

Cascade of Misalignment: Understanding Coaching Erosion in Hierarchical Organizations

Iwan Pramana¹

Universitas Prasetiya Mulya, Jakarta, Indonesia¹

17102410004@student.prasetiyamulya.ac.id¹



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Abstract

Purpose: This study explores why coaching initiatives fail to deliver sustained developmental impact in hierarchical and compliance-driven organizations using the Indonesian banking sector as a context.

Research Methodology: This qualitative study was conducted in Indonesia using Gioia's methodology to examine why coaching initiatives do not deliver sustained developmental impact in hierarchical banking organizations. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 23 professional coaches and triangulated with classroom observations and peer debriefing. The data were manually coded using Microsoft Excel (no software-based CAQDAS was used). Thematic analysis was applied to identify first-order concepts, second-order themes, and aggregate dimensions using interpretive logic.

Results: Coaching becomes ineffective as a cascade of misalignment starts with role confusion and behavioral gaps, escalating into symbolic and reactive implementation, and culminating in cultural and structural barriers, such as fear of openness and strategic drift. These dynamics create a recursive breakdown that weakens coaching effectiveness despite formal institutional support.

Conclusions: Coaching ineffectiveness in hierarchical organizations emerges not from isolated deficiencies, but from a cumulative cascade of misalignment across individual understanding, managerial practice, and structural-cultural conditions.

Limitations: This study focuses on a specific sector (banking) and draws data primarily from coach perspectives. Broader generalizability may require further multi-actor and cross-industry studies.

Contributions: This study contributes to Human Resource Development (HRD) theory by offering a multilevel explanation of coaching erosion and proposing a conceptual framework to help organizations realign coaching strategies with structural and cultural realities.

Keywords: *Banking Sector, Coaching Ineffectiveness, Gioia Method, HRD, Organizational Misalignment*

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1. Introduction

Coaching is increasingly recognized as a key strategy for building leadership capacity and managing organizational complexity (Bachkirova, Arthur, & Reading, 2020; Cox, Clutterbuck, & Bachkirova, 2023). In highly regulated and performance-oriented sectors, such as banking, coaching serves as a tool to drive transformation (Bauer & Grosse, 2024), align managerial behavior with strategic objectives, and strengthen psychological resilience in the face of constant change (Diener & Špaček, 2021). Once limited to elite organizations, coaching has become a common investment in human capital across industries (Cannon-Bowers et al., 2023). This development is evident in the growing adoption of internal coaching programs, particularly in state-owned and private banks aiming to modernize talent

development in response to regulatory pressure and digital transformation ([Al Issa & Omar, 2024](#); [Diener & Špaček, 2021](#)). In the banking context, rigid hierarchies, strict compliance systems, and a command-oriented culture significantly influence the introduction and practice of coaching.

A growing body of research has demonstrated the positive effects of coaching on both individual and organizational outcomes. Studies and meta-analyses report consistent improvements in goal achievement, self-efficacy, behavioral change, and work engagement across various coaching formats ([Ben-Hador, 2024](#); [Cannon-Bowers et al., 2023](#)). Brief interventions, such as micro-coaching, have also shown benefits in enhancing employee motivation and adaptive performance. In leadership development, coaching contributes to lower burnout, greater resilience, and better decision-making in volatile and uncertain environments ([Mosala & Bennett, 2024](#)). Coaching is also linked to identity development, supporting leaders in reflecting on their roles, reconstructing personal narratives, and aligning with organizational expectations ([Horvath, Wilder, & Guthmiller, 2024](#); [Passmore & Evans-Krimme, 2021](#)). These findings reinforce coaching as a high-impact intervention in the field of Human Resource Development (HRD).

Despite its growing popularity and documented benefits, coaching does not always lead to the desired outcomes. Surprisingly, limited research has examined the specific conditions under which coaching falls short, particularly in hierarchical and compliance-driven environments, such as banking. The existing literature tends to focus on success stories and outcome-based evaluations, while paying less attention to relational, structural, and contextual barriers that may reduce coaching effectiveness ([Cannon-Bowers et al., 2023](#)). A recent study by [Kruger and Terblanche \(2025\)](#) begins to address this gap by identifying several contributing factors, including coach-coachee misalignment, ineffective coaching processes, and organizational conditions that do not support developmental efforts. The research gap addressed in this study is the lack of empirical investigation that explicitly explains the conditions and processes through which coaching initiatives become ineffective in hierarchical and compliance-driven organizational environments, particularly within the banking sector.

