

Chapter 7

THE IMPACT OF COACHING ON LEBANESE BANK EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT AND LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Due to the dynamic competitive environment and worldwide economic openness, companies are seeking to improve their position in the market by finding distinctive competitive advantages. Hence, they are incrementally investing in their HR capabilities. In this regard, coaching is gaining in popularity among the main HR practices that help in developing HR skills and in fulfilling deficiencies. Coaching is known as one of the most cost effective ways that help employees enhance their aptitudes. This chapter examines the effect of coaching on employee commitment and learning and subsequently evaluates its impact on performance in the Lebanese banking sector. By exploring some of the main outcomes of coaching interventions, this article seeks to fill the existent gap in the literature given the shortage in studies that scrutinize coaching and its effects on employees in Lebanon. For that purpose, a qualitative study has been conducted within an exploratory context to explore the effect of coaching on employee/customer service representative (CSR) commitment and learning and therefore on the Lebanese banking sector performance. The main findings reveal that coaching improves employee learning and enables them to acquire new skills. It strengthens their organizational commitment by increasing their feeling of belongingness. Furthermore, the impact of age has been evoked as young-aged coachees are more influenced by coaching than are older ones and thus, the performance of the former is much more enhanced. The results of this study will help executives and researchers by revealing the effects coaching on employee performance in the Lebanese banking sector.

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INTRODUCTION

The modern ever-evolving business environment has been adding pressure on contemporary organizations specifically in the field of Human Resource Management (HRM). Customers have become more discerning with the increase of competitors. In this context, companies find themselves seeking competent employees with distinct capabilities and rich experience (Chintalapati, 2013). Hence, companies are investing in their human resources by implementing updated practices to improve employees' performance and to enhance their competitive position in the market (Travis & Lane, 2006). In this regard, Sisson (2014) highlights the importance of coaching in developing employees' talents and potential.

Accordingly, companies are implementing personalized interventions, such as coaching and other innovative techniques, aiming at supporting employees in overcoming their weaknesses and improving their skills (Achi & Sleilati, 2016). Coaching, as a HR practice, has attracted significant attention, as it is one of the most efficient techniques to align employees with organizational goals and hence enhance performance (Ellinger, Ellinger, Hamlin, & Beattie, 2010). Due to its interactive approach as well as its capacity to stimulate employees' learning and efficiency, coaching provides satisfaction for employees and further desire to improve their competencies (Ellinger et al., 2010; Peterson & Hicks, 1996). Learning updated work practices increases employee satisfaction and motivates them to request more coaching; hence, such cycle supports their personal and organizational advancement (Longenecker & Neubert, 2005). As a result, managers have started to significantly acknowledge coaching's desirable effects on employee advancement on various levels (Ellinger, Ellinger, & Keller, 2003; Hargrove, 2008).

Furthermore, coaching fosters a better understanding of tasks given that the enhanced role clarity increases employee work satisfaction leading to an augmented work commitment and performance (Kim, Egan, Kim, & Kim, 2013). By understanding both the purpose and the importance of a job responsibility, employee involvement is greater. In this context, Ellinger et al. (2003) underscore the link between coaching, employee work-related commitment and job performance enhancement. By having feedback as an integral part, going beyond simple assistance, and promoting experience-based learning (Rich, 1998), coaching increases employee affective commitment as it decreases role ambiguity (Onyemah, 2009).

Given such outcomes and in order to better address competition, companies are currently integrating coaching, for it has become one of the most widely and internationally used development practices in today's business environment (Mihiotis & Argirou, 2016). Coaching helps the firms to grow by developing its personnel, their skills and capabilities. It provides companies with a unique competitive advantage paving the way for increased organizational performance. That is why Rock and Donde (2008) perceive coaching as the art of performance improvement.

RESEARCH GAPS

Despite the growth of the HRM literature in international contexts and the significant acknowledgement of its competitive advantage in companies (Harzing & Pinnington, 2011; Sparrow, 2009), a major gap remains in the Lebanese literature. According to Fahed-Sreih (2012) and Rees, Mamman, and Braik (2007), studies covering HR practices in Lebanon come short in number. In this regard and in a recent study, Afiouni, Karam, and El-Hajj (2013) highlight the vagueness and underestimation of HR practices in Lebanon. Furthermore, Dirani (2006) emphasizes the lack of research examining the development of the labor force and its performance improvement in the Lebanese market. The author argues that studies on HR development have been mainly limited to macro level human development.

Coaching, according to our current knowledge, is a young practice in the Lebanese market, as only one study, conducted by Achi and Sleilati (2016), examines the impact of coaching on the performance of employees in the Lebanese banking sector. The aforementioned study focuses on creativity and motivation as variables linking coaching to employee performance. The present research aims at filling this gap by providing additional information about coaching in Lebanon. Accordingly, this study covers additional variables linking coaching to employee performance, and they are no other than those of learning and commitment.

The Lebanese Banking Sector Context

The Lebanese banking sector has played a major role in stimulating growth in the Lebanese economy since it has relatively ensured stability in the financial sector. This sector has developed throughout the years driven by numerous comparative advantages, specifically the law of secrecy, skilled personnel and, more essentially, the conservative regulations imposed by the Central Bank (FFA Private Bank, 2009).

Even during the civil war between 1975 and 1990, this sector successfully survived and maintained regional leadership with respect to creativity, product development,

expertise, and quality. Despite 15 years of war, the Lebanese banking sector has managed to uphold its distinct reputation (Afiouni, 2007). Moreover, while Lebanon was enduring political instability, Lebanese banks needed to be more competitive to attract investors and depositors especially given the limited size of the Lebanese economy. To achieve these objectives, the sector had to invest in one of its main assets and the source of its competitive advantage: its HR capital (Achi & Sleilati, 2016).

This environment underscores the rise of the coaching approach as a prominent HR practice and an efficient tool for skills development in the context of the Lebanese banking sector. In addition to that, over the last two decades, the international banking sectors have come to appreciate the significant value of the human resources offering a source of competitive advantage. On a local level, Lebanese banks have been pioneers in implementing and investing heavily in the HRM practices, such as coaching. Nevertheless, empirical studies pertaining to the added value coaching offers to organizational performance lag behind, hence the relevance of this research. On the other hand, the transformations affecting this field due to globalization, creativity, diversity at the workplace, and technological development constitute another factor contributing to conducting this research.

Based on all the above, and while the Lebanese banking sector is witnessing growth and progress, examining the situation of coaching as an HRM practice embraced by the sector and its main players, arises as a must.

Gaps in the Lebanese Context

The Lebanese banking industry is constituted of family businesses, where managerial practices are confidential. In general, managerial positions are held by family members, while practices remain traditional. As a result, this analysis suffers from a gap, as this limited information sharing weighs heavily on this investigation.

