

COACHING IN ORGANIZATION – BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS (CO-WORD AND CLUSTER ANALYSIS)

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Purpose: The article aims to identify the current state of knowledge about coaching in organizations by conducting a bibliometric analysis of publications in this area.

Design/methodology/approach: In the article, a partial bibliometric analysis of the research area of coaching in organizations was carried out using co-word analysis and cluster analysis techniques to identify the current state of knowledge. The data was analyzed using the Scopus bibliometric database and the VOSviewer program.

Findings: The analyses indicated that the fundamental research topics discussed are leadership, mentoring, executive coaching, management development, and leadership development. It was identified that the initial interests of coaching researchers focused on organizational changes. The latest research topics are micro-coaching and the use of AI in coaching.

Research limitations/implications: Further research should complement and extend the bibliometric analysis with other relational techniques, i.e., co-citation analysis, co-authorship analysis, bibliographic coupling, and direct citation analysis. A critical literature review should be conducted after a full bibliometric review of the publication on coaching in organizations. In subsequent studies, the analysis can also be extended to include publications in the field of social sciences.

Originality/value: In the day of searching the SCOPUS database, no bibliometric review from this area was noticed. The analysis provides an opportunity to deepen further research and partially highlight research gaps in this area. This is particularly important among national authors due to the small number of publications from this area affiliated with Polish institutions.

Keywords: coaching, organization, leadership coaching, executive coaching, bibliometric analysis, VOSviewer.

Category of the paper: Literature review.

1. Introduction

Coaching is a dyadic relationship in which the coach and the coachee cooperate to identify and achieve organizational goals and professional or personal development purposes (Sonesh et al., 2015, p. 73). In organizations, coaching focuses on activities that strengthen and motivate employees (Coimbra, Proença, 2023). Coaching also helps employees build self-awareness and learn, thus contributing to the success of an individual and an organization (Joo, 2005, p. 468).

The number of publications on coaching in organizations in the SCOPUS database indicates a growing trend of exploring this topic. However, no publication on coaching in organizations in the SCOPUS database (as of January 16, 2024) presents the current state of knowledge using the results of bibliometric analysis of this topic.

In this context, the article aims to identify the current state of knowledge about coaching in organizations by conducting a bibliometric analysis of publications in this area. Achieving this goal requires answers to the following detailed questions:

RQ1: What are the fundamental and significant research topics in organizational coaching?

RQ2: What clusters constitute publications on coaching in organizations?

RQ3: How does the structure of research topics related to organizational coaching change?

To achieve the article's aim, a review of the literature included in the SCOPUS database regarding coaching in organizations was used, which allowed the identification of a cognitive gap in the form of a lack of knowledge about the current state of research in this area, obtained using bibliometric analysis. Consequently, a bibliometric study was used. A relational technique was applied to examine the relationship between the author's keywords, and also co-word and cluster analyses were performed. VOS viewer software was used to visualize the study results. The theoretical background was prepared based on studies of the most frequently cited and newest publications (i.e., published after 2019) taken from the SCOPUS database, meeting the assumed search criteria, i.e., regarding coaching in organizations.

The first part of the article presents the theoretical background. Then, the methodology of the bibliometric research conducted was described. The next section presents and discusses the findings. The summary formulated the conclusions of the analysis, indicates the study's limitations, and outlines directions for further literature study.

2. Theoretical Background

Around 1997, coaching and mentoring emerged as part of the rising interest in management and leadership development (Vicere, 1998). Research has concluded that coaching can be a tool for individual and organizational transformation (Bowerman, Collins, 1999). The International

Coaching Federation (ICF) defines coaching as collaborating with clients in a creative, thought-provoking process designed to inspire them to maximize their professional and personal potential (International Coaching Federation, 2020). The common part of most definitions is an intimate relationship between the coach and the client to improve the client's and the organization's performance (Cannon-Bowers et al., 2023).

The most frequently researched topic is executive coaching. Executive coaching is a partnership between an individual holding a management position and a coach employed by the organization to help the manager become a more effective leader (Hannafey, Vitulano, 2013).

