

Impact of Corporate Coaching and Digital Leadership on Employee Sustainable Performance with Work-Life Integration as Mediating Variable: A Conceptual Framework

Triaji Prio Pratomo

Doctoral Student

Faculty of Business and Economics
Islamic University of Indonesia (UII)
Yogyakarta, Indonesia
triaji@gmail.com

Fiona Wang

Doctoral Student

Faculty of Leadership and Innovation Policy
Gajah Mada University (UGM)
Yogyakarta, Indonesia
fiona.wang889@gmail.com, fiona@integrainstitute.co.id

Fauziah Zulfitri

Master Student

Faculty of Economics and Business
Telkom University
Bandung, Indonesia
fauziah.insightindonesia@gmail.com

Abstract

Coaching has been introduced worldwide and absorbed into corporate HR as one of employee development programs quite intensively and extensively in recent years rebranded as Corporate Coaching (CC), with early indicators showing that coaching positively impacted employee performance. Unfortunately, further research on its impact on long-term/sustainable employee performance has yet properly researched. Digital leadership (DL) on the other hand has become household jargon in the era of Industry 4.0 indicating the trend of leadership has shifted into the facilitation of a more data-driven, flexible time, people-oriented, collaborative, and technology-savvy working environment, with particular note that the research of DL still limited to short term performance. Work-life integration (WLI) construct as the mediating variable between DL and employee sustainable performance (E-SuPer) also has not been addressed sufficiently. The aim of this paper is to develop theoretical foundation for the nexus of CC, DL, E-SuPer, and WLI, thus providing a complete review of the literature on the interdependence association of the variables. This paper provides insights for researchers as well for managers on what variables need to be considered when it comes to similar interdependence.

Keywords

Corporate coaching, digital leadership, employee sustainable performance, work-life integration

1. Introduction

In 25 years since its introduction, coaching still fragmented and rife with contradictions. On one hand, coaching has been recorded as the fastest-growing field within consulting (Liljenstrand and Nebeker, 2008). Moreover the coaching

industry was claimed as the fastest-growing sector in the world second only to information technology (Passmore, 2018). As such corporate coaching (CC) is now an established part of human resources development portfolio in many organizations (Bozer and Delegach, 2019). However the exponential growth has yet backed up by empirical research on to what extent coaching is effective, how it is more effective compared to other human resources development tools such as training and mentoring, and how it impacted individual performance. To add more salt to the open wound, CC was characterized as field of practice of industrial and organizational psychologist that suffered from serious lack of research (Silzer et al., 2008), such that many professionals and academics regarded it as an elusive, pseudo-scientific, and intricate intervention (hypnosis and other intrusive subconscious mental manipulation). Sherman and Freas (2004) and Sonesh et al. (2015b) illustrated not only the high level of disagreement over what “coaching” means and how it characterized, but also not convinced how it distinguished itself from alternative and more established human resources development tools. Moreover, there is still zero evidence of coaching impact in the long term a.k.a. employee sustainable performance (E-SuPer).

Digital leadership (DL) suffers similar challenge coaching has; first its definition, and second its application. DL definition clearly confusing to some who established themselves in the field of IT, it was not meant to be referred to ‘person’, rather than a state of evolution (Outvorst and Visker, 2018). DL application in the field of HR is no less presumptuous, since it ride along the so called Industry 4.0, where is believed digital transformation need to be balanced with human transformation, starting from its leaders who need to understand and operate in digital workplace, hence DL. Its application plagued with little to no evidence on how it contribute to employee performance, moreover E-SuPer with WLI in between.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Corporate Coaching (CC)

The term ‘coaching’ when used exclusively leads to quite a number of interpretation and definition. Historically it derived from Hungarian lexicon ‘kocs’ where horse drawn carriages were made (Cox et al., 2014), adapted to English ‘coach’ with the same meaning and adopted into sports world especially in Northern America where the term flourished and became strongly associated with sporting events. However, in the last a couple of decades, management and corporate practices also adopt the term ‘coach’ for different purpose where it focuses more on psychological aspect of a person being coached, rather than their physiological aspect to achieve certain business performance. Scopus, CrossRef, and Google Scholar database analysis shows coaching divided into two separate networks, one revolves around sports world and the other revolves around corporate/business/management/people development world. Although these two major networks interact with each other when it comes to philosophy, methodology, and application, it is safe to say CC has its own set of philosophical background, methodology, and application as separate body of knowledge from its sibling from sports world, given the fact that it is now being a well-accepted term as shown in research database analysis in Figure 1.

