this statement at 36%. 20% strongly agreed and lastly, 4% strongly disagreed.

As for the fifth statement, it was revealed that majority (23 out of 75) of employees agreed that they tend to share and open up to their coaches regarding their personal problems. This showed a positive relationship between coach and employee. Although 14.7% strongly agreed, 9.3% still strongly disagreed. The percentages of those who neither agreed nor disagreed are fairly close to the percentage of those who disagreed.

The sixth statement, 'my coach/mentor helps me coordinate my professional goals' is considered one of the most important ways to determine whether or not the coach is fulfilling the major aspects of coaching. Despite 12 participants reacted negatively towards this statement, the results are still considered very positive as 49.3% agreed and 21.3% strongly agreed with this statement.

Having the ability to keep the employees motivated is a necessity in every organization since it has a high impact on employees' performance and on retaining the employees as well. 44% agreed that their coaches have a sense of motivation and encouragement towards their employees. 29.3% strongly agreed followed by 18.7% who are not sure if they do or not. Those who disagreed and strongly disagreed made up the smallest percentages of this result for the seventh statement.

The statement 'I exchange confidences with my coach/mentor' is related to the relationship between the coach and employee. 57.3% agreed that they share confidences and trust their coaches with these matters. Those who strongly agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed are 19, 12 and 1 respondents respectively.

When a coach shows his/her devotion to his/her employees and puts effort into assisting them, this will automatically increase their coachee's job performance. 46.7% agreed, 18.7% strongly agreed, 25.3% are not sure if it is applicable to their coaches, 6.7% disagreed and 2.7% strongly disagreed with this last statement.

Table 1. Survey results for 'intensity of coaching/mentoring received by the employee' section

Statement	Responses				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My coach/mentor takes a personal interest in my career	23(30.7%)	29(38.6%)	15(20.0%)	5(6.7%)	3(4%)
My coach/mentor has placed me in important assignments	22(29.3%)	43(57.3%)	4(5.35%)	4(5.35%)	2(2.7%)
My coach/mentor gives me special guidance on the job	42(56.0%)	22(29.3%)	8(10.7%)	2(2.7%)	1(1.3%)

My coach/mentor advised me about promotional opportunities	15(20.0%)	27(36.0%)	30(40.0%)	0(0.0%)	3(4.0%)
I share personal problems with my coach/mentor	11(14.7%)	23(30.7%)	16(21.3%)	18(24.0%)	7(9.3%)
My coach/mentor helps me coordinate my professional goals	16(21.3%)	37(49.3%)	10(13.3%)	11(14.7%)	1(1.4%)
I admire my coach/mentor's ability to motivate others	22(29.3%)	33(44.0%)	14(18.7%)	4(5.3%)	2(2.7%)
I exchange confidences with my coach/mentor	19(25.3%)	43(57.3%)	0(0.0%)	12(16.0%)	1(1.4%)
My coach/mentor has devoted special time and consideration to my career	14(18.7%)	35(46.7%)	19(25.3%)	5(6.7%)	2(2.7%)

Impact of coaching/mentoring on employee performance

The survey result on the impact of coaching/mentoring on the employee performance is presented in Table 2.

Based on the first statement 'I sufficiently complete duties that I am assigned to', majority of the respondents reacted positively to this statement with 48% strongly agreed while 44% agreed. Those who disagreed are only 1 person and 5 people chose 'sometimes' on this statement.

For the second statement, it was found that 38 respondents strongly agreed and 31 respondents agreed that coaching had motivated them to be able to fulfil the responsibilities specified in their job description. Although no respondents strongly disagreed, 5 of them chose sometimes whereas 1 person disagreed.

As stated in the third statement ‘I perform the tasks that are expected from me’, a total of 96.0% had given positive responses with 46.7% strongly agreeing and 49.3% agreeing. This indicated that the employees are driven to perform their respective tasks when they are coached. Nonetheless, this did not guarantee that all the employees meet the formal performance requirements of their job as in the fourth statement. This is evident with only 40.0% strongly agreed with this statement while 46.7% just agreed. The number of those sometimes achieved these requirements are 9 respondents and 1 person strongly disagreed.

Statement number five indicated that most of the participants (44.0%) agreed that after being coached, they engaged in activities that will directly affect their performance evaluation. Those who strongly agreed, sometimes and strongly disagreed are 27, 12 and 3 people respectively.