In the highly competitive banking environment, a variety of concepts, models, and literature related to coaching has emerged. Nonetheless, in a study on coaching in the Arab world, Karboul (n/a) highlights the deficiency in the studies examining the effects and outcomes of coaching in this region. Due to its recent introduction in Lebanon, literature concerning coaching, its implementation, assessment and evaluation is not well developed, for few empirical studies have tackled this field. Even following the insistence and the eagerness of HRM to introduce new development practices, the short-term and traditional employee training techniques are still maintained in Lebanon (Dirani, 2012).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Coaching has generally been used for players in sports activities; however, this practice has quickly been integrated into other arenas. There are different definitions of coaching based on the impact on practitioners' perceptions. Some label it as an ongoing learning process (Whitmore, 2010; Whitworth, 2007); while others like Downey (2003) define coaching as the learning and skills development of individuals. In this regard, scholars argue that learning happens due to the implementation of facilitative and empowerment methods generated by coaching, and such an approach is quite distinctive from the directive techniques (Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999; Rich, 1998). Other definitions of coaching highlight its efficiency and ability to induce behavioral change (Cox & Jackson, 2010; Thompson, Wolf, & Sabatine, 2012). Likewise, Berg and Karlsen (2007) explain that coaching is the process of stimulating and assisting a person or a team to improve learning. Furthermore, and according to Kilburg (1996), coaching is defined as a close bond between a manager and an employee who implements several behavioral practices, a bond aiming at supporting the employee in meeting mutual objectives to enhance his/her satisfaction and performance, and thus to improve the employee's productivity within the so-called coaching contract. Moreover, Antonioni (2000) underscores the partnership relation in coaching, a partnership between the employee and the manager/coach for the sake of enhancing the employee's potentials.

Whitmore (2004) focuses on the *manager as a coach* concept and describes coaching as capitalizing on a person's capabilities to improve his/her performance. Despite the fact that most of the scholars portray coaching as an employee-competence development tool closely linked to the improvement of performance, Grant and Cavanagh (2011) see in the coaching ability that of developing employee self-control capabilities. They state that coaching is a goal-oriented practice as it focuses on personal and organizational goal achievement. Spence and Oaddes (2011) add that the success of a coachee depends on his/her capabilities in managing his/her behavior and thoughts toward organizational and personal goal attainment. In this case, coaching efficiency is examined from a psychological perspective. Besides, some scholars have incorporated emotions in their definitions of coaching affirming that the respect of feelings is among this practice's core objectives. Coaching is an approach that emphasizes valuing people and their personal feelings; hence, the human approach dominates the mechanical performance (Goldsmith & Lyons, 2005). Coaching encourages employees by giving them more responsibilities and thus improves their morale and productivity (Franklin, 2000). Among the effects of coaching figures the increase of employee confidence and ability to make decisions. In line with such thoughts, Lenhardt (2004) argues that coaching is part of a learning process that affects every human being living in today's society. Coaching helps individuals in managing their own decisions and taking responsibilities, in improving their self-esteem and developing their ability to listen to their own needs. Moreover, Eggers and Clark (2000) claim that coaching is also extremely productive and satisfying while fulfilling the inner needs of human beings, i.e., the desire to freely express one's

thoughts and to be understood with no judgment. All of the above benefits cannot happen unless supported by a learning culture in the organization. The climate of the learning organization is perceived as a main stimulator in the coaching intervention, for it sustains its application for quicker and better outcomes.

According to Jarvis (2004), coaching improves an individual's competences and understanding so that his/her performance is enhanced, leading to the attainment of organizational objectives. This specific definition will be chosen for this chapter as it encompasses several coaching aspects revealed in the literature and is relevant to the main topic of the actual study.

Performance Definitions

The term performance mostly describes variables comprising the efficacy and efficiency towards improvement (Stannack, 1996). In this regard, Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, Sager, Schmitt, and Borman (1993) state that performance is crucial since it is a major determinant of the effectiveness of an individual, a team, and an organization. Bilgin, Mine and Ayşe (2012) refer to performance as the qualitative and quantitative results of a proposed and prearranged task. Tekeli and Pasaoglu (2011) identify several forms of performance, namely, corporate performance, team performance, and individual performance. On the other hand, Uddin, Luva, and Hossian (2013) argue that the term performance reflects several aspects, such as the performance of an organization, an employee, an individual and society. Furthermore, Islam and Rasad (2006) define performance as the contribution of employees to achieving corporate goals.

Tahir, Naeem, Sarfraz, Javed, and Ali (2011) explain that employee performance is reflected by the time needed to achieve targets, the attitudes towards management, the way employees socialize with their coworkers, and the rate of absenteeism. Thus, performance depends on what individuals do at work (Sonnetag & Frese, 2002). It also depends on individuals' effectiveness in accomplishing their jobs. Furthermore, Tahir et al. (2011) argue that efficiency is mostly about accomplishing an assigned task in a short period, which reduces the costs for the organization and increases revenues. Kelidbari, Dizgah, and Yusefi (2011) refer to the job performance as an essential working behavior which has raised managers' awareness and attention on employee performance and task accomplishment, a process more often neglected. On the other hand, Christen, Iyer, and Soberman (2006) define job performance as an aggregation of effort, abilities, and outcomes essential for the employees and the organization. Thus, the definition of employee performance to be adopted in the actual study is that of Hameed and Waheed (2011) which consists of the employee productivity resulting from the employee's development. The choice of this definition is based on its direct link with this topic since coaching is assessed as one of the most important development tools for individuals.

In sum, employee performance is a key-factor for the success of any company. Accordingly, managers need to dedicate more efforts and attention to their staff and implement recent techniques enabling employees to improve their skills and overcome their weaknesses.

Coaching Intervention Enhancing Employee Performance

It is only recently that coaching has become a driver of organizational success and goal attainment. Given that a significant number of researchers have increasingly associated the performance of employees to coaching practices, organizations endeavor to incorporate sustainable coaching practices into their HR strategic policies.

Besides, coaching has been acknowledged as being a continuous process. Simply put, coaching is a set of activities involving continuous learning. Homan and Miller (2006) highlight four key coaching goals and outcomes in the company. First, the authors assert that coaching maintains highly qualified employees. Second, it fosters a positive environment in the corporation. Third, it increases incomes, and finally, it reduces losses and boosts customer satisfaction by increasing employee retention on the long run. Furthermore, Steiler (2006) states that coaching indirectly improves performance. The author explains that coaching interventions develop and amplify learning which enables individuals to be more aware of the main problem they are facing, which will in turn improve their performance. In this same context, Jarvis (2004) stresses on two essential effects of coaching, namely, the impact on the performance of the individual and on the organization as a whole. When coaching is employed successfully, employee competences, commitment, and satisfaction are positively affected. Hence, a cost reduction in the human resource investment is achieved leading to enhanced organizational performance. Additionally, labor productivity increases just like the quality of the service; hence, more innovations see the light. Learning new skills, employees get more motivated and self-confident. The above-discussed conclusions of Jarvis (2004) can be validated given that the impacts Jarvis (2004) has highlighted are echoed in the current research through the research propositions.

Through coaching, employees feel more valued and productive at the company. Consequently, they are motivated to remain with the current employer rather than seeking employment elsewhere. The retention of highly qualified individuals has a wide range of benefits for the firm as it reduces the cost of recruiting and coaching new staff, and it increases employee flexibility to undertake multiple tasks and roles leading to fewer interruptions and the occurrences of work breakdowns. In view of the above, it comes as no surprise that coaching is perceived as adding value to the entire organization. Effective, professional and proficiently implemented coaching has been proven to improve employee performance and organizational outcomes (Jarvis, 2004).