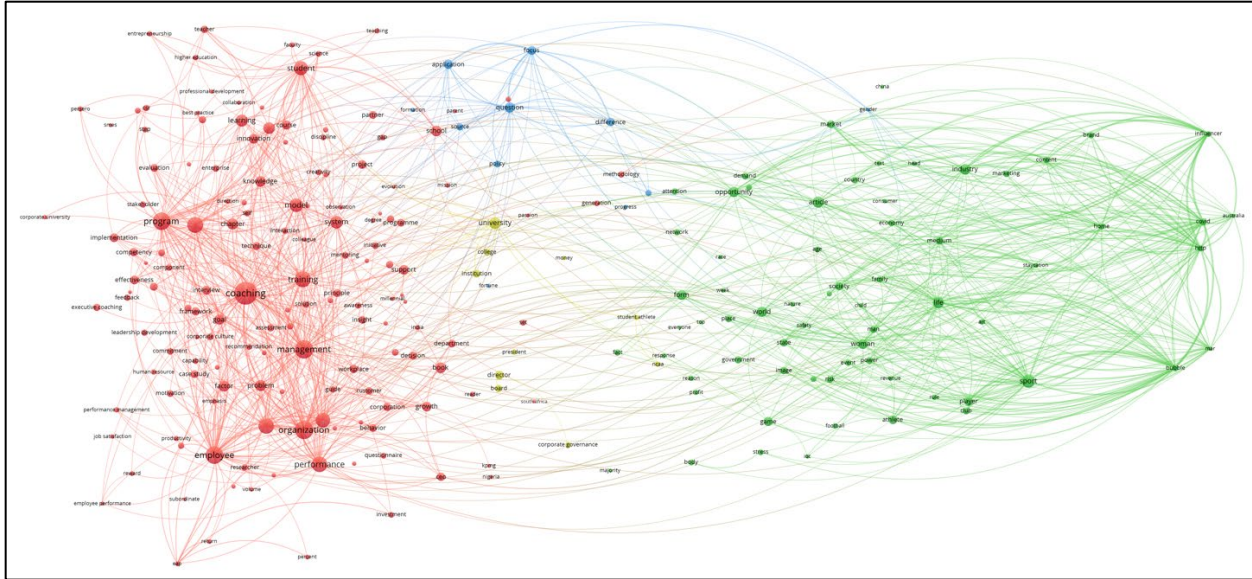


Figure 1. Coaching definition mapping and interaction

The term corporate coaching, executive coaching, leadership coaching, business coaching, professional coaching, workplace coaching, and management coaching are often used interchangeably. However, different governing bodies and thought leaders define ‘coaching’ differently as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Coaching definition

Definitions	Coined by:
A coach transports a valued person from where they are to where they want to be.	Webster Dictionary
A pragmatic approach to help people manage their acquisition or improvement of skills’ and can be either ‘directive or non-directive.	David Clutterbuck, 1998
A coach is a trusted role model, adviser, wise person, friend, steward, or guide – who works with emerging human and organizational forces to tap new energy and purpose, to shape new visions and plans, and to generate desired results. The coach is someone trained and devoted to guiding others into increased competence, commitment and confidence.	Frederic Hudson, Handbook of Coaching
A collaborative solution-focused, results-orientated and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of performance, life experience, self-directed learning and personal growth of individuals and organizations.	Anthony M. Grant, 2006
The process of equipping people with the tools, knowledge and opportunities they need to develop themselves and become more effective.	David Peterson, 1996
The facilitation of learning and development with the purpose of improving performance and enhancing effective action, goals achievement, and personal satisfaction.	Peter Bluckert, 2006
Coaching is a change process that mobilizes the strengths and realizes the potential of an individual or an organization	Institute of Coaching
Unlocking a person’s potential to maximize his or her own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them.	Center for Creative Leadership
Coaching as partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential. The process of coaching often unlocks previously untapped sources of imagination, productivity and leadership.	International Coaching Federation

For the purpose of this paper, we will use International Coaching Federation (ICF) definition of coaching: “*Coaching as partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential. The process of coaching often unlocks previously untapped sources of imagination, productivity and leadership*” simply because ICF has now become the trendsetter in business/ corporate/ management coaching (Passmore and Sinclair, 2020). The research in coaching has grown exponentially in the last decade with Jonathan Passmore and Tracy Sinclair leading the citation traffic as shown in Figure 2.

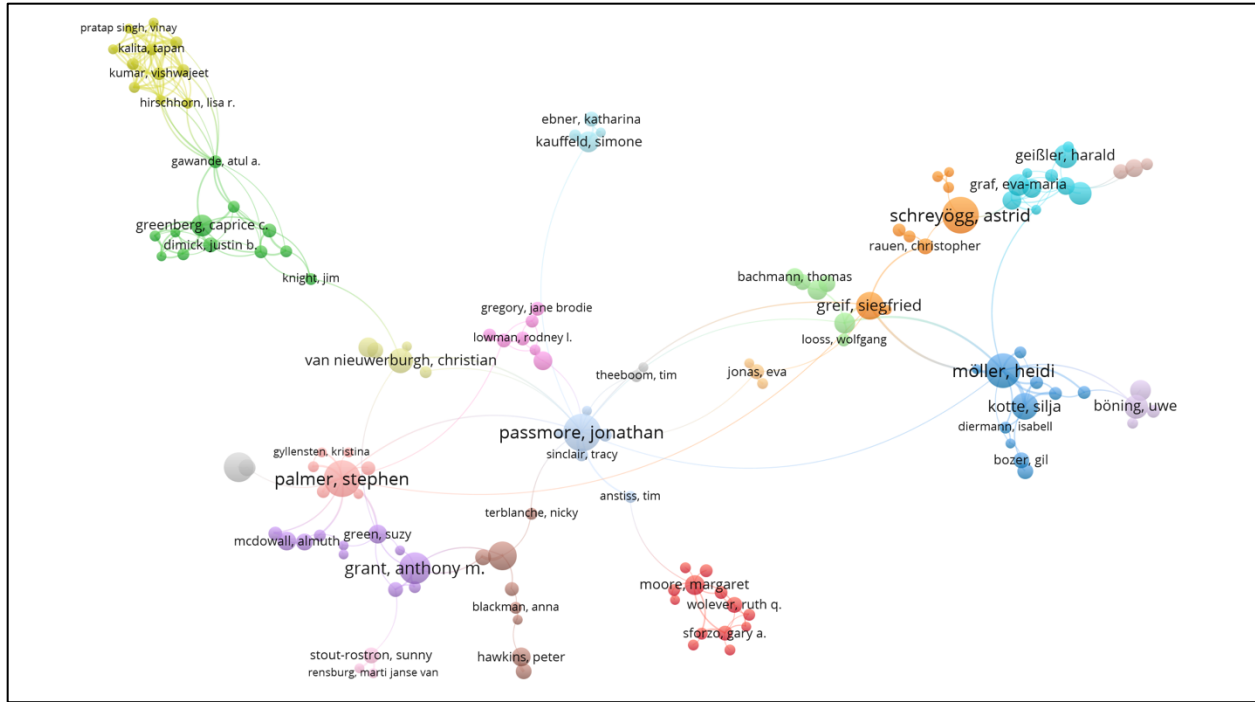


Figure 2. Author citation analysis on the term ‘corporate coaching’