Many publications are also devoted to the subject of leadership coaching which concerns leadership development. It aims to help employees develop their skills and leadership abilities, thereby increasing their chances of promotion (Carter, 2023).

Supervisory coaching is a term frequently confused with executive coaching. The task of supervisory coaching is to increase the work efficiency of subordinates (Sketch, 2001).

The goal of a manager as a coach is to help employees recognize how they can work more effectively, improving their behavior or ways of working (Ladyshevsky, 2010).

Among the tools used to measure coaching effectiveness, there is a qualitative ROE approach (return on expectations) and a quantitative ROI approach (return on investment). A. Grant, believes that ROI is not a reliable measure of the results of the coaching process. He even points out that paying too much attention to financial returns can be limiting for both coaching and organization. Coaching processes focusing too much on maximizing profits can increase employee stress and anxiety (Grant, 2012). While research conducted by J. Phillips, has shown a positive return on investment in coaching (Phillips, 2022). According to the ICF, 86% of companies saw a positive return on investment in their coaching activities, and 96% of organizations accompanied by executive coaching thought they would repeat the process. This consists of measurable and immeasurable factors. Measurable include, among others, increased productivity, better efficiency, and employee engagement or sales growth. Unmeasurable factors include higher levels of emotional intelligence and self-confidence among employees and improved team and stakeholder relationships (McCullough, 2023).

A different indicator for assessing effectiveness is the return on expectations (ROE, Return on Expectations). This measurement aims to link coaching with critical indicators and desired results for the company by adjusting coaching activities to strategic goals and explaining the relationship between coaching and mission and values, on which the organizational culture is based (Nowicka et al., 2021).

Among the publications on coaching, some refer to the coaching culture (Gormley, van Nieuwerburgh, 2014) and gender in coaching in their subject (Gray, Goregaokar 2010; Gray, De Haan, Bonneywell 2019). Coaching is also used in the topic of well-being (Gardner, Moorefield, 2022).

Increasingly, in the context of leadership, the topic of emotional intelligence appears. In 2017, this topic was undertaken by researchers in the context of the impact of coaching intervention on the emotional competences of managers. A study proved the positive impact of long-term coaching on the development of emotional intelligence of leaders (Dippenaar, Schaap, 2017). However, research has not proven a link between emotional intelligence and task-oriented behaviors among leaders (Halliwell, Mitchell, Boyle, 2022).

Among the new trends in coaching is micro-coaching. Research indicates the effectiveness of positive psychological micro-coaching, a short-term intervention that builds on the coachee's strengths (Corbu et al., 2021). Strengths-based micro-coaching can help increase employee performance and engagement and positively influence employee well-being (Peláez, Coe, Salanova, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has directed the interests of researchers to the issue of virtual meetings in coaching. There is a belief that virtual meetings are not attractive enough and that their participants are appropriately involved. Therefore, the critical problem is to take actions that will increase involvement in virtual meetings (Preston, Maes, 2023).

Among the current interests is the topic of AI in coaching in organizations, which first appeared in publications in 2011 (Watkins et al., 2011). The development of artificial intelligence has necessitated the need to define guidelines for the design of AI coaches who will meet international standards of ethics and coaching practice (Terblanche, 2020). In the available publications, you can find the definition of AI coaching, which defines this concept as a machine-assisted process, helping clients set professional goals and look for solutions to achieve them. Thanks to its ability to acquire extensive data, AI coaching could help individuals achieve their goals more effectively by better selecting tools, questions, or exercises (Grassmann, Schermuly, 2021). The topic of AI in coaching is fascinating due to the recent extensive use of the ChatGPT tool. Experts assessed the coaching conversations conducted by the artificial intelligence tool. They concluded that ChatGPT could conduct a conversation, generating open-ended questions and summarizing answers at a level lower than the International Coach Federation ACC standard of coaching. The author emphasizes in his article the need for organizations to consider whether the ChatGPT tool can be accredited or prohibited. The author also indicates the possibility of using artificial intelligence to support and improve coaching practice. This is the first article that raised the issue of the artificial intelligence tool Chat GPT as a potential for coaching talks (Passmore, Tee, 2023).