Studies have shown that the banking sector is characterized by top-down management structures, strict regulatory oversight, and a strong focus on institutional goals rather than individual development conditions that may limit the effectiveness of people-centered interventions, such as coaching ([Kachi et al., 2020](#); [Kamna & Ilkhanizadeh, 2022](#); [Ndengu & Leka, 2022](#)). Regulatory bodies also play a central role in shaping performance assessments and disclosure practices, reinforcing rigid behavioral norms across organizations ([Leitner & Williams, 2023](#)). In addition, banks differ structurally from non-financial firms because of their high leverage, dispersed debt structures, systemic importance, and intensive supervision, all of which require tailored approaches to human resource development ([Laeven, 2013](#)).

Against this backdrop, the present study explores the breakdown of coaching initiatives as an emergent process shaped by institutional, managerial, and cultural dynamics within the banking industry. It builds on earlier work by ([Pramana & Kristamuljana, 2025](#)), which identified early signs of coaching ineffectiveness in highly structured organizations by systematically unpacking the multilevel misalignments that may explain why coaching efforts fall short in this context. This study aims to examine why coaching initiatives often fall short in the banking sector by exploring how coaching ineffectiveness emerges within regulated and hierarchical organizational environments. While prior research has addressed coaching effectiveness, most studies have focused on successful cases in high-autonomy settings, leaving a limited understanding of how coaching becomes ineffective in regulated and hierarchical environments.

Drawing on a qualitative approach using the Gioia methodology, this study develops a proposed framework based on interviews with experienced coaches who have worked with clients in the banking industry. The proposed Cascade of Misalignment framework illustrates that coaching breakdowns typically stem not from individual shortcomings, but from interconnected misalignments involving institutional mandates, leadership inconsistency, and organizational culture. This article contributes to

HRD scholarship by identifying contextual constraints that reduce coaching effectiveness in rigid institutions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Coaching as a Human Resource Development Strategy

Coaching has become a widely recognized Human Resource Development (HRD) intervention, valued for its role in building leadership capacity, supporting behavioral change, and promoting goal achievement across different organizational settings ([Bozer & Jones, 2018](#); [Jansen, Czabanowska, de Pagter, & de Koeijer, 2024](#); [Lee, Idris, & Tuckey, 2019](#); [Passarelli, Moore, & Van Oosten, 2022](#)). Its positive influence on performance, engagement, and self-efficacy has been confirmed by several meta-analyses ([Ben-Hador, 2024](#); [Cox et al., 2023](#)). Coaching also aligns with key HRD principles that emphasize learning, performance alignment, and the creation of meaning in the workplace ([Mosala & Bennett, 2024](#); [Sipondo & Terblanche, 2024](#)). Despite growing interest in coaching, recent studies have raised concerns about its variable effectiveness. Some scholars suggest that overly optimistic portrayals may overlook critical challenges, especially in hierarchical and tightly regulated environments. A more balanced understanding of coaching, acknowledging both its benefits and limitations, is needed to strengthen its strategic role in HRD.

2.2. Role Clarity and Coaching Ambiguity

A persistent challenge in coaching is the lack of clear role boundaries, often causing confusion with mentoring or performance evaluation ([Joo, 2005](#)). Such ambiguity reduces coachee engagement and undermines developmental outcomes, particularly where managerial authority overlaps with coaching intentions ([Bozer & Jones, 2018](#); [Grant, 2017](#)). Studies have confirmed the enduring nature of this issue. [G. Jones and Gorell \(2021\)](#) observed that role confusion persists even in digital formats. [Milner](#) highlighted ethical tensions when leaders act as both managers and coaches ([Milner, Milner, McCarthy, & da Motta Veiga, 2023](#)), while others showed how unequal power relations discourage openness ([Ben-Hador, 2024](#)). [Kruger and Terblanche](#) identified role misperceptions as a key factor in failed workplace coaching ([Kruger & Terblanche, 2025](#)). [Ferro, Swiger, and Yoder \(2024\)](#) demonstrated that unclear roles can heighten stress and ambiguity in complex settings. These indicate that role clarity is not merely a definitional matter but a systemic requirement. In hierarchical organizations such as banking, where communication is often transactional, ambiguity in coaching roles can quickly erode its developmental intent.