Variables Linking Coaching to Employee Performance

As discussed in the literature above, coaching interventions lead to improved employee and organizational performance (Enescu & Popescu, 2012; Hooijberg & Lane, 2009; Jarvis, 2004; Rider, 2002). Willis and Britnor Guest (2003) deem coaching as one of the most effective development intervention tools leading to the enhancement of organizational performance as it affects different levels of the organization and aligns the improvement of employee skills with the organizational goals. Bond and Seneque (2013) further support this view and claim that coaching aims at evaluating and enhancing employee and team performance, thus increasing organizational productivity and efficiency.

Yet, and as discerned in the literature, coaching and employee performance are not directly linked. For coaching to improve employee performance, many mediators may interfere of which both, learning and commitment will be explored.

The Relationship between Coaching and Employee Commitment

Organizational studies prioritize the issue of employee commitment to the organization (Obalola, Aduloju, & Olowokudejo, 2012). According to Porter, Crampon, and Smith (1976), organizational commitment consists of the intrinsic emotions and values that improve the desire of employees to stay with the firm and to support its main principles and goals. Moreover, organizational commitment is defined as the employees' psychological involvement to the workplace (Chen, Tsui, & Farh, 2002). Besides, He, Li, and Lai (2011) define employee commitment as the emotional attachment of employees toward the organization. Motivated employees are extremely involved in the achievement of organizational goals. They work harder to improve the quality of their outcomes (Chen, 2007). Furthermore, Allen and Meyer (1990) sort organizational commitment as being either affective, or normative, or continuance commitment. Jha (2011) defines affective commitment as the employee's psychological connection and participation in organizational goals. As to normative commitment, it is the moral obligation which forbids employees to leave their job (Madi, Abu-Jarad, & Alqahtani, 2012). It is a kind of ethical responsibility inhibiting employees from quitting. Finally, employees exhibit continuance commitment when they continue working solely because of the financial compensation (Riaz, Akram, & Ijaz, 2011). In this study, it is the affective commitment that will be adopted due to its importance to the subject at hand.

A significant number of studies has revealed the indirect link between coaching and organizational commitment (Park, 2007). Coaching, as mentioned earlier in the literature,

has various sorts of influences on employees. It can develop skills, induce self-awareness, and improve the self-control capacity among other things. According to Onyemah (2009), coaching is an effective practice capable of increasing the commitment and retention of employees. Joo, Sushko, and McLean (2012) relate coaching to increased employee commitment, performance, learning, change in attitude, and control. Furthermore, Meyer, Becker, and Vandenberghe (2004) emphasize the fact that coaching increases employee confidence, sense of control, and work identification; consequently, it strengthens their organizational commitment. On the other hand, Allen and Meyer (1990) underscore the capability of coaching to fill the essential needs of employees given that it increases the feeling of workplace belongingness, thus reinforcing their commitment to the firm. Accordingly, an indirect effect of coaching on employee organizational commitment can be identified.

While discussing the effect of coaching on employee/organizational commitment, it is necessary to underline the coach-coachee fit as an essential contributor to enhanced employee attachment toward the organization. Joo (2005) stresses on the importance of the coach-coachee bond as a critical factor for coaching efficiency. This relationship induces open communication, reliance, true support, mutual trust, acceptance, and confidence. This, in turn, stimulates the coachee to work harder and to be more committed. Employee retention is therefore reinforced. According to Onyemah (2009), coachees become more committed when they value the effort done by the organization towards them through the adoption of this recent HR practice. However, and despite the literature supporting the relationship between coaching and employee commitment, similar studies do not exist in Lebanon and specifically in the Lebanese banking sector. As a result, it would be interesting to address the following in the Lebanese banking sector through the first proposition:

Proposition 1: Employee commitment improves when coaching is successfully applied within banks in Lebanon.

The Relationship between Employee Commitment and Employee Performance

Many studies have attempted to explore the effect of employee commitment on work performance (Cabrera, Collins, & Salgado, 2006; Lok & Crawford, 2001; Roca-Puig, Beltrin-Martin, Escrig-Tena, & Bou-Llusar, 2005). Kelidbari, Dizgah, and Yusefi (2011) shed a light on the bond between organizational commitment and the enhancement of employee performance. The commitment of employees toward their organization increases as managers seek to improve their employees' outcome and work performance (Khan, Ziauddin, & Ramay, 2010). Studies have shown that when the psychological bond

between the organization and its employees is improved, goals are better-achieved (Mowday & McCade, 1979). A highly committed person will exhibit good intentions to stay in the organization he/she works for and will aim at a high job performance. The enthusiasm and loyalty toward the organization take shape in the efforts invested in assigned tasks. Accordingly, the employee would display a positive attitude and compliance with regulations, principles, and goals of the corporation (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnytsky (2002) argue that a committed employee highly trusts the organization he/she works for, and this may translate into a better performance. Organizational commitment consists of a strong relationship toward the organization in which employees are ready to make many sacrifices for the prosperity and success of their organization (Jamal, 1985; Testa, 2001). To ensure the success and prosperity of the organization they work for, employees search for new job techniques, and they pursue new skills in order to benefit the organization. An even higher commitment improves employee outcomes (Angle & Perry, 1981). Jamal (2011) adds that organizational commitment has been perceived as a main factor resulting in performance improvement.

Furthermore, and in a recent study published by Yeh and Hong (2012), “organizational commitment can improve employees’ performance and raise organizational overall competitiveness” (p. 50). As to the Lebanese context, Dirani (2007) highlights the scarcity of the organizational commitment literature.

Having established that high commitment leads to an increase in employee performance, and with the lack of relevant studies in the Lebanese banking sector, the subsequent proposition to be validated is,

Proposition 2: Whenever coaching integration within banks in Lebanon increases employee commitment, employee performance increases.

The Relationship between Coaching and Employee Learning

In modern day organizations, the human capital learning has attracted much attention. To face the aggressive business environment, organizations are fostering employees’ learning to remain competitive in the market. Management is selecting and maintaining skilled employees and is thus providing better assistance and a supportive business environment (Park, 2007).

Employees’ learning is often referred to as organizational learning. It emphasizes the knowledge acquisition of employees within the organization and the application of this knowledge in daily practices (Lundberg, 1995). Organizational learning requires means to easily transfer knowledge and to share information. Thus, it enables employees to overcome task-related problems and to deepen their knowledge in specific fields (Abel,

2008). Ortenblad (2001) identifies three basic dissimilarities between the learning organization and the organizational learning concepts. First, a learning organization is an organizational structure whereas organizational learning focuses on practices. Second, organizational learning involves practices increasing individuals' learning development, whereas the learning organization focuses more on tools that promote learning (Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999). Third, organizational learning mainly targets academics unlike the learning organization which is practitioners oriented.

In a nutshell, organizational learning is induced through practices which aim at developing employees within an organization, whereas learning organizations are specific organizational forms that try to benefit from organizational learning. Thus, organizational learning is emphasized in this research since the study examines the effect of coaching on employee learning.

Learning occurs when individuals understand work-related topics in a more rational perspective. According to Argyris and Schön (1978), learning is the creation, testing, and rearrangement of a specific type of knowledge. For Jarvis, Holford, and Griffin (2003), learning enables employees to benefit from experiences and to apply the acquired knowledge in the achievement of goals. Learning affects the development of the organization especially as it boosts creativity, transformation and output production (Lang & Wittig-Berman, 2000). Furthermore, Parker (2007) defines learning as "an adaptive behavior that can influence mental models and channel new and creative responses to change" (p. 6). Moreover, Lankau and Scandura (2002) consider employee learning as a way to improve competences through developmental relationships.