Coaches often work in a very complex environment, resulting in ethical dilemmas. The difficulty of dealing with emerging ethical dilemmas is due to the confidentiality that the coach must maintain. Research indicates that supervision plays a helpful role in this area. Thanks to various strategies, supervisors help solve ethical dilemmas (Ratlabala, Terblanche, 2022).

3. Research Methodology

A bibliometric review is a method of systematic literature review based on the field of science (Paul, Criado, 2020, p. 2). Bibliometric analysis uses the so-called relational technique (Benckendorff, Zehrer, 2013, p. 126).

One of the bibliometric methods is the analysis of co-words. It allows you to find answers to the following questions: a) What are the conceptual components of literature? b) What are the dynamics of the conceptual structure of the field? c) What topics relate to a specific direction of research? d) How does the studied concept evolve? (Zupic, Cater, 2014, p. 439).

A graphical bibliometric review can be developed using Viewer (Visualization of Similarities) programs such as VOSviewer, which is now commonly used for such a bibliometric review.

To identify the current state of knowledge about coaching in organizations, the questions defined in the introduction were asked.

Bibliometric studies were used to find answers to the questions. A relational technique was used to examine the relationship between the author's keywords, and an analysis of co-words (co-word analysis) and clusters (cluster analysis) was conducted.

Research publications were taken from the Scopus scientific database. The starting point was to establish strict search criteria. The query formula had to consider the leading phrases in the organization's coaching area. The following query was entered by the language formula in force in the database: TITLE-ABS-KEY („coaching”) AND („organization*” OR „organization*” OR „enterprise*” OR „compan*”).

During the preliminary search, 5,673 publications were found. Matching publications indexed in the Scopus database were filtered. In the second step, the following query string was used: TITLE-ABS-KEY („coaching”) ORAZ („organization*” LUB „organisation*” LUB „enterprise*” LUB „compan*”) ORAZ ((LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ch") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "bk") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "cp")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, “BUSI”) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, “English”)). As a result, 1,577 articles were obtained.

In the third stage, the presence of duplicates was checked. For this purpose, the Zotero bibliography manager was used. 7 Repeated publications were identified. As a result, 1570 articles were qualified for further analysis.

The literature database was obtained on 13.12.2023 and used to carry out w/w analysis. In addition, the most frequently cited and latest publications were extracted, i.e., after 2019. Further content studies were subjected to 29 articles; based on them, a theoretical background was prepared.

4. Bibliometric analysis of co-words (co-word analysis) and clusters (cluster analysis)

Essential and significant research topics in the field of coaching in organizations

In order to identify primary and significant research topics in the field of coaching in organizations, an analysis of the co-occurrence of keywords (co-word analysis) provided by the publication's authors was conducted.

The minimum number of occurrences of a copyright keyword was first limited to 2 words. Of the 3,307 keywords, 659 meet a defined threshold. For each of the 659 keywords, the total strength of co-occurrence relationships with other keywords was calculated. Keywords with the highest total strength of connections were selected. In order to verify the correctness of the identified leading keywords, an analysis was also carried out, narrowing the minimum number of instances of the author's keyword to 5 and then to 15. The results confirmed that the essential research topics in the field of coaching in organizations are leadership, mentoring, executive coaching, management development, and leadership development.

The most common keywords with the greatest strength of association are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Keywords with the greatest strength of connections

Keyword	Minimum number of occurrences: 5 of the 3307 keywords		Minimum number of occurrences: 15 of the 3307 keywords	
	Occurrence	Total link strength	Occurrence	Total link strength
Coaching	377	721	377	368
Leadership	112	241	112	128
Mentoring	57	149	57	101
Executive coaching	67	106	67	42
Management development	48	117	48	82
Leadership development	62	108	62	68

Source: Scopus database, VOSviewer analysis, authors' compilations, and calculations.

Clusters of publications on coaching in organizations

In order to determine which clusters form publications on coaching in organizations, an analysis of the network of keyword co-occurrences (co-word analysis) provided by the authors of the publication and cluster analysis (cluster analysis) was carried out.