2.3. Leadership Coaching Competencies

The effectiveness of organizational coaching depends heavily on leaders' coaching skills and behaviors; without adequate competencies, leaders struggle to facilitate reflective dialogues and goal setting ([Ely et al., 2010](#)). Insufficient coaching skillsets undermine trust and developmental outcomes ([Bozer & Jones, 2018](#); [R. J. Jones, Woods, & Guillaume, 2016](#)). Recent research confirms that this gap remains significant, showing that coaching competencies are essential for building trust in hybrid teams and enhancing authentic, change-oriented leadership. These competencies also relate to leaders' ability to foster self-regulation and learning, while emphasizing the importance of culturally adapted approaches and leaders' own self-regulation for effective coaching ([Cidral, Berg, & Paulino, 2023](#); [Halliwell, Mitchell, & Boyle, 2023](#); [Hu et al., 2024](#); [Mbokota & Myres, 2024](#); [Mühlberger et al., 2025](#)). These studies suggest that leadership coaching competencies are not static but evolve with organizational demands. Persistent skill gaps indicate that without deliberate capability-building, leaders may continue to undermine the sustainability of coaching initiatives ([Ellinger & Ellinger, 2021](#)).

2.4. Coaching-less Leadership

Leadership development is not only about building skills but also about integrating coaching into leaders' identities. Leadership identity evolves through reflective experiences; however, many leaders fail to embed coaching in their daily practice ([Lord & Hall, 2005](#)). When coaching is not internalized as a leadership behavior, development efforts remain superficial, and organizational coaching initiatives are often unsustainable ([Bozer & Jones, 2018](#)).

Recent studies have reinforced this argument across multiple contexts, conceptualizing coaching leadership as a learning process through which leaders develop optimism, self-efficacy, and practical tools for team development ([Karlsen & Berg, 2020](#)). This approach has been shown to enhance motivation, job satisfaction, and the quality of care in healthcare settings, while fostering innovation and team effectiveness across organizations ([Chegini, Kakemam, Asghari Jafarabadi, & Janati, 2020](#); [Liu & Xiang, 2020](#); [Szekely, Whiley, Pontes, & McDowall, 2025](#)).

Scholars have highlighted that coaching-based leadership promotes continuous learning and confirmed its positive impact on engagement and development in educational settings ([Halliwell et al., 2023](#); [Wang, Casey, & Cope, 2025](#)). Together, these studies suggest that coaching-less leadership reflects more than a skills gap; it indicates a systemic neglect of coaching as a leadership orientation. Without deliberate integration into leadership identity, coaching remains peripheral, weakening its developmental intent and limiting its contribution to sustainable organizational performance.

2.5. Symbolic Coaching and Managerial Inconsistency

Leadership practices are often infused with symbolic meaning and enacted for their ritual value rather than for developmental impact. Managerial practices frequently take the form of rituals that sustain legitimacy within organizations. Such actions project alignment with institutional expectations, even when they lack substantive developmental outcomes ([Clegg, Rhodes, & Kornberger, 2007](#)). This concern is deepened by arguments highlighting the paradoxical nature of organizational rituals, which, while appearing as opportunities for change, often operate as symbolic repetitions that stabilize existing structures. From this perspective, leadership behaviors risk becoming ritualized performances that secure legitimacy but contain rupture rather than fostering genuine organizational learning and transformation ([Islam, 2015](#)).