The studies linking coaching to employee learning are not abundant. Although learning is an essential part of the coaching process, researches associating it to the coaching process form only a small part of the coaching literature (Griffiths & Campbell, 2009). For Griffiths (2005), coaching is a model for effective learning; that is why Griffiths and Campbell (2009) recognize a three-way process for learning to take place via coaching, and it includes discovering, applying, and integrating. Park (2007) asserts that coaching directly affects personal learning. Coaching induces employee learning via open communication, clear feedback, reliable coach/coachee relationship, and knowledge transfer. It is in this context that Beattie (2002) considers that a coach specific behavior induces employee learning. According to Ference (2001), a coach encourages learning by questioning employees on appropriate ways to accomplish assigned goals, informing them various tactics to achieve these objectives, allowing coachees to endorse strategies, determining the particular tactic, and assessing results. For learning to occur, employees should be held personally responsible of the outcomes (Stener, 2007).

Having established that coaching leads to an increase in employee learning, and with the lack of relevant studies in the Lebanese banking sector, the subsequent proposition is put forward for validation,

Proposition 3: Employee learning improves when coaching is successfully applied within banks in Lebanon.

The Relationship between Employee Learning and Employee Performance

Due to worldwide competition, a company's successful performance depends on the acquired knowledge and skills developed by its employees as well as on its capacity to learn from its interfaces with the environment (Luntraru, 2011). Exhaustive studies confirm that employee learning, which enhances employee performance, is essential for the survival of organizations (Dirani, 2007).

According to Jones (2000), organizational learning is essential for performance enhancement. When learning is regularly induced, employee performance is enhanced, and so are employee self-confidence and work commitment (Skerlavaj, 2006). While employee learning and development are utilized to improve individual competences (Tjepkema & Verheijen, 2005), these same employees need to feel appreciated and need to sense that the firm they belong to is paving the way for them towards learning new skills and is providing them with added value when it comes to enhancing their knowledge. Conversely, when employees feel that they are not evolving, they seek external job opportunities where they can further develop their skills (Rodriguez, 2008).

Newman (2008) explains that learning increases employees' self-conception, induces creative processes, and converts knowledge into better results and an enhanced performance. Furthermore, the development of knowledge through employee learning facilitates change in the organization, improves performance, and thus both creates and maintains the firm's competitive advantage (Abdul, 2013; Calantone, Cavusgil, & Zhao, 2002; Rowden, 2001). Moreover, Hult, Hurley, and Knight (2004) argue that organizational learning is a major antecedent of and a key influence on organizational performance.

Based on the above literature, employee learning improves employee performance. Moving to learning organizations in the Lebanese context, Jamali and Sidani (2008) have found that Lebanese firms recognize the importance of the learning organization, yet opportunities for experimentation are still limited while no rewards are allocated. The authors did not proceed further in discussing its effect on employee performance. Still, a study conducted on the Lebanese Banking sector by Dirani (2007) underscores the positive relationship extant between learning and employee performance in the Lebanese banking industry. It is worth noting here that the author of this study have not approached coaching as an inducer of learning.

Knowing that one of the purposes of this study is to evaluate the impact of enhanced employee learning generated by coaching on employee performance in the specific case of the banking industry in Lebanon, it can be posited that,

Proposition 4: Whenever coaching integration within banks in Lebanon increases employee learning, employee performance improves.

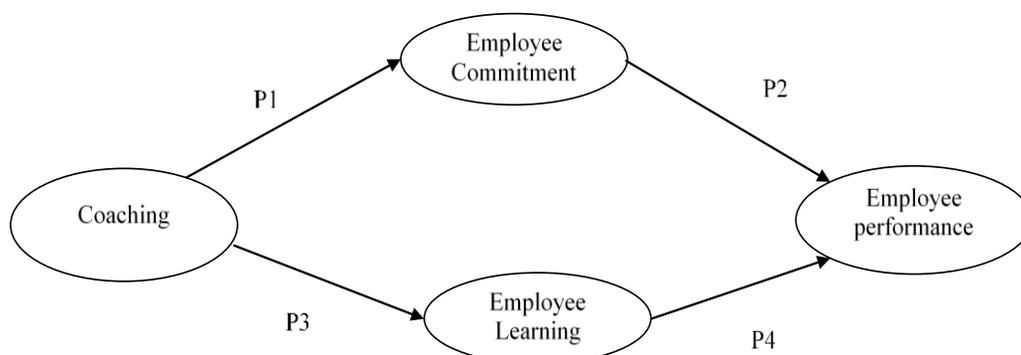


Figure 1. The preliminary exploratory model put forth in this study attempts to test the indirect relationship linking coaching to employee performance through the mediation of employee commitment and employee learning.

METHODOLOGY

This research aims at investigating the effects of coaching on employee performance in the banking sector in Lebanon. Because of the sensitivity of the data in the banking sector, an exploratory study imposes itself to investigate the importance of coaching when it comes to the performance of bank employees. Moreover, the need to undertake this exploratory investigation has arisen from the gap in the literature regarding the development and growth of HR. Moreover, Dirani (2006) stresses the lack of human capital development and performance improvement literature in Lebanon, further highlighting this gap in existing studies. Afiouni (2007) equally specifies that HR development studies are uncommon in Lebanon.

To our knowledge, and since coaching has been recently integrated into some of the Lebanese organizations, only one empirical study conducted by Achi and Sleilati (2016) explores the effects of coaching in the Lebanese banking sector on employee performance and underscores two mediators: creativity and motivation. On the other hand, while Dirani (2012) praises the efforts of leaders in implementing new HRD practices in organizations, he criticizes traditional HRD practices in Lebanon. Thus, the purpose of this qualitative research is to examine the effect of coaching on the performance of employees in banks operating in Lebanon while highlighting commitment and learning as coaching outcomes leading to performance enhancement.

Additionally, since family enterprises dominate the Lebanese banking industry, administrative practices and information are kept private. This represents a major limitation for the current research yielding an additional reason to resort to qualitative

research. Given the difficult access to banks and their data, an in-depth investigation of the situation seems to be the most suitable choice. Consequently, conducting multiple case studies has revealed to be the best methodology for results will be considered as being more persuasive thus leading to a more solid and credible investigation (Herriott & Firestone, 1983) knowing that a case study is an in-depth experimental exploration of a current phenomenon studied within the framework of real life (Yin, 2009). Also, case studies enable a deep comprehension of the related framework. In this context, Stake (2005) has recognized the following types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental and multiple case studies. For Stake (2005), an intrinsic case study is “the study undertaken because, first and last, one once better understanding of this particular case” (p. 445). Stake (2005) uses the term *instrumental case study* when a specific case is inspected mostly to clarify a certain matter or to enable a generalization. Finally, Stake (2005) defines the multiple case study approach as being an “instrumental study extended to several cases” (p. 446). For the research at hand, the collective case study fits best due to the rigor of its findings and the collection of the examined cases. It is also recommended because of its replication logic for more accurate generalization of findings (Yin, 2003, 2009). Thus, this approach can represent a substantial contribution to knowledge and a fertile ground for further studies in this field.