Published research based on one or more studies shows that coaching delivers the following outcomes: Client satisfaction with their relationship with the coach and the process results from coaching (de Haan et al., 2019, de Haan et al., 2020). The client’s intention to act on and expect specific goals results from coaching (Grant, 2012; Spence et al., 2008). An improved sense of well-being results from coaching (Spence and Grant, 2007). A more substantial and coherent personal vision of one’s ideal future results from coaching (Mosteo et al., 2016). A wide variety of health outcomes also result from coaching, such as increased quality of life measures, decreased pain, health care utilization (Hackshaw et al., 2016), and potential behaviour change (Frates et al., 2011; Sforzo et al., 2019; Wolever et al., 2013). Nevertheless, the outcomes assessed reflect a narrow part of the spectrum of possible desired outcomes (Athanasopoulou and Dopson, 2018; Theeboom et al., 2014). Numerous studies have investigated how coaching can enhance an individual’s work-life balance. The research examining the experiences of a group of managers participating in an externally provided coaching programme reaches the conclusion that coaching significantly improves the effectiveness of the links between self-development, management development, and organizational effectiveness including stress management and work/life balance. (Wales, 2002)

2.2 Work-Life Integration (WLI)

There are two different ways to think about the boundaries between personal and professional lives, WLI and work-life balance (WLB). Both WLI and WLB are realistic strategies for striking a balance between obligations to one’s personal and professional lives. WLB is quite distinct from the term WLI. WLI is a strategy that increases symbiotic relationships between all the components of “life”—work, home/family, community, individual well-being, and health. To achieve WLB, one’s personal and professional lives must cohabit while yet thriving independently. Employees set clear boundaries between work and home life so they can offer both their undivided attention at any given time. WLI is based on the idea that there is no distinction between the two and that they must coexist in harmony. WLI is a modern work model that reframes the traditional work-life debate by expecting a system of key stakeholders from the work and family spheres, along with the community as an active partner, to recognize, re-examine, and reorganize previously held assumptions and expectations about work and family in order to generate system-sensitive solutions that are comprehensive, healthy, and beneficial to all parties (Googins, 1997; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Voydanoff, 2005). Solutions put forth by the major stakeholders to address the activities and priorities linked with work, family, and community are equally valued within this meso-systemic framework (Bailyn et al., 2001; Voydanoff, 2005). The possibility and shared duty of developing comprehensive solutions capable of producing more

and healthier returns than would be obtained by isolating are created by the collaboration among key stakeholders, which also involves the community. In contrast to WLB, which has a lot of research related to coaching, DL and E-SuPer, research on using the concept of WLI is non-existent when it comes to sustainable employee performance. The relationship of those aforementioned variables which are generated from Scopus database can be seen in Figure 3, Figure 4, and Figure 5.

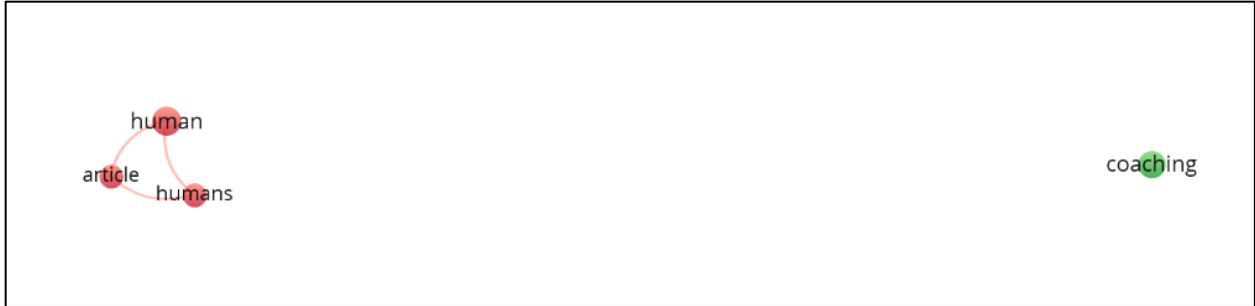


Figure 3. Coaching and work-life integration interconnection.



Figure 4. Leadership and work-life integration interconnection.