Recent research further develops these insights into symbolic participation, examining how symbolic acts underpin legitimacy within organizations and how symbolic diversity practices serve normative pressures more than authentic inclusion ([Fitzsimmons & Callan, 2020](#); [Picard & Islam, 2020](#)). Recent analyses highlight the persistence of symbolic representation in modern institutions, illustrating governance as symbolic compliance and linking leadership to symbolic interactionism, which underscores how managerial presence can function primarily as a symbolic marker ([Citraningsih & Noviandari, 2022](#); [Lotta et al., 2024](#); [Vitanova, 2021](#)). Despite these advances, symbolic perspectives have rarely been applied to coaching. This provides the basis for considering how coaching participation itself may become symbolic, performed as an institutional ritual to signal legitimacy while lacking authentic developmental engagement.

2.6. Coaching as Compliance Ritual

Institutional theory highlights how organizations often comply with formal requirements symbolically rather than substantively. This is described as ceremonial compliance, in which practices are decoupled from their developmental purpose ([Meyer & Rowan, 1977](#)). Organizational routines can become ritualized, fulfilling institutional demands without producing meaningful change ([Heimstädt, 2017](#)). Recent work confirms this tendency across multiple contexts. Compliance often reflects symbolic conformity rather than genuine improvement ([Anderson, 2017](#)). Managerialism in academia fosters ritualistic engagement, with actors playing along to preserve legitimacy ([Kalfa, Wilkinson, & Gollan, 2018](#)). Formal structures in leadership and organizational development can drift into symbolic rather than substantive practice ([Passarelli et al., 2022](#); [Rogers, 2022](#)).

Human resource development investments may reflect performative alignment with institutional expectations, whereas formal compliance is frequently used to signal legitimacy without producing deep developmental outcomes ([Alodhialah, 2025](#); [Kim, 2024](#)). Applied to coaching, compliance rituals occur when sessions are mandated or reported for formality rather than genuine development. Leaders may document “coaching activities” to satisfy policy requirements, but interactions remain superficial. Thus, coaching is decoupled from its intended developmental function, serving as a ceremonial practice that preserves legitimacy while failing to deliver substantive growth.

2.7. Problem-Triggered Coaching Culture

While coaching is ideally embedded as a proactive developmental practice, early research shows that it is often used reactively ([Feldman & Lankau, 2005](#)). Coaching cultures require readiness and integration into everyday leadership; however, workplace coaching is frequently positioned as a remedial intervention to address performance problems or leadership deficiencies ([Bozer & Jones, 2018](#)). Many organizations deploy coaching only when urgent problems arise, limiting its role as a continuous resource ([Ibarra & Scoular, 2019](#)). Recent studies confirm this remedial tendency. Coaching interventions are often triggered by organizational challenges rather than sustained development ([Nichol, Cook, & Ross, 2022](#)). Healthcare coaching programs are commonly initiated under crisis conditions or performance pressures ([Jansen et al., 2024](#)). Dominant coaching strategies can become misaligned when they are positioned primarily as corrective tools ([Coetzee, Veldsman, & Odendaal, 2023](#)).

In higher education, coaching mainly appears when teaching performance is inadequate ([Burleigh, Kroposki, Steele, Smith, & Murray, 2023](#)). Supervisory coaching is closely tied to performance feedback and turnover risks, further embedding coaching in problem-response cultures ([Lee et al., 2019](#)). Applied to organizational settings, this pattern reflects a problem-triggered coaching culture, where coaching is institutionally associated with problems, underperformance, or crises. Rather than enabling proactive growth, coaching becomes framed as a corrective mechanism, creating stigma and narrowing its developmental potential.

2.8. Structural Coaching Drift

Organizational research has long recognized the risk of drift, in which initiatives lose alignment with their original strategic purpose ([Jarzabkowski, 2007](#)). Competing logics and fragmented routines generate drift, thereby weakening strategic coherence. Drift often stems from the slow accumulation of structural and cultural contradictions rather than immediate breakdowns ([Pettersen & Schulman, 2019](#)). Applied to coaching, this suggests that even well-designed interventions may erode when organizational structures and cultures fail to sustain their developmental intent.