Analysis of the minimum number of occurrences of the author's keywords of 5 allows you to learn information about what research topics related to coaching and other leading keywords are of interest to researchers and showed that out of 3307 keywords, 163 meet the defined threshold and form 10 clusters, including each identified leading keyword is a component of another cluster (figure 1).

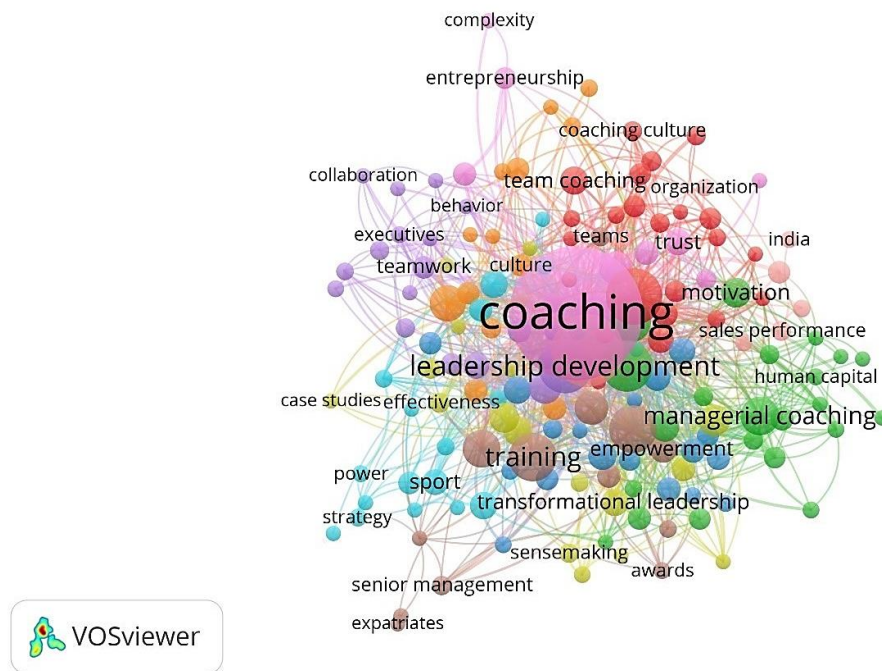


Figure 1. Co-occurrence network of author's keywords with a minimum number of occurrences: 5 of the 3307 keywords – network visualization.

Source: own analyses based on data extracted from Scopus database using VOSviewer software.

In cluster 9 (pink), the dominant theme of coaching is combined with issues related to innovation, creativity, entrepreneurship, education, and experiential learning, but also with commitment, trust, complexity, and performance. It is worth noting that structural equation modeling also appears here. The word leadership (100 connections, 241 connection strength, 112 publications) is critical in cluster 10 (salmon) and is associated with customer orientation, sales management and performance, and qualitative research in India. It is worth emphasizing that the dominant word in cluster 5 (purple) is leader development, which has 467 connections. It appears in 62 publications, and its strength of connections is 108. It seems more related to coaching than cluster 10. The remaining 17 words forming cluster 5 concern issues related to learning organization, organizational learning and development, knowledge transfer, succession and family business, cooperation and work, and team learning; it is also related to behavior and psychological safety and organizational results.

With a minimum number of copyright keywords of 5, the following clusters stand out:

- cluster 1 (red, 23 issues): The dominant keyword is executive coaching, including the most strength of connections: Human resources development (link 26, total link strength 34, events 14), but also the keywords: business coaching, organizational coaching, organizational coaching, peer coaching, team coaching, workplace coaching, coaching effectiveness, coaching culture, coaching results, coaching process, coaching process, the coaching relationship and the relatively current average year of publication: managerial coaching, emotional intelligence, self-coaching, well-being, organizational coaching (avg.pub.age, 2019);