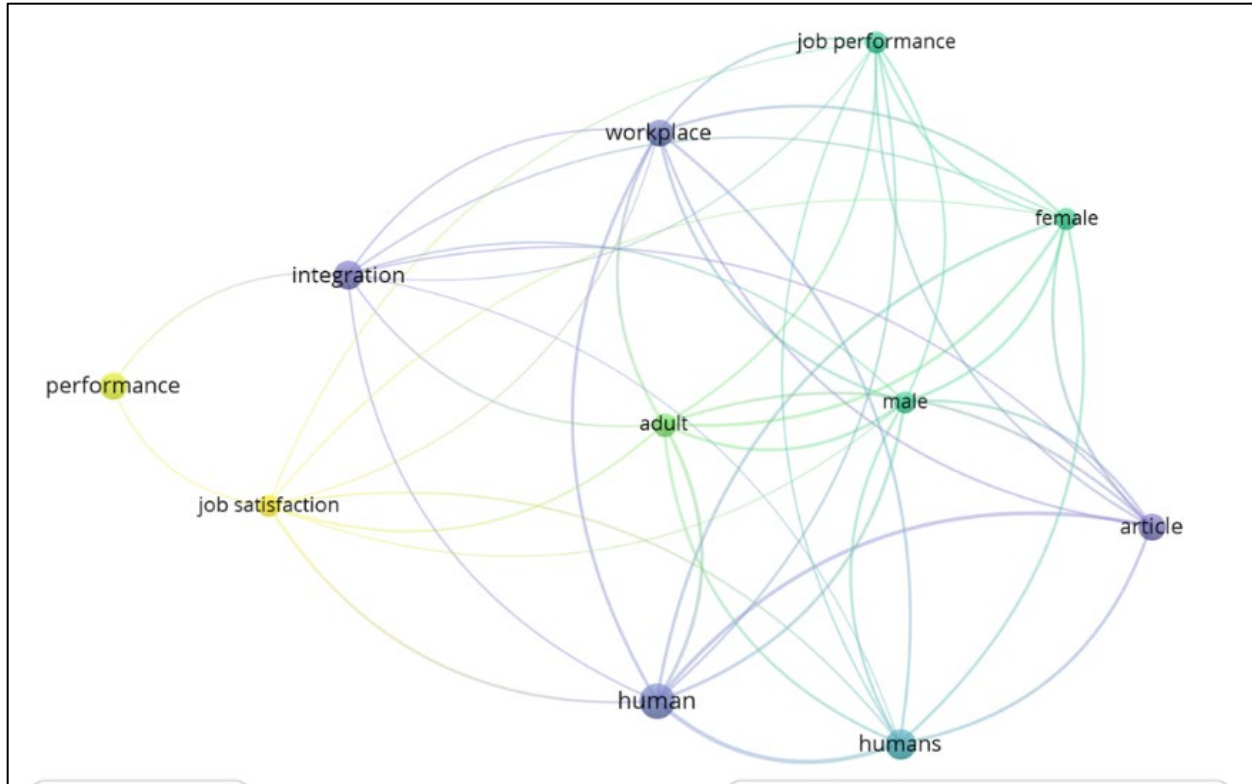


Figure 5. Work-life integration and employee performance interconnection

Mobile work and virtual collaboration are both constantly expanding as the digital transition continues. While there are some downsides related to teamwork, this advancement promotes advantages on the organizational and individual levels. Positive changes are anticipated in the following areas: leadership; technology (e.g., improvements in virtuality and artificial intelligence); WLI; and involvement and flexibility in the workplace (Kauffeld et al., 2022). Considering that this phenomenon will continue and become a personal and professional style of balance in the future, several issues need to be addressed with further research, such as the following points.

- 1) The organizations continue to use the WLB idea, which distinguished between life outside of work and work itself, despite the fact that trends are shifting from WLB to integration. Additionally, not all businesses could implement the WLI concept; others chose to implement the WLB concept. This is a result of the distinction between the job functions that could not use WLI systems and flexible working hours (Afif, 2019).
- 2) A role-blurring may occur from integration, which makes it easier for people to switch between roles but increases work-life conflict (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000). (Desrochers and Sargent, 2004; Galvin and Schieman, 2012).
- 3) Positive affect and negative affect are related to work-life outcomes because they alter how people experience life pressures, according to new research and the congruency theory, which links personality traits and perceptions to WLI. In order to fully comprehend how personality affects the integration of work and life, much more research is required (Michel & Clark, 2011). Additionally, because demands in both work and life are constantly changing, future study might make more use of intraindividual approaches (Ilies et al., 2007).

2.3 Employee Sustainable Performance (E-SuPer)

Based on 980 abstract analysis using VOSviewer from Scopus and Google Scholar database, with minimum h-index 13 and minimum 6 citation/paper showed in figure 6, E-SuPer is closely related with transformational leadership, organisational citizenship behaviour, leadership style, and sustainability, which all revolves around the study of engagement, most notably employee engagement that includes well-known variables such as motivation, commitment, involvement, culture, productivity, and performance. We have witnessed a growing interest in the past decades in

building sustainability for ensuring the performance of both organizations and employees in the long haul (De Jonge and Peeters, 2019; Perrott, 2015; and Pfeffer, 2016). “Sustainability” and “performance” without a doubt are two of the most popular term in business context. However, from academic point of view, these two topics are rarely studied together.