Recent studies illustrate that coaching often loses traction when structural supports are inconsistent or fragmented ([Kruger & Terblanche, 2025](#)). Alignment erodes when coaching decouples from leadership systems, leaving practices symbolic or short-term ([Moleka, 2024](#)). Cultural and structural barriers can limit the sustainability of leadership development, while contradictions between strategic goals and resource realities undermine continuity ([Bristol-Alagbariya, Ayanponle, & Ogedengbe, 2024](#)). Adaptive leadership and mentoring are critical to counteracting organizational drift and maintaining developmental alignment ([Buryk, Piatnychuk, & Biloshkurskyi, 2025](#)). Together, these insights reveal how coaching initiatives lose coherence not through abrupt ineffectiveness, but through a gradual process of drift.

2.9. Perceived Developmental Risk

Trust and psychological safety have long been recognized as essential conditions for developmental engagement ([Edmondson, 1999](#)). Psychological safety enables individuals to take interpersonal risks without fear of negative consequences, whereas its absence constrains openness and learning ([Schiemann, Mühlberger, Schoorman, & Jonas, 2019](#)). Trustworthiness in coaching relationships can be cultivated through benevolence and care, highlighting trust as a central condition for meaningful engagement ([Terblanche & Heyns, 2020](#)). Trust and trustworthiness are decisive in shaping the quality of coaching relationships, underpinning the relational quality of coaching, and influencing coachee openness ([Zhao & Jowett, 2022](#)). Mutual trust and psychological safety are preconditions for disclosure in internal coaching contexts, and organizational trust climates are critical for coaching readiness ([Abrantes, Mach, & Ferreira, 2022](#); [Ebrahimi, 2024](#); [Passmore, Tee, & Gold, 2025](#)). A trust deficit can undermine coaching effectiveness in Indonesian organizations, demonstrating how vulnerabilities derail coaching as a developmental tool ([Pramana, Budiman, & Kristamuljana, 2025](#)). Taken together, these insights indicate that reluctance to engage in coaching often reflects a well-documented barrier: the absence of trust and psychological safety. This study defines this as perceived developmental risk, a replication of established findings within the coaching domain.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design and Analytical Approach

This study employed a qualitative approach using Gioia's methodology ([Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013](#)) to identify the underlying causes of coaching ineffectiveness in the Indonesian banking sector. The qualitative data were coded manually using Microsoft Excel rather than Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), such as NVivo or Atlas.ti. This choice was made deliberately to maintain close and iterative engagement with the data during the coding process, which is consistent with the inductive and interpretive logic of Gioia's methodology.

Manual coding enabled the researchers to flexibly move between first-order concepts, second-order themes, and aggregate dimensions. Therefore, the decision was methodological rather than technical and did not affect the rigor or transparency of the analysis. The qualitative phase involved in-depth semi-structured interviews with 23 professional coaches selected through purposive and selective sampling. All participants had relevant experience with coaching engagements in Indonesian banking institutions, and the interviews lasted 30–60 minutes. The interviews explored coaches' backgrounds, coaching processes, contextual challenges, success factors, and perceived ineffectiveness. All sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Manual coding was conducted following three analytical steps: first-order coding (using participant-centric terms), second-order themes (researcher-centric constructs), and aggregate dimensions to develop a grounded data structure. The resulting conceptual framework was then subjected to a quantitative phase to confirm its structural rigor.

3.2. Trustworthiness, Reflexivity, and Researcher Positioning

To ensure trustworthiness, this study employed multi-stakeholder triangulation and reflexive techniques. Eight banking professionals serving as coaches and coachees from various hierarchical levels (Director to Staff) were involved to capture diverse perspectives. The researcher conducted two full-day observations in "Leader as Coach" training sessions with 25 managerial-level participants and also acted as a facilitator in another session involving 25 branch managers across Indonesia, thereby enabling prolonged engagement and contextual immersion ([Creswell & Poth, 2016](#)).

Reflexivity was maintained through a structured journal and peer debriefing with five senior coaches selected from the original pool of 23 informants. These steps enhanced the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings ([Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017](#)). The researcher, a Professional Certified Coach (PCC) certified from ICF with over 800 coaching hours, played an embedded yet reflexively aware role throughout the data collection. All coding and thematic development adhered to Gioia procedures, and AI-assisted tools (e.g., ChatGPT) were used to support reference management and language clarity. Final coding and interpretations were entirely determined by the researcher.