Sample of Case Studies

Coaching has only recently been introduced in Lebanon despite its fast evolution and adoption worldwide. Three banks in which coaching is implemented, have been chosen for this research. The criteria used to select those banks are that, on the one hand, the author has accessibility to the needed data in those specific banks, a situation that is uncommon in the Lebanese culture because of the secrecy law in the Lebanese banks; and on the other hand, the ranking of these banks that are among the top ten in the Lebanese market and among the top hundred banks in the Arab world has rendered their selection attractive (Union of Arab Banks, 2013). Those banks will be identified as Bank A, Bank B and Bank C given that the interviewees have requested complete anonymity.

To support the credibility and validity of this research, relevant details related to the selected banks are subsequently listed. Those three banks have been operational in Lebanon for more than 50 years. In fact, Bank A was established in 1963; Bank B was instituted in 1961, and Bank C was founded in 1944. Furthermore, 1,529 employees work in Bank A, 1,609 in Bank B, and 1,370 in Bank C. These numbers are significant when compared to the average number of employees per bank in Lebanon equaling about 400 (Central Bank of Lebanon, 2012). Besides, compared to the 847 total branches of commercial banks in Lebanon, Bank A has 58 local branches, Bank B has 66, and Bank C has 60 (Central Bank of Lebanon, 2012), which means that these banks represent 22%

of the domestic branches in Lebanon. Furthermore, the interviewed coaches have at least five years of experience in the coaching domain, which makes them eligible to answer interview questions and to accurately reflect on the bank's internal environment. Not only do these numbers and details support the credibility of this study, but they also render its outcomes more reliable.

Data Collection Details

Two coaches/managers and four coachees/employees were selected for in-depth interviews from each bank thus ending up with a total of six coaches and twelve coachees. Those 18 interviews took place in the respective banks and lasted between one hour and one hour and 30 minutes.

Generally, semi-structured interviews are designed according to an interview guide made up of various themes to be discoursed with all respondents. The non-imposition of the discussion order in such semi-structured interviews enables the interviewee responses to be more flexible (Gavard-Perret, Gotteland, Haon, & Jolibert, 2008). The investigator has thus based the order of questions on the sequence of the respondents' ideas. Two questionnaires composed of several open-ended questions were adopted: one addressed to the coaches and the other to the coachees. All conversations were audiotaped allowing a detailed and clear transcription at a later stage. Although the multiple case study has been adopted, each bank was dealt with distinctly. For a clearer representation of the study, the outcomes of each case have been compared and contrasted in order to facilitate the illustration of holistic deductions (Yin, 2003).

The pilot study took place in Bank A with the head of the Retail Training Department as a coach and two CSR employees as coachees. Upon the request of the candidates, anonymity has been guaranteed, and they have been assured that the data gathered will only be utilized for academic purposes. The pilot study was helpful as it enabled the adjustment of some questions and the clarification of some terms. Consequently, those interviews helped in elucidating essential parts of the addressed topic while revealing insights into the related literature. The head of retail training highlighted one main variable inexistent in the literature which is the effect of the coachees' ages on the coaching outcomes. During the interview, the manager/coach affirmed that young coachees benefit more from coaching than do older ones. He asserted that younger coachees are better receivers as they are more enthusiastic and more open to change; thus, their performance does witness an enhancement. Such findings were detected in the post-coaching evaluation. Based to pilot study results, three older coachees, one from each bank, were chosen as interviewees. From Bank A, the selected coachee was 43 years old, the one from Bank B was 40 years old, and the third one from Bank C was 39 years

old. In a nutshell, the pilot study was very beneficial as it helped in improving the research design and in evoking variables untreated in the current literature.

Interviews Data Analysis Protocol

The recorded interviews were transcribed to include all the details mentioned by the interviewees. Afterwards, the transcribed data underwent in-depth analysis through open coding which revealed the main themes from the gathered data. The thorough analysis allowed the disclosure of themes that were, in turn, sorted under categories having a similar focus. Proceeding in this manner, identical answers and remarks were gathered under one distinct category (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). At a later stage, open coding was conducted to analyze the content of the transcripts through axial coding. According to Creswell (2013), axial coding clarifies specific categories and explains the phenomenon under study. So during this process, correlations were made among categories and subcategories thus facilitating the analysis of the interviews' content (Patton, 2002).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The Effect of Coaching on the Commitment of Employees (P1)

Basically, all coaches had positive outlooks when asked whether coaching induces employees' organizational commitment. Although their answers uncovered some distinct justifications with few common ideas, there still was an overall affirmative consensus. In general, despite the huge competition in the Lebanese market, collectivism is still quite rooted in the minds of most of the Lebanese people. Thereby, most of the employees get easily committed to their institutions especially in the event of a close follow-up and some appreciation from the upper management. Once again, most coaches assertively claim that the young generation becomes committed faster than the older one. For young coaches, the feeling of belongingness is, to them, an essential driver of satisfaction.

In fact, one of the coaches insists that when the coach acknowledges the employee's efforts, this increases the employee's self-confidence and therefore his devotion to the organization he belongs to. The coach adds that commitment is reflected, first of all, by basic details such as abiding by the bank's dress code and work schedule as well as by the way the coachee participates and gets involved in the decision making process. Half of the coaches believe that when coachees tangibly feel that providing coaching sessions reflects the effort deployed by their bank, they become more committed and dedicated to their work. Coachees feel that their institution really cares about them and is investing a

significant amount of money for the coachees' best interest which increases employee trust and loyalty toward the organization. Two other coaches highlight the strong coach-coachee bond established during coaching sessions rendering work more enjoyable and enhancing coachee commitment. Furthermore, half of the coaches believe that after coaching sessions, coachees achieve better results and this by itself makes them more involved. Coaches have noticed that the application of new techniques has resulted in a faster performance and in increased sales as well as a heightened level of work devotion. They have equally remarked that including CSR in coaching sessions increases the feeling of belongingness and commitment. Another coach considers that coaching has a positive impact on the personality of the coachees leading to a positive attitude towards their institutions, the work regulations, and objectives. On the other hand, more than half of the coaches affirm that commitment is further increased when the institution recognizes achieved coaching results. Recognition can be either moral such as through thank you letters, or financial such as through bonuses. The point remains, according to the coaches, a simple acknowledgment of their efforts which enhances the coachees' commitment even further.

As to the sweeping majority of the interviewed coachees, they deem that coaching increases their commitment since they feel more appreciated by their organization and by their coach whom they believe is seeking to help them become more qualified. They feel accountable towards the bank they belong to, so they work wholeheartedly on reflecting its superior image to the external world. Furthermore, they claim that coaching sessions enable them to become closer to their colleagues especially whenever they are all working for the same goals, a situation that heightens their feeling of integration. They equally state that when they realize that their deficiencies are almost overcome, they get highly involved and motivated. As to the two coachees who have different points of view in this regard, they state that commitment is a relative process. The older CSR considers that he has always been committed even before the implementation of coaching especially that he has been working for that specific bank for thirteen years. Yet, he states that the positive effect of coaching on employee commitment cannot be disregarded as coaching has improved the quality of his interactions with others. However, the last coachee states that he believes commitment is not affected by coaching but by the coachees' own personality, the organizational culture and the organizational regulations.