- cluster 2 (green, 22 issues): The dominant keyword is mentoring, including the most strength of connections (link 33, total link strength 51, occurrences 32), motivation (link 28, total link strength 39, occurrences 19), Career development (link 22, total link strength 34, occurrences 18), Employee engagement (link 21, total link strength 24, occurrences 8) and the relatively current average year of publication: coach, coaching education, trust, women, gender, higher education;
- cluster3 (blue, 23 issues): The keywords that dominate are feedback (link 26, total link strength 39, occurrences 15) and Employee development (link 27, total link strength 38, occurrences 13); in this leadership coaching, individual dimensions (i.e., Authenticity, competencies, Diversity, Individual behavior, Individual performance, personality, Self-efficacy), but also ethics and the relatively current average year of publication: coaching leadership (avg.pub.age, 2020);
- cluster 4 (light green, 18 issues): The dominant keyword: Performance management (link 37, total link strength 58, occurrences 21), including the one with the greatest of connections: Human resource management (link 28, total link strength 40, occurrences 19), change management (link 27, total link strength 37, occurrences 17) and the relatively current average year of publication: engagement (avg.pub.age, 2018);
- cluster 6 (aquamarine, 17 issues): The dominant keyword: coach (link 23, total link strength 30, occurrences 16), including the most strength of connections: Evaluation (link 21, total link strength 25, occurrences 12) and the relatively current average year of publication: psychological safety (avg.pub.age, 2019);
- cluster 7 (orange, 13 issues): The dominant keyword is management (link 36, total link strength 64, occurrences 28), with the biggest strength of connections: Organizational development (link 25, total link strength 36, occurrences 12);
- cluster 8 (brown, 13 issues): The dominant keyword is Management development, with the biggest strength of connections: training (link 53, total link strength 103, occurrences 50), Organizational change (link 32, total link strength 689, occurrences 30), Organizational culture (link 30, total link strength 55, occurrences 24), empowerment (link 25, total link strength 36, occurrences 16) and the relatively current average year of publication: developmental relationship (avg.pub.age, 2019).

Structure of research topics related to coaching in organizations over the years

It is worth paying attention to the average year of other publications regarding individual keywords, which illustrates the changes in interest in topics related to coaching.