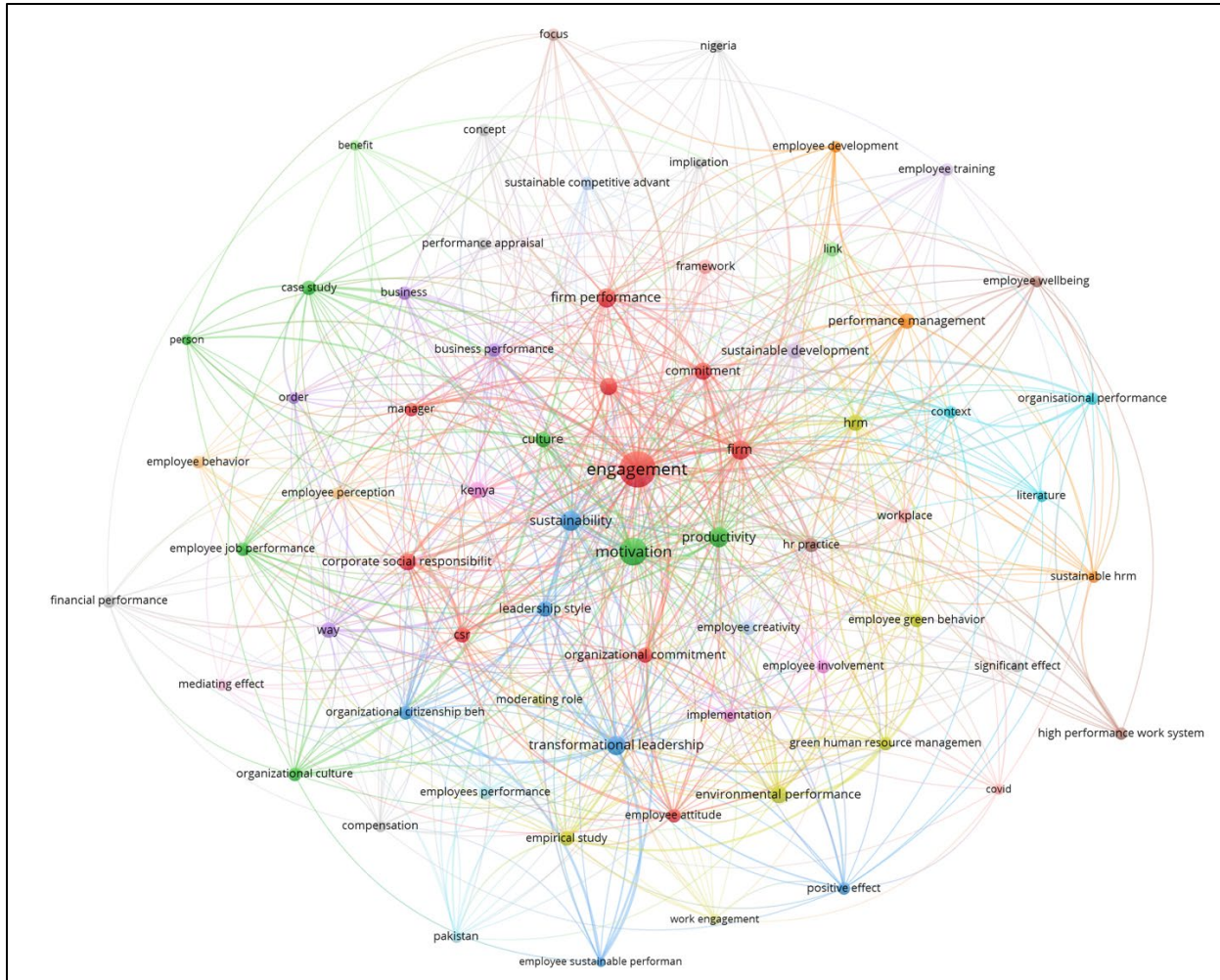


Figure 6. E-SuPer research interconnection

This is rather tragic, as high employee performance may, in the short run as well as in the long run, have adverse consequences for employee health and well-being, which could in turn negatively affect later employee performance (De Dreu et al., 2004; Taris and Schaufeli., 2015; Wright and Cropanzano, 2004; and Wright et al., 2007). This study proposes E-SuPer as dependent variable of newly introduced management concept (i.e. Coaching and Digital Leadership), whereas these two antecedents are predicting performance in the long run. Previous study has established a conceptual assessment framework to identify what sustainability means to a specific organization and how existing programs and initiatives can be used to improve the sustainability of an organization’s overall performance (Beloff et al., 2004). Interestingly, the value of sustainable performance at the individual level, i.e., for employees rather than the organizations they work for, is often overlooked or even neglected. Therefore it is imperative to explore sustainable performance from an individual perspective; that is, E-SuPer at work. Based on this status quo, there are still many gaps in the theoretical and empirical knowledge surrounding E-SuPer, its impact and also antecedents. (Ji et al., 2021)

2.1 Digital Leadership (DL)

For centuries leadership generally define as the interaction between the leader and his followers in which the leader direct and supervises his subordinate to do the work. Leadership can be related to achieving target numbers and managing people and is also related to the leader's ability to focus on the future. According to Kotter (1990) Leadership itself then requires the ability in influencing people to work towards the goals of the organization or a team and motivate employees for achieving their best every day. With the developments and innovations within the era of 4.0 technology, many organizations are then transforming to adapt to the demands of digital technology. There are much research before has shown that digital transformation has fundamental effects on businesses, societies and individuals (Westerman & Bonnet, 2014, Berman & Marshall, 2014, Berman, 2012, Bouee, 2015, Rogers, 2016). Digital transformation is changing all aspects of business management—organizations, current or projected business models, business processes, ecosystems, services, and products (Schallmo and Rusnjak, 2017). Digital transformation processes are considered to be a prime challenge for leadership and top management of transforming organizations (Westerman & Bonnet, 2014).

Digital Transformation demands leadership. The concept of E-leadership and DL then emerged, and several studies gave a different view. Klus & Müller (1998) define E-Leadership and DL as a synonym. Another research offers a different approach where e-leadership will not change the fundamentals of business, but the execution of business as supported by technology (Dasgupta, 2011) and DL “doing the right things for the strategic success of digitalization for the enterprise and its business ecosystem” (Elsawy et al, 2011). In relation to have a comprehensive definition, (Eberl & Drewes 2021) define in their terms of DL as a complex construct aiming for a customer-centered, digitally enabled, leading-edge business model by (1) transforming the role, skills, and style of the digital leader, (2) realizing a digital organization, including governance, vision, values, structure, culture, and decision processes, and (3) adjusting people management, virtual teams, knowledge, and communication and collaboration on the individual level.

Most organization are now evaluating and planning the adoption of DL as a leadership approach aiming at supporting the realization of digitally enabled business models by changing the behavior of leaders, organizational structures, and employee (Eberl & Drewes, 2021). Larjovuori et al. (2016) defined DL as “the leaders’ ability to create a clear and meaningful vision for the digitalization process and the capability to execute strategies to actualize it”. DL unlike traditional leadership are built according to environment of the organisations’ in (Morgan and Papadonikolaki, 2022), and when built appropriately, DL will facilitate innovation performance (Benitez et al., 2022), governance (Seaman, 2021), agility and transformation (Stepnov, 2021), self-organisation (Gierlich-Joas, Hess, and Neuburger, 2020), cultural intelligence (Ruth and Netzer, 2020), collaboration (Frankowska and Rzeczycki, 2020), and psychological well-being (Zeike et al., 2019).

Scopus database analysis in Figure 7 shows the term DL closely related to transformation, digital era, digital leader, leadership role, which affecting its relationship with employee, employee performance, and eventually company's performance. Several indicators of digital leaders are also identified; digital skills, dynamic capability in managing virtual team, digital storytelling and digital pedagogy (in education).