Interpretation and Conclusion of P1

In this exploratory context, the analysis of the interviews leads to the conclusion that coaching is highly likely to positively affect employee organizational commitment. However, some additional points should be underlined in this regard. First, it seems that the more the bank acknowledges the efforts of the coachees after the coaching sessions, the more these employees get motivated and involved. Second, the strong coach-coachee confidence is apparently a true catalyst of this enhanced commitment. Third, the sense of

collectivism that is deeply rooted in the Lebanese culture induces employees to get further involved and committed to the organizational values and to the team they belong to. Finally, and most importantly, coaches affirm that coaching increases younger coachees' commitment more than that of older ones as the younger generation seeks integration more than the older generation. In brief, employee commitment is affected by many factors besides coaching, but in this research the main objective is the examination of the influence of coaching. As a result, P1 is largely confirmed. Facts, not found in the literature review but that have been extracted from the field study, have led to the emergence of the following new proposition.

P1a- The age of the coached employee is likely to affect the relationship between coaching and the employee's organizational commitment. This proposition will be discoursed in P5.

The Impact of Employee Organizational Commitment on Employee Performance (P2)

All coaches agree that when employees are more committed, they become more devoted to their work and their performance improves. In fact, the coaches who linked earlier the coachees' bank appreciation to an increase in commitment have given affirmative answers regarding performance improvement. They state that the highly involved employees behave more professionally as they double their efforts and try to meet or even exceed their targets. By doing so, they would be expressing their gratitude to the institution they belong to as they acknowledge the institution's efforts when providing those coaching sessions. Furthermore, the coaches who underscore the impact of the coach-coachee relationship on the enhancement of employee commitment claim that coachees work harder to make their coach proud and to maintain the new friendship. In addition to that, two coaches highlight the importance of expressing appreciation towards the performance of bank employees in maintaining employee efforts. As a matter of fact, the enhanced performance and commitment induced by coaching are reflected in the reduction of customer complaints, the increase of customer retention, the positive customer feedback and constructive recommendations. Moreover, one of the coaches asserts that this is just the beginning for coaching given that he believes performance will further improve with the increase in employee awareness regarding coaching benefits. Additionally, most of the coaches believe that the performance of young coachees is bound to improve faster and more than that of older ones. They deem that the younger the employee is, the higher the work-related commitment and the greater the enthusiasm at work.

Given that only one coachee does not believe that coaching has an impact on his organizational commitment, he naturally does not perceive that the level of commitment

can increase his performance since it is still the same as it was before coaching. Yet, the older coachee, who has stated that he has always been committed, has affirmed that commitment has a partial effect on the enhancement of performance. Since coaching increases his ties with his colleagues and the organization he belongs to, his objectives are further aligned with organizational goals, and this enhances his performance. Nonetheless, all the remaining coachees affirm that the higher the coachee commitment, the more is his/her performance enhanced. The majority states that coachees try to achieve, and even exceed, targets assigned to them to demonstrate their appreciation to the institution in return of the improvement it is enabling them to attain. This performance peaks further when the coachees feel that the success of their organization is their own success.

Yet two of the coachees with affirmative answers stress the fact that coaching should take place on a regular basis in order to constantly and positively affect both their productivity and efficiency. After all, commitment renders work more enjoyable, thus improving the quality of work and enriching employees' portfolios. Furthermore, two other coachees consider that coaching and its positive outcomes are a cycle, so when coached employees generate better results, they are further committed and end up being up attaining the desired standards.

Interpretation and Conclusion of P2

Following an in-depth analysis of the discussions with both the coaches and the coachees, P2 reveals a cause-and-effect relationship between employee organizational commitment and employee performance. Whenever coachee commitment is higher, his/her performance is heightened. The opposite is also true given that whenever employee commitment is decreased, employee performance is equally diminished. As to the coachee who claims that his commitment is not affected by coaching, he assumes that there is no a resulting change in his performance. Since P2 derives from P1, the statement concerning the impact of the employee's age on the impact of coaching is equally sustained. Thus, P2 is confirmed.

The Effect of Coaching on Employee Learning (P3)

All the coaches concur that coaching induces employee learning. This can be justified by the simple reasoning that coaching is, by itself, a continuous learning process. Throughout coaching sessions, coaches focus on the employees' gaps and work on these deficiencies by exposing to the coachees their weaknesses and by proposing solutions. In this part as well, most of the coaches assert that younger employees learn faster and acquire new skills easier than the older ones. They reckon that younger coachees are eager to learn and adapt fast unlike older employees who find it more difficult to adapt

and resist changing their working habits. Younger coachees are more attentive and interested in discovering new techniques and in acquiring updated approaches. Yet, and in order for the learning process to be successful, the coaches need to adopt a low-power-distance approach. Furthermore, since Lebanon is highly exposed to competition and globalization, employees are always seeking to develop their knowledge and skills. It is obvious then that environmental factors amplify the teaching effect of coaching.

Coaches consider that coaching is an appropriate technique to transfer knowledge and to educate employees. Throughout their replies, coaches have enumerated different skills that need to be present at the core of the coaching sessions for those sessions to be successful, and they believe that coachees learn both hard and soft skills. Coaching covers selling skills, listening techniques, the types of questions coaches should ask to clients, and the most appropriate approaches to customers. Coaches also focus on communication, negotiation, listening, and observation skills. Learning takes place when the coach works individually with the coachee on overcoming particular weaknesses and when the coach brings the group of coachees together and communicates with them different skills and knowledge related to new banking products and services. One of the coaches claims that he explains job-related issues to his coachees by sending brief messages each Monday morning, in the so-called Monday Pills. First, coachees will know that the coach is thinking about them; second, those Monday Pills contain some learning experience, such as “success is the sum of small efforts repeated day in, day out.” Another coach goes on advising coachees to record their discussions with customers to be able to assess their performance through auto-criticism. Half the coaches state that during coaching meetings, they try to teach the coachees how to get as much information as possible from the customer in order to succeed in the cross-selling process at a later stage. Coaches concur that successful coaching should be provided regularly, and the employees’ efforts should be acknowledged. An important comment made by the Head of the Retail Training Department in Bank A is that, according to him, the problem in Lebanon is the individuals’ ego. People are not used to coaching, and they believe that they know it all. So people neither feel the need to be coached nor do they feel the need to improve. Therefore, given the recent integration of coaching in Lebanese banks, people are still wary of this new addition and time is needed to obtain more substantial and conclusive coaching outcomes.

Furthermore, all the coachees affirm that coaching has enhanced their learning, except for one older coachee who has only given a partial affirmation. This can constitute a confirmation of the coaches’ statement regarding the above-mentioned impact of age. In fact, most of the coachees believe that they have learned several hard and soft skills including selling, negotiation, listening and communication skills. One of the coachees focuses on how weaknesses are dealt with during individual meetings. Half of the coachees explain that the coach teaches them how to manage their emotions and how to control their behavior and reactions especially when dealing with customers. One

coachee has attributed the rise in his optimism to the coaching sessions given that he now knows how to eliminate negative thoughts and ideas. Another coachee admits that before coaching, he thought he knew how to handle different cases, but after undergoing those personalized sessions, he realized that he still has much to learn. On the other hand, the older coachee, who has given a partial confirmation, has expressed feeling bored whenever the coach is explaining selling skills since he is already knowledgeable in this regard and has already established good long-lasting relations with his customers. What he has equally complained about is the repetitiveness of ideas especially that he has been working at that specific bank for ten years. He thus keeps on urging the coach to address new topics for learning to be induced.