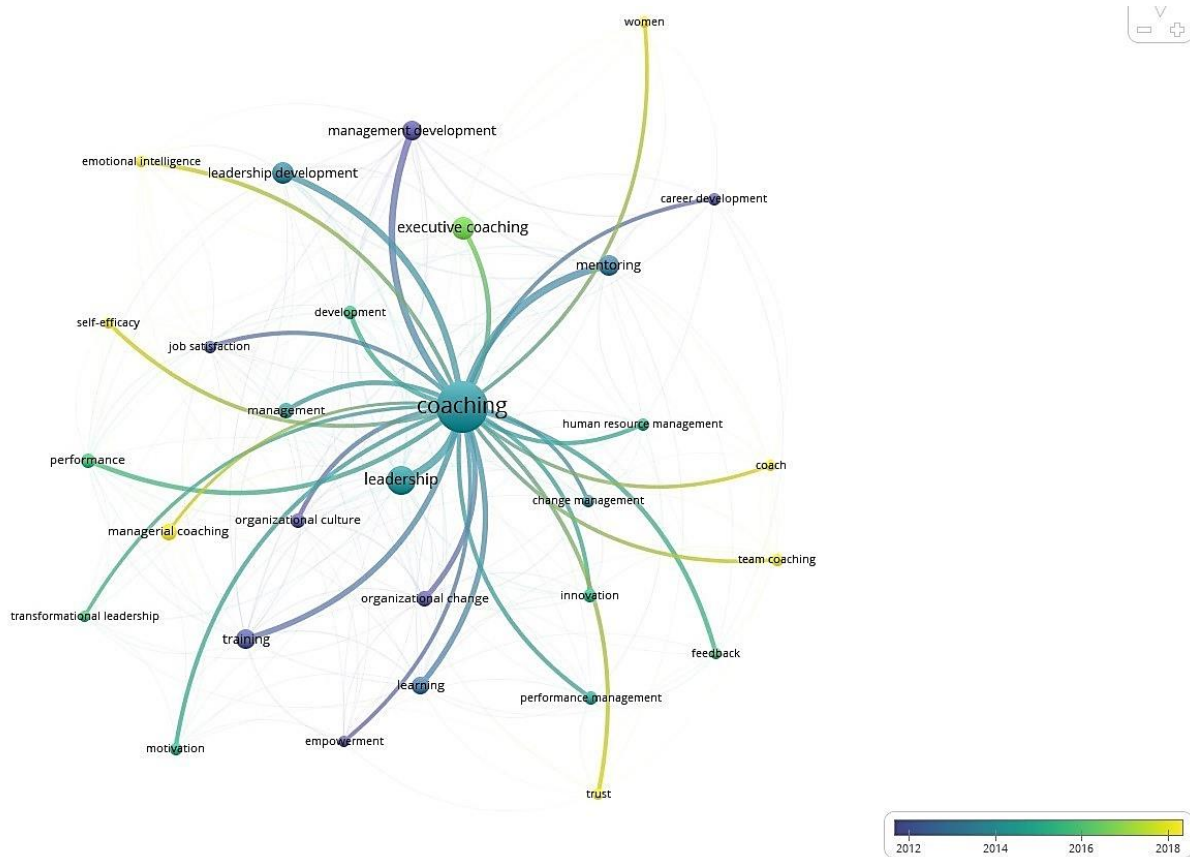


Figure 2. Co-occurrence network of author's keywords with a minimum number of occurrences: 15 of the 3307 keywords – overlay visualization.

Source: own analyses based on data extracted from Scopus database using VOSviewer software.

The oldest average year of publication refers to organizational change (avg.pub.age, 2008). This leads to the conclusion that at that time, it began to be noticed that coaching was one of the topics related to this issue. A relatively long time ago, the subject of interest of researchers in the field of coaching were also topics related to organizational culture, empowerment (avg.pub.age, 2011) and career development, job satisfaction, and training (avg.pub.age, 2012). It should be emphasized that the average year of publications containing keyword coaching is 2013, but the trend of publications on this topic has been growing since 1996.

In addition, around 2013, publications were also related to leader development and mentoring, change management, and learning. Then, the researchers' interest, in addition to leadership and management topics, was directed to performance management (avg.pub.age, 2014). Then, publications appeared more often on human resource management, motivation and feedback, and transformational leadership (avg.pub.age, 2015), and thus, related to the person in the organization. The average year of publication for the keyword executive coaching is 2016. The relatively youngest topics include emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, coach (avg.pub.age, 2017) and, managerial coaching, team coaching, trust, and women (avg.pub.age, 2018).

Therefore, it seems that it can be concluded that the interests of researchers in the field of coaching in the recent period are directed to a) so-called soft dimensions of human resources management, such as.: emotional intelligence and self-efficacy, b) the development of knowledge about managerial coaching and team coaching, c) the issue of trust (These research paths is converged with the actual interest in trust in business relationships. There are currently about 1820 documents related to trust in business relationships in the Scopus database), d) gender aspect in management, including female activity. Moreover, the most current research topics in the context of coaching are organizational coaching, developmental relationship, psychological safety (avg.pub.age, 2019), and coaching leadership (avg.pub.age, 2020).

5. Summary

Analysis of the co-occurrence network of the author's keywords showed that the beginning of interest in coaching was related to organizational change issues. Considerations related to coaching in the aspect of organizational changes are still of interest to researchers. In recent years, a combination of coaching, change and development topics has been observed. Confirmation of this position can be found, among others, in articles by Boak G., Crabbe S. (2019), Akande A., Adewuyi M., Akande T., Adetoun V. (2021), Raudenbush L., Clarke J. (2023). The term “empowerment” in the aspect of coaching does not currently arouse the interest of researchers. Publications in this area come from many years ago, e.g., Mone E, Eisinger C., Guggenheim K., Price B., Stine C. (2011), Heslin P. (1999). This may reflect a broadening of the perspective of perceiving the benefits of coaching. Research conducted over the years has proven that coaching can not only arouse a sense of self-efficacy (empowerment) (Heslin, 1999) but also can be used in managing the development of organizations because it also helps to increase the efficiency of achieving goals, solution-focused thinking, more remarkable ability to cope with change, increase leadership resilience, reduce depression, anxiety and stress, and, increased job satisfaction (Grant, 2014).