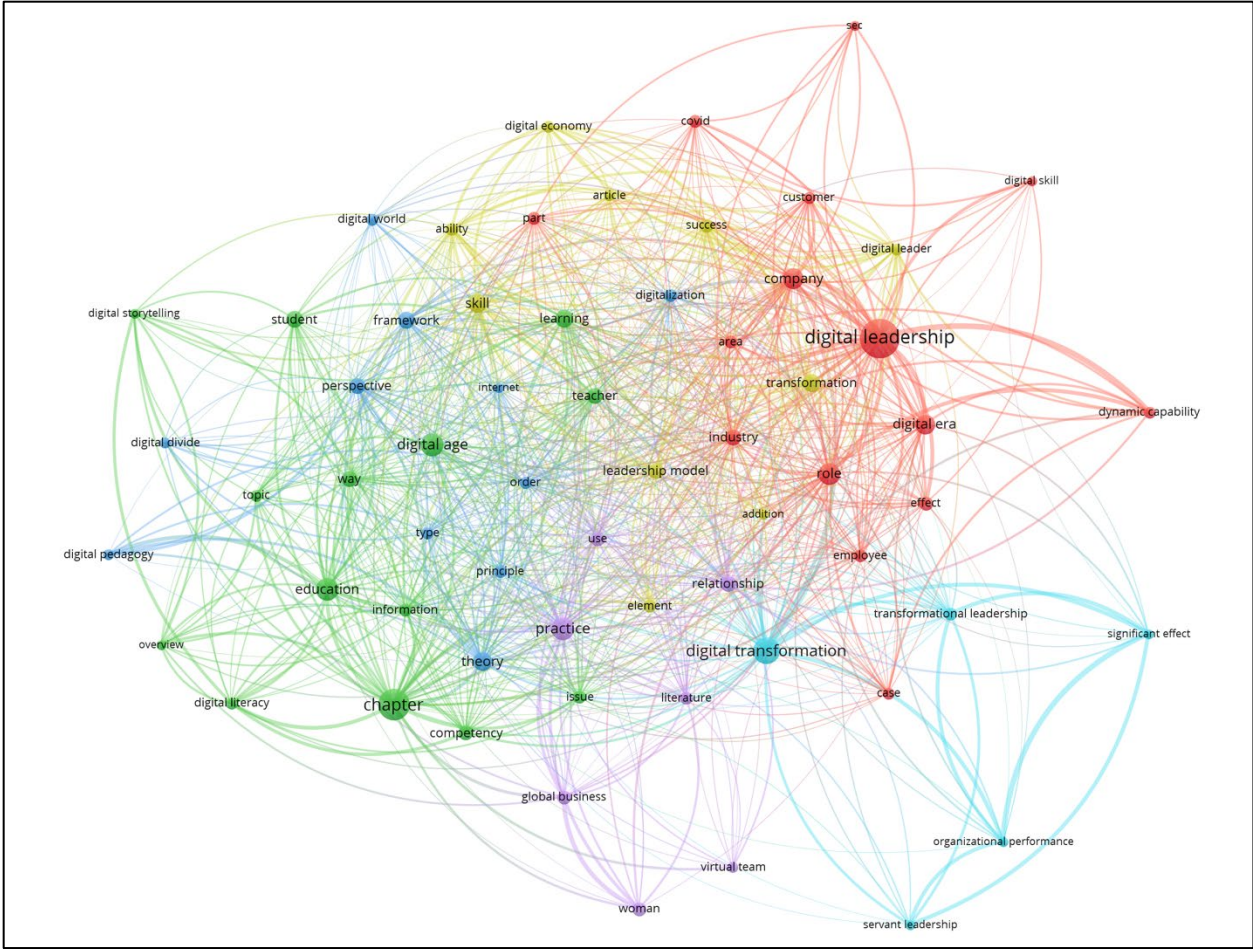


Figure 7. Digital leadership research interconnection

The digital transformation and the development of technology 4.0 have changed the nature of work in all organizations worldwide. This change in the nature of work impacts working conditions in daily life and changes the employees' working style. Previous research has shown how digital transformation and technology continually affect job redesign and transform the organizational environment and demands of new leadership ability. Most companies today are developing new digital business strategies, but they do not necessarily understand the role of digital leadership in this process (Abbu & Gopalakrishna, 2021). According to recent research, the most significant characteristics that differentiate digital leaders from other non-leaders or traditional leaders are their different skills, attitudes, knowledge, and professional and personal experiences (Marcel De Araujo et al., 2021).

Now, with the recent challenges and different roles in digital transformation, how does DL affect the work-related situation? Although the impact of digitalization itself is still widely debated regarding work-related effects within the organization, no research has specifically examined its impact on the specific term as WLI mentioned in this article. Work-life integration itself is defined as a reconciliation process of work, family, and individual self-demands and time (Heraty, Morley, Cleveland, Grady & McCarthy, 2008). As we may find in Figure 8 and Figure 9, the research on DL is most likely related to character and competency, agility, well-being, and WLB. However, WLI in relation to DL has not yet properly researched.