Interpretation and Conclusion of P3

The in-depth analysis of the interviews, in this exploratory study, has led to the conclusion that coaching may have a positive impact on employee learning. However, few additional arguments stemming from the interviews should be underlined. First, the age of the coaches, as perceived by the coaches, heavily affects the employee learning process. The younger the coachees are, the higher their interest, and the faster their learning. The older the coachees, the more resistant they become. Second, the problem with Lebanese people, and more particularly with the older ones, is their ego. It is difficult for them to admit their need for help. This leads to a resistance to coaching. This results in the third argument that more time is required to deeply integrate coaching in the Lebanese culture and for it to be accepted by candidates as a tool for improvement and not as a tool for judgment. Fourth, to enhance employee learning, coaching should be provided on a regular basis in order to guarantee a long-term effect. Otherwise, coachees will lose interest in being constantly updated and in seeking continuous improvement. Finally, the results attained by the coachees should be acknowledged by upper management and generously rewarded with, if possible, both moral and financial compensations. In conclusion, it can be confirmed that many factors can influence the enhancement of learning. In this research, the focus will be on coaching-related influences.

As a result, P3 is largely confirmed. However, facts which were not found in the literature review but that have been extracted from the field study led to the emergence of the following new proposition.

P3a- The age of the coached employee is likely to affect the relationship between coaching and employee learning. This proposition will be covered in P5.

The Impact of Employee Learning on Employee Performance (P4)

All coaches have agreed that coaching increases employee learning, and they have asserted that, as a result, employee performance improves. They have equally added that since younger coachees learn faster and are more appreciative of the coach's assistance, their performance is more positively affected than that of older coachees. In addition to that, one of the coaches affirms that younger coachees dedicate more time to review distributed documents and are much more attentive during coaching sessions. Consequently, they end up with better results.

All coaches believe that when coachees apply what they have learned during coaching sessions, they perform better and attain higher targets. Steps and tactics taught in coaching enable the coachee to become better organized, to anticipate situations and to proactively think up solutions to those situations. As to the acquired listening skills, they allow the coached employees to deeply understand the needs of customer through active listening which will lead to a reduction in customer complaints. The coaches who addressed role play claim that, through role play, coachees work on demonstrating that they can excel in dealing with customers the way their coach does. This reveals a direct correlation between coaching and enhanced results. The improved performance of CSR is revealed through the additional sales, customers' retention, and objectives achievement. One of the coaches believes that, in addition to a bettered performance, the coachee's personal life is equally improved. Two of the coaches declare that learning makes the coachees feel more responsible and more willing to make extra efforts to find alternatives which enable them to accomplish higher quality work. The coach who has developed the Monday pills strategy states that it is a smooth learning technique that also improves the coachees' performance. These brief learning experiences are implicitly integrated in the coachees' thoughts and behaviors. Another coach declares that coachees that achieve better results should either be promoted or better remunerated. This encourages the concerned coachees to focus more during the learning process and to keep on exhibiting superior outcomes. Recognition is thus an effective catalyst of enhanced performance.

All the coachees who have replied positively regarding the effect of coaching on employee learning have equally responded affirmatively when asked whether learning improves their performance. They state that when applying practices learned in coaching sessions, they do so with higher confidence and with much more ease while dealing with customers. They confirm that during coaching meetings, they acquire additional product- and job-related knowledge which enables them to confidently describe their offerings to customers and to easily convince them to buy. Such results are bound to increase sales and boost performance. When coachees explain about the bank offering more professionally, they gain the trust and loyalty of their clients. Two coachees also stress on the importance of behavior and emotions control that are acquired during coaching to improve work quality. Furthermore, two other coachees talk about the role-play which inspires them to adopt the same techniques presented by the coach when approaching customers. These coachees highlight a significant difference in their performance before

and after coaching. On the other hand, the older coachee, who has affirmed the partial effect of coaching on learning, states that his performance is only partially improved since he was already aware of some of the techniques explained during coaching sessions. Yet, he admits that he does benefit when new and updated approaches are brought to light.

Interpretation and Conclusion of P4

By analyzing different points of view of coaches and CSR, a causal relationship between employee learning resulting from coaching and employee performance is confidently concluded. Actually, the majority believes that an increase in employee learning is associated with performance enhancement. The opposite is also true given that when employee learning is not improved, employee performance is not enhanced. Thus, P4 is confirmed. Furthermore, since P4 is derived from P3, the assumption concerning the effect of the coachee's ages on coaching outcomes equally stands.

The Effect of Age on the Relationship Linking Coaching to Employee Commitment and Employee Learning (P5)

During the interviews, the coaches have revealed a key variable that was not previously taken into account; namely, the effect of the coachees' ages on coaching outcomes. In fact, all coaches affirm that coaching is more efficient with younger coachees. They state that the latter are more open to change, and this makes it easier to coach them given that they get more motivated when learning innovative techniques unlike older ones who find it more difficult considering that their 'old habits are hard to break'. Moreover, older coachees usually get offended when given even minor remarks as they believe that their lengthy experience makes them experts in their respective fields. In this context, coaches confirm that noticeable improvements are detected in the performance of the younger coaches, and that this is related to their flexibility which contrasts with that of the older ones who are more conservative and resistant to change. One coach explains that resistance naturally occurs at the start of the coaching process, and this is explained as part of human nature characteristics. But the distinction here is that younger coachees overcome their resistance to change at a faster rate than do older coachees. The latter require more time to adapt and to accept the change, which is an issue that requires the patience and perseverance of the coach. Another point worthwhile mentioning is that younger coachees are more attentive during the coaching sessions especially when they become aware that coaching is going to enhance their career advancement and their private life. Thus, they acquire knowledge better, seek further development and achieve excellent results compared to older ones. However, Bank B team sales manager who has backed the previous statements of the coaches argues that, if the coach manages to convince older coachees of the importance of coaching, those

coachees will perform better than the younger ones given that older coachees have a higher level of maturity, a wider and more varied experience, and are better acquainted with the banking system. If this is attained, the older coachees are bound to better grasp how and when to practice the techniques and approaches covered during coaching sessions. As a result, their performance will be positively affected.

In addition to that, coaches highlight time availability among the juniors who have fewer external commitments and responsibilities compared to the older ones. Free time enables the younger coachees to review covered material at home and to be more prepared than the older coachees whose family responsibilities prevent them from dedicating that much time to work-related material away from the work premises. On the other hand, some managers place the ego amongst the main barriers limiting the active involvement of older coachees in coaching sessions. Older coachees refuse to abandon old techniques and seldom admit their mistakes. This fixation slows their progress. Moreover, and due to their lengthy experience at the bank, they feel hurt when advised by coaches and do not collaborate easily. So, they get positively affected but at a slower pace. Finally, coaches highlight routine and redundancy as another obstacle inhibiting improvement since older coachees get demotivated unlike juniors who are still discovering new aspects of their work.