Besides, those who have being mentored also appeared to be more helpful towards their colleagues with 30.7% strongly agreed and 37.3% agreed that they helped their colleagues who are absent. However, there a still a small group of respondents (19 people) who only helped occasionally.

Coaching also had motivated the employees to attend work frequently with 25 people strongly agreed and agreed that their attendance is above than normal. 22.7% of the respondents said only sometimes they attended work above the normal. On the other hand, 8 of the participants’ attendance are not affected.

Those employees who had/ are being mentored, also noticed that improvement in themselves since 41.3% of them strongly agreed that they received positive feedback from their peers and manager. Similarly, 29.3% agreed to receive the same response.

Table 2. Survey result on the impact of coaching/mentoring on the employee performance

Statement	Responses				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Sometimes	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I sufficiently complete duties that I am assigned to	36 (48.0%)	33(44.0%)	5(6.7%)	1(1.3%)	0(0.0%)
I fulfil the responsibilities specified in my job description	38(50.7%)	31(41.3%)	5(6.7%)	1(1.3%)	0(0.0%)
I perform the tasks that are expected from me	35(46.7%)	37(49.3%)	2(2.7%)	1(1.3%)	0(0.0%)
I meet formal performance	30(40.0%)	35(46.7%)	9(12.0%)	0(0.0%)	1(1.3%)

requirements of my job					
I engage in activities that will directly affect my performance evaluation	27(36.0%)	33(44.0%)	12(16%)	0(0.0%)	3(4.0%)
I help my colleagues who have been absent	23(30.7%)	28(37.3%)	19(25.3%)	5(6.7%)	0(0.0%)
My attendance at work is above than normal	25(33.3%)	25(33.3%)	17(22.7%)	7(9.3%)	1(1.3%)
I have noticed more positive feedback from my peers and manager	31(41.3%)	26(29.3%)	18(24.0%)	4(5.3%)	0(0.0%)

Overall Discussion

In terms of demographic results, 75.0% of the participants have been coached and majority of them were employed in private companies. They were also between the ages of twenty to thirty years old and from both entry and manager job levels with either less than five years of experience or more than 10 years of experience.

Based on the participants' evaluation on their coaches, it was proven that the coaching/ mentoring sessions were well received by the participants since most of them gave positive feedback on the survey statements. Nevertheless, the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that their coaches provided advises on promotional opportunities. This is something need to be improved as study by Arifeen [9] revealed that there is an association between slow career advancement and lack of mentor. In addition, quite a number or respondents were not comfortable to share their problems with their coach. This is in accordance with Hastings and Kane [10] who stated that coach does not provide the solutions nor does give advice or counsels the coachee. However, a coach's task is to try promoting what is already within the coachee by asking the right questions and by using active listening and nudging the coachee to keep focus in the place they have deemed important.

The third section scrutinized the impact of coaching. Theeboom, Beersma and van Vianen [11] reported that there are several measures can be used to determine the effectiveness of coaching which included job satisfaction, job performance, self-awareness, self-efficacy, positive affect, depression, anxiety, resilience, hope, autonomy and goal attainment. In this study, it is revealed that overall coaching has improved the participants' job performance. The

employees are more productive and appeared to be goals driven. This is in line with Jones, Woods and Guillaume [12] findings which proved that coaching had positive effects on organizational outcomes overall and on specific forms of outcome criteria (skill-based, affective and individual-level results). Furthermore, coaching appeared to be effective irrespective of the format of the coaching and the longevity of the coaching intervention (including number of sessions). Askhatova et al. [13] mentioned that the most important factor in the effectiveness of the whole development process is the level of training and professionalism of a coach.

The results obtained by Kumari [14] also indicated that some of the organizational benefits of coaching derived from work-life balance are higher levels of productivity and lower rates of absenteeism. This justified that those employees who are coached on work-life balance actually reduced absenteeism and enhanced their performances.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that coaching has helped to enhance most of the employees' job performance. The performance indicators used in this study were (absenteeism, task completeness, feedbacks from colleagues and peers, and work engagement). The employees are able to achieve this performance due to good coaches or mentors given to the employee. Despite not being able to completely share their problems, employees are still able to establish a good relationship with their coaches.

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