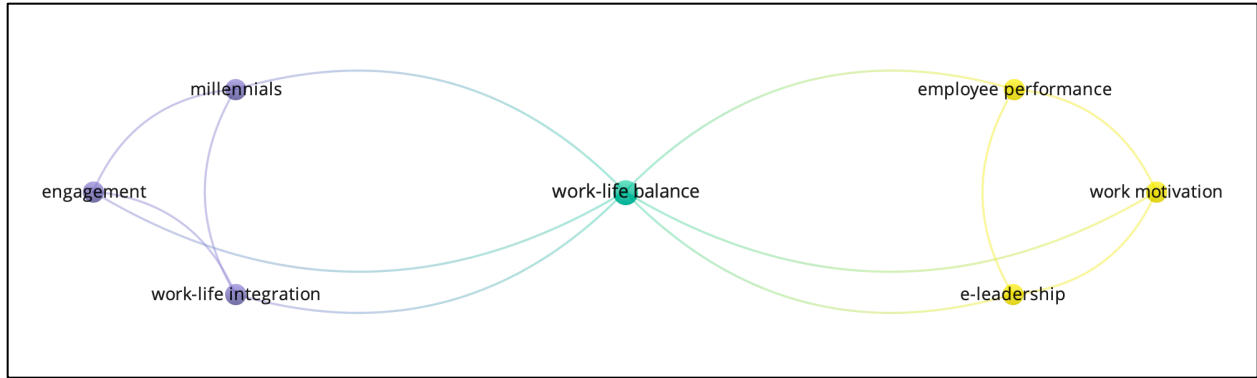


Figure 8. Work-Life Integration interconnection

In terms of Employee Performance, Management in the organization uses performance as a way to communicate goals and performance standards to employees and to drive them to perform better in the future for the benefit of the firm (Shafini et al., 2016). However, Employee performance measured over a long period and viewed as “sustainability” was not yet having a specific related study and research. Based on Scopus data analysis as we may find in Figure 8, E-SuPer, has yet interlinked with DL in any research whatsoever, leaving a broad gap to be closed.

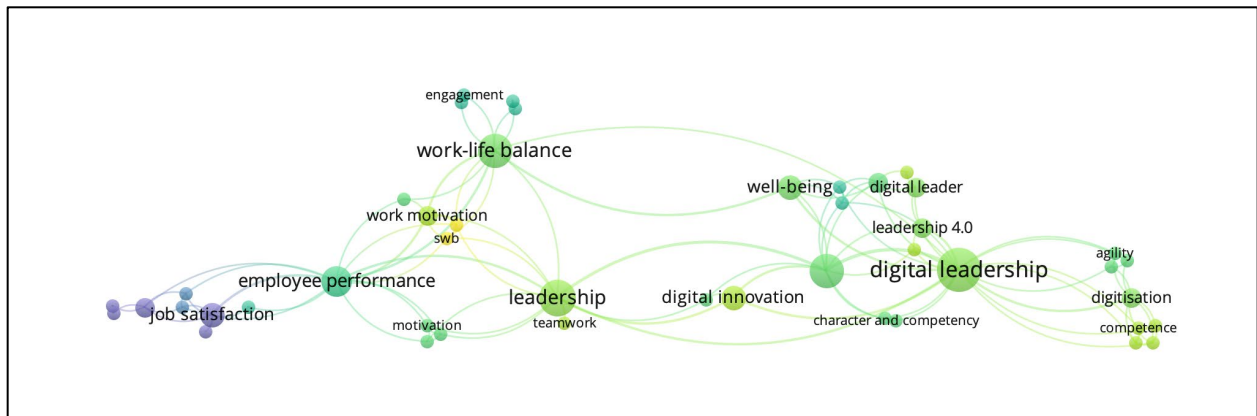


Figure 9. Digital Leadership, Employee Sustainable Performance, and Work-Life Integration interconnection

3. Conceptual Framework

There is remain a huge gap among variables’ interconnection; CC to WLI, DL to WLI, WLI to E-SuPer, CC to E-SuPer, and DL to E-SuPer, leaving massive field od research to be explored. Therefore we propose a conceptual framework to bridge these gaps as shown in Figure 10 below, which highlights potential discoveries of the aforementioned variables.

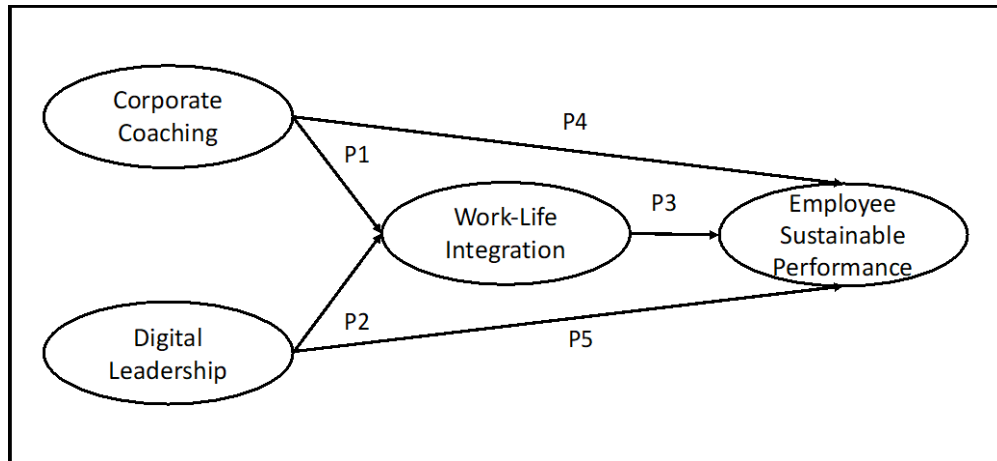


Figure 10. Proposed Conceptual Framework

Of all the growing research in the field of CC, there are still massive research gaps to be filled, one of the biggest research questions “Does coaching work?” Such question cannot be answered without first defining what determines coaching effectiveness. Multiple studies have investigated how coaching can improve an individual's WLB, but none have examined how CC can enhance employee WLI. Several coaching outcomes have not been studied or sufficiently and rigorously studied. Self-change could be an additional important coaching outcome in behaviour change and change in self-awareness, self-access, self-regulation, self-insight, self-congruence, and self-reflection (Diller et al., 2021a, 2021b). Behaviour change could include the improvement of behaviour or competencies that help clients be more effective (Boyatzis & Cavanagh, 2018; Grover & Furnham, 2016), have better relationships with others at work and home, and improve their performance (both measures of success and effectiveness, Luthans et al., 1988). However, there is no evidence that coaching improving E-SuPer.