The coaches state that a close follow-up is mandatory from the perspective that employees' efforts should be recognized by the bank's head office and branch manager who should keep track of the improvement made by each coachee. This follow up should be mandated by the head office and afterwards supported by the branch manager. One of the coaches compares coaching to a binge injection. The follow-up is necessary as it alleviates the resistance of older coachees and augments the effect of the above-mentioned coaching variables on the younger coachees. One matter highlighted by the coaches is the lack of patience of the younger coaches given that they believe that they should directly get their promotion, as soon as their performance improves as a result of coaching. Thus, the necessity of the acknowledgment and close follow-up that bring forward the additional effort are highly recommended and expected from the coaches' end.

On the other side, when studying the effect of coachee age on the above-named variables from the perspective of the coachees, findings were different from those declared by the coaches. Mainly all coachees have given positive replies concerning the effects of coaching which contradicts the coaches' statement above. Those CSR have asserted that coaching has actually strengthened their commitment and improved their learning which has led to the enhancement of their performance. However, one of those coachees, who has previously given more or less moderated answers, argues that his commitment is only partially improved since he has always been committed to his institution; otherwise, he would not have remained with the same bank for 10 years. He further explains that his commitment has only partly been strengthened by coaching

given that the latter strengthens ties among colleagues. In consequence, his performance has slightly improved. Second, he does not deny that coaching has enhanced his learning but only when new concepts and innovative approaches are discussed and not when the material covered traditional techniques that are only too familiar to him. Thus, generally speaking, the effects of learning as well as performance improvement are partial in this case.

In short, the coaches have had different reactions regarding the effect of age on the outcomes of coaching from that of the older coachees. Based upon their expertise in this field and their performance assessment of coachees, the judgment of coaches seems to be more reliable than that of the older coachees as they are solely relying on their own personal experience. Furthermore, it would be pertinent to underscore the difficulty for coachees to admit their own resistance to change and their difficulties in adapting to the new HR practices integrated by the banks. Hence, based upon the analysis of the replies of both the coaches and the coachees, P5 is confirmed.

The aggregation of the coaches' and coachees' above-described perceptions regarding the impact of coaching on employee commitment and learning, and consequently on employee performance, the final research exploratory model is revealed in figure 2 below. In the conceptual model, the straight lines depict those propositions that were totally confirmed, whereas the dotted arrows depict the propositions that were partially confirmed.

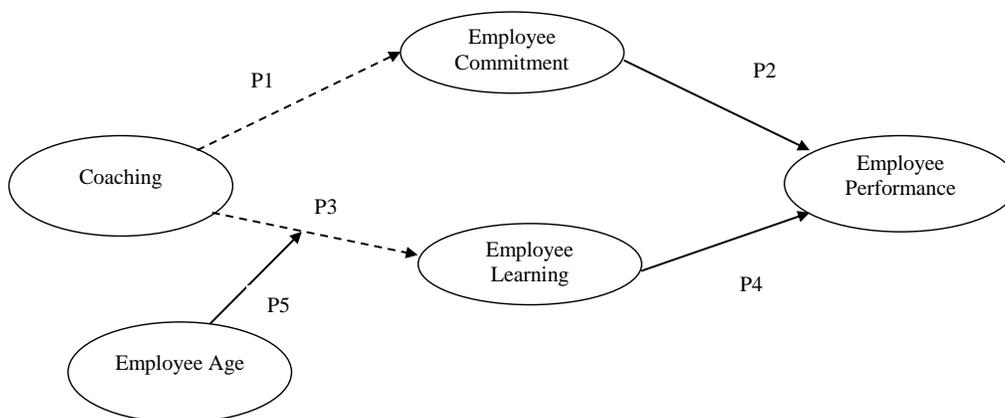


Figure 2. This figure portrays the conceptual model that was derived from the outcomes of this study in an exploratory context.

CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

This study has successfully compared similar case studies applying the multiple case studies approach. It has enabled the exploration of the propositions mentioned above

from the perspectives of both the coaches (managers) and the coachees (CSR). The attained conclusions are remarkable particularly that the literature and the studies on this topic in Lebanon are very limited, namely in the Lebanese banking industry. Actually, coaches concur that older coachees are less influenced by coaching than are the younger ones whose performance is bound to improve more and faster. The coaches' opinion is highly significant mainly because they coach both juniors and older coachees and are thus qualified to assess and compare their performances.

Relying on the analysis and the results of the empirical study, Table 1 below reveals the explored propositions and their validation.

Table 1. Research Propositions Validation

P	Propositions	Validation
P1	The effect of coaching on employee commitment	Partially validated Mainly from the coaches' perspectives
P2	The effect of employee commitment on the performance of employee	Validated
P3	The effect of coaching on employee learning	Partially validated From the coaches' and coachees' perspectives
P4	The effect of employee learning on the performance of employee	Validated
P5	The effect of age on employee commitment and learning	Validated Coaches' perspective

To summarize, the outcomes of this study are inferred from the experiences and resulting opinions of bank coaches and coachees. They have been pooled to deliver a holistic understanding of the coaching effects on employee performance in the Lebanese banking sector.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Since this study is considered among the first in exploring the effect of coaching on employee performance in Lebanon, there is no solid basis to establish any deductions on. This has presented a major challenge and an essential barrier in the face of the progress of this research. Second, personal contacts and connections have helped in data gathering procedures since the Lebanese bank secrecy law limits public access to data; therefore, full figures and numbers related to performance could not be obtained. Hence, the findings of this investigation are mainly based on the outcomes of the interviews made with the coaches and the coachees. Third, the investigation has focused on the direct

correlation between coaching and its effects impacting employee performance. Nevertheless, this does not eliminate the interference of other variables that could equally be affecting employee performance. In this research, these variables have been considered as constants in order to better focus on the analysis of the effect of coaching on performance. Fourth, the research has covered three commercial banks because of the difficulty to access data. However, those three banks are highly ranked with high market coverage thus increasing the representativeness of the results to the Lebanese population. Fifth, the scope of this study has been narrowed to cover only CSR performance as no clear measurement for performance currently exists. Finally, and most importantly, the exploratory nature of this study renders the obtained results non-generalizable since the multiple case study design was used. Yet according to Yin (2009), when using case studies “analytical generalization” takes place which contrasts with the “statistical generalization” (p. 15). The latter generalization is mainly applied when there is a shift from specific results to a more universal theory. In this research, the shift occurs from the cases studied to the Lebanese banking industry which is the aim of this study.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Many are the directions of forthcoming studies. First, this study can be replicated by applying the suggested model in other fields, industries and contexts. Thus, it can be conducted in institutions other than banks, such as in commercial companies in Lebanon, samples can be broader, and not just limited to the CSR. Second, the effect of age on the coaching process can be further examined in other fields in Lebanon to confirm the amplified coaching effect on younger coachees. Third, the study of the effects of coaching on employee performance using a quantitative methodology can also be undertaken. This suggestion can further be studied in commercial companies since data access is not restricted as it is in banks. Fourth, it would be interesting to examine the existent relationship between the coaching variables, i.e., between commitment and learning, since commitment affects employee learning and the opposite is equally true. Furthermore, it would be enlightening to study additional variables, besides coaching, that may influence employee performance. In addition to that, the study of additional factors associating coaching to employee performance would also be instructive. Finally, the extension of the current investigation can equally be achieved by studying the impact of coaching on organizational performance, which is the aggregated upshot of employee performance. This study encompasses substantial value as it extends beyond the current model.

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