The subject matter of the results of coaching activities is the subject of numerous and current research both in the quantitative dimension (ROI return on investment) (e.g., Phillips 2022), as well as qualitative (ROE return on expectations) (e.g., 2012 Grant). Cluster 4, with the leading author's keyword management performance, includes, among others, problems of effectiveness, engagement, and competitive advantage.

Coaching in organizations is related not only to the management of the development of the organization but also to its human resources. Coaching researchers in the context of management deals with various problems, of which the most interesting currently are action learning, project management, and value.

The greatest strength of the link is between coaching and leadership. This is a topic that researchers have been interested in over the years, from the 1996 article by Davies B. through the ones with the highest number of citations, including Wageman R. (2001), Joo, B. (2005), Ely K., Boyce L., Nelson J., Hernez-Broome G., Whyman W. (2010), all the way to one of the newest Ealy P. from 2024. The co-occurrence analysis of the author's keywords showed that with a minimum number of occurrences of these words of 5 or 15, the keyword leadership co-creates a separate cluster. However, reducing the minimum number of keyword co-occurrences to 5 resulted in forming a cluster with the dominant term leadership development. Leadership development is also one of those with the greatest strength of links with coaching and seems to be more related to coaching than a cluster with the leading word leadership. Exciting issues in the field of leadership development include, for example, transformational leadership (Kirkbride, 2006), leadership identity (e.g. Aas, Vavik, 2015), leadership tools (Berg et al., 2012), or leadership coaching, relational leadership (Ladegard et al., 2014).

An essential area of coaching research is cluster 1 (minimum number of keyword co-occurrence 5) with the dominant keyword executive coaching. This cluster is characterized by the distinction of various types of coaching and its results. This may indicate a deepening of research in these topics. A particularly new topic (average year of publication 2018) in this cluster is well-being (link 19, total link strength 24, occupations 13). Interest in this problem has been intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic. Research conducted, for example, by Jarosz J. (2021), showed that coaching can effectively improve the well-being and efficiency of managers and their teams during the pandemic. The significance of well-being, however, is also noticed after the pandemic; Addison L. and Shapiro J. emphasize that leaders are expected not only to achieve financial results but also to care for the mental and physical well-being of their employees (Addison, Shapiro, 2023, p. 219).

The subject of relatively high interest in coaching researchers is mentoring. In recent years, this cluster has recorded research on gender, including women (average year of publication 2019). However, there appears to be a research gap in this area, Bonneywell S., and Gannon J. point out the need for research to allow a deeper understanding of coaching as a social process, including the effect of combining coaching approaches and the development of female leaders as part of leadership development (Bonneywell, Gannon, 2022).

The subject of research in the field of coaching is also feedback. As rightly noted by Walsh B. (2016) and Burger Z. and van Coller-Peter S. (2019), feedback mechanisms are necessary to achieve coaching results and illustrate the organization's investment in the individual's professional development. Therefore, it can be thought that exploring knowledge in this area will be further interesting.

Coaching researchers also focus on issues related to the work of a coach, including, for example, the process of teaching, learning, and practicing solution-focused coaching (Grant, 2022). Due to the pursuit of professionalization and certification in the coaching profession, it can be assumed that researchers will continue exploring this topic.

Conducting in-depth studies of the latest literature, i.e., after 2019, a new area of research exploration was also noticed, namely using artificial intelligence in coaching processes, including its latest tools, i.e., GPT Chat (Passmore, Tee, 2023). Due to the few publications so far, this topic has not been disclosed in the bibliometric analysis. However, it can be assumed that the increasingly dynamic development of artificial intelligence will also deepen research in the context of the usefulness of AI in coaching. Further research is needed to understand the impact of increasingly advanced artificial intelligence tools.

The further research should complement and extend the bibliometric analysis with other relational techniques, i.e., co-citation analysis, co-authorship analysis, bibliographic coupling, and direct citation analysis. A critical literature review should be conducted after a full bibliometric review of the publication on coaching in organizations. In subsequent studies, the analysis can also be extended to include publications in the field of social sciences.

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