The relationship between work-life balance and employee performance has been the focus of a number of studies, including as follow: The achievement of a better work-life balance can bring benefits for employers in terms of having a more motivated, productive, and less stressed workforce that feels valued; attracting a broader range of candidates, such as older part-time workers and career changers; increased productivity and reduced absenteeism; gaining a reputation as an employer of choice; retaining valued employees; reducing costs; and maximizing available labour (Byrne, 2005). Stress at work impairs individual performance and organizational effectiveness. Personal life coaching is a well-established method among business and management executives as well as some public organizations for reducing work-related stress (Hawksley, 2007). A high quality of work life leads to increased organizational productivity and employee performance, motivation, commitment, pride, and job satisfaction. The constructs are positively correlated with work-life quality (Xhakollari, 2013). However, our literature review shows the correlation between work-life balance and sustainable employee performance has not been established. The closest research we can find is the demand for WLI such as Flexible Working Arrangements which indicates the implementation of work-life policies and FWAs may impact the organization’s performance but yet to touch employee performance, moreover E-SuPer (Kumar et al., 2021).

The gap in the research between DL and WLI is that DL focuses more on employee psychological condition such as well-being, agility, and work-life balance rather than WLI. Especially with the pandemic conditions that have occurred since 2020, research is much more focused on how to maintain employee well-being or work-life balance program. WLI itself has not been discussed much in the realm of leadership and especially in DL. Regarding the relationship between DL and ESuPer, no research has been found to see the relationship between these two and this can then be a gap for future research to see the dependency relationship between these two variables.

4. Implications

This study contributes to both theoretical and practical implications. From the theoretical stand-point, this research contributes to the literature of CC, DL, WLI, and E-SuPer, thus providing a strategic conceptual model which clarifies the recognised interactive nexus between these variables. Subsequently, this research closes the gap in the literature

which calls for more studies on the links between CC, DL, WLI, and E-SuPer. Eventually, by applying the conceptual model of this research, researchers can develop empirical studies that explain the scheme's relationships in a more effective way.

From a practical stand-point, the conceptual model helps decision-makers and managers in improving performance as a coactive influence. Also, the existing study can help managers understand the influence of the adoption of CC, DL, WLI, and E-SuPer theories in organisational context. Consequently, managers and leaders must be concerned about balancing the independent variables to meet optimum level of interplay that leads to desired result. Additionally, this study assists managers and leaders with in-depth knowledge of each variable's capabilities and components, and how to utilise these capabilities to improve the organisation's overall performance and create the organisation's competitive and comparative advantage.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Latest research has given much attention to CC, DL, WLI, and E-SuPer as independent variables, but yet to create a more meaningful relationship between them with each and every variable are considered to be novel and not yet widely implemented in the field of practice. This provides major opportunities to be taken advantage of and we strongly recommend the research are conducted intensively and extensively to achieve general theory and provides both researchers and practitioners alike an enlightenment on how those variables in such nexus interplay.

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Biographies

Triaji Prio Pratomo is a practitioner-academic (pracademic) at Telkom University Indonesia since 2021, previously accountable as CEO (2019-2021) of LPP Agro Nusantara a subsidiary of Perkebunan Nusantara Holding, VP Leadership and Future Capability Academy (2013-2019) of PT. Bank Negara Indonesia (persero) Tbk., Senior Consultant (2010-2013) of Accenture Plc., and Program Manager (2007-2013) at Sampoerna School of Business and Management ITB. He is currently pursuing postgraduate degree (doctoral) in the field of Human Resources Management at Islamic University of Indonesia (UII), after previously holds Master of Business Administration from Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB). Triaji holds quite a number of professional certifications, most notably Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Teacher, Cultural Transformation Tools Practitioner from Barrett Values Centre, Certified Training Design and Delivery, and many more. Triaji is known for his productivity in written materials such as international journals (scopus and crossref indexed), books (2 individually, and 1 collaboratively), as well as daily reflection blog. People development is his life calling and passion, he is here to serve humanity.

Fiona Wang holds a Professional Certified Coach (PCC) credential from ICF and a Registered ICF Mentor Coach . Her educational background is Accounting (Atma Jaya Yogyakarta University) and she got a Masters in Management (Tanjung Pura Pontianak University). She has more than 20 years of experience as an executive in FMCG and retail. Fiona has also served as a counsellor, mind therapist and life coach since 2009. She has been providing training and seminars on wellness and leadership since 2012. After resigning from her position as Vice President at a national retail company, Fiona currently dedicates her time as a professional leadership & wellness coach and coach trainer at the Integra Institute. She developed SMILE coaching tools to help people easily learn practical coaching skills that are already widely used by personal and corporates. Fiona has a strong interest in Mind technology and developed an Intuitive Coaching program that not only empowers the Rational mind but also explores the Intuitive Mind of the client. She also created the Intuitive Coaching Cards and Intuitive Leadership Tools as a tool for learning and developing intuition.

Fauziah Zulfitri holds a Professional Certified Coach (PCC) credential from ICF and holds Licensed Master Coach credential from International Muslim Women Coaching Academy. Fauziah graduated from Faculty of Psychology and currently pursuing master degree in the field of Digital Talent Management at Telkom University. She is a professional trainer, ICF Professional Certified Coach, Certified Leadership and Executive Coach, Certified Virtual Facilitator from International Institute of Facilitation, and BNSP Indonesia Competency Assessor. Fauziah has 20 years of extensive experience in Human Resources & People Development area with various exposures: Recruitment & Assessment, Talent Management, Compensation & Benefit, Employee Relation, Organizational Development and Industrial Relation. After resigning from her last position as Director of Hospitality Group at one of the biggest corporations in East Indonesia, she builds her own consulting company based in Makassar, South Sulawesi. With her national client exposure, in just six years her consulting firm, Insight Indonesia, has helped more than a 100 organization from SMEs to larger Corporation across Indonesia. Recently in 2022, with Muslim Women Coaching Academy Fauziah developed and launched the first Islamic syariah based Coaching card “Essence of Life” as a tool for self-coaching, professional coaching session and other development approach like training and facilitation.