3.3. Theoretical Positioning of Second-Order Themes

To clarify the analytical logic underlying the presentation of results, this section explains how second-order themes were classified in terms of their theoretical positioning. Specifically, themes were positioned as emergent, replicative, or modifiable based on their relationships to existing literature. Emergent themes represent novel contributions derived inductively from the data, while replicative and modifiable themes reflect alignments or extensions of existing literature. Modification themes refer to reinterpretations or reframing of established concepts, offering new perspectives or uncovering unintended consequences. Replication themes confirm existing theoretical claims within the hierarchical and high-stakes context of the banking sector.

Although this classification is not a formal part of the Gioia methodology, it is informed by the theoretical positioning framework, which distinguishes between adding new constructs, modifying assumptions, and reinforcing known relationships ([Whetten, 1989](#)). To ensure rigor, each second-order theme was positioned by tracing its conceptual lineage from original sources, through mid-stage development, to recent literature from the past five years ([Suddaby, 2010](#)). This approach helps clarify each theme's theoretical contribution and its relevance to the current organizational context.

4. Results and Discussion

This study involved 23 professional coaches who had delivered coaching engagements within Indonesian banking institutions. The participants comprised 14 men and 9 women, with coaching experience ranging from 8 to 25 years. Most held certifications from the International Coaching Federation (ICF), while a few held credentials from other institutions, such as WCI, IPMA, and internal certifications. Eleven of the 23 had prior work experience in the banking industry, primarily in roles such as senior managers, corporate university trainers, and board-level advisors. This diversity in coaching credentials and banking exposure provided a rich basis for exploring coaching dynamics in hierarchical organizational settings.

Table 1. Profile summary of interviewed coaches

| No | Code | Gender | Years in coaching | Certification | Banking background | Previous role in banking |
|----|---------|--------|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | Coach A | Female | 10 | ICF | Yes | Learning head |
| 2 | Coach B | Male | 16 | ICF | Yes | Internal trainer |
| 3 | Coach C | Female | 8 | ICF | Yes | Senior operation manager |
| 4 | Coach D | Male | 10 | ICF | Yes | Senior support manager |
| 5 | Coach E | Male | 14 | ICF | No | - |
| 6 | Coach F | Female | 8 | ICF | Yes | Senior risk manager |
| 7 | Coach G | Male | 14 | ICF | No | - |
| 8 | Coach H | Male | 9 | ICF | No | - |
| 9 | Coach I | Male | 18 | Internal | No | - |
| 10 | Coach J | Male | 10 | WCI | No | - |
| 11 | Coach K | Male | 10 | ICF | No | - |
| 12 | Coach L | Male | 11 | ICF | No | - |
| 13 | Coach M | Male | 15 | IPMA | No | - |
| 14 | Coach N | Female | 13 | ICF | No | - |
| 15 | Coach O | Male | 12 | ICF | No | - |
| 16 | Coach P | Female | 13 | ICF | No | - |
| 17 | Coach Q | Male | 15 | ICF | Yes | Learning manager |
| 18 | Coach R | Male | 18 | ICF | Yes | Corp university head |
| 19 | Coach S | Female | 20 | ICF | Yes | Senior vice president |
| 20 | Coach T | Female | 20 | ICF | Yes | Senior vice president |
| 21 | Coach U | Male | 25 | ICF | Yes | Board-level advisor |
| 22 | Coach V | Female | 18 | ICF | No | - |
| 23 | Coach W | Female | 8 | ICF | Yes | Senior legal manager |

The analysis yielded several second-order themes and aggregate dimensions, which are presented in the following sections. Illustrative quotes from the interviews were included to highlight key patterns and underlying mechanisms contributing to coaching ineffectiveness in the banking context.

4.1. Overview of Data Structure and Theoretical Positioning

This study used Gioia's methodology to analyze interview data through three coding stages: first-order concepts, second-order themes, and aggregate dimensions (Gioia et al., 2013). A total of 27 first-order concepts were identified and grouped into eight second-order themes, which were then organized into three aggregate dimensions. Figure 1 displays the data structure, tracing the analytical path from raw statements to theoretical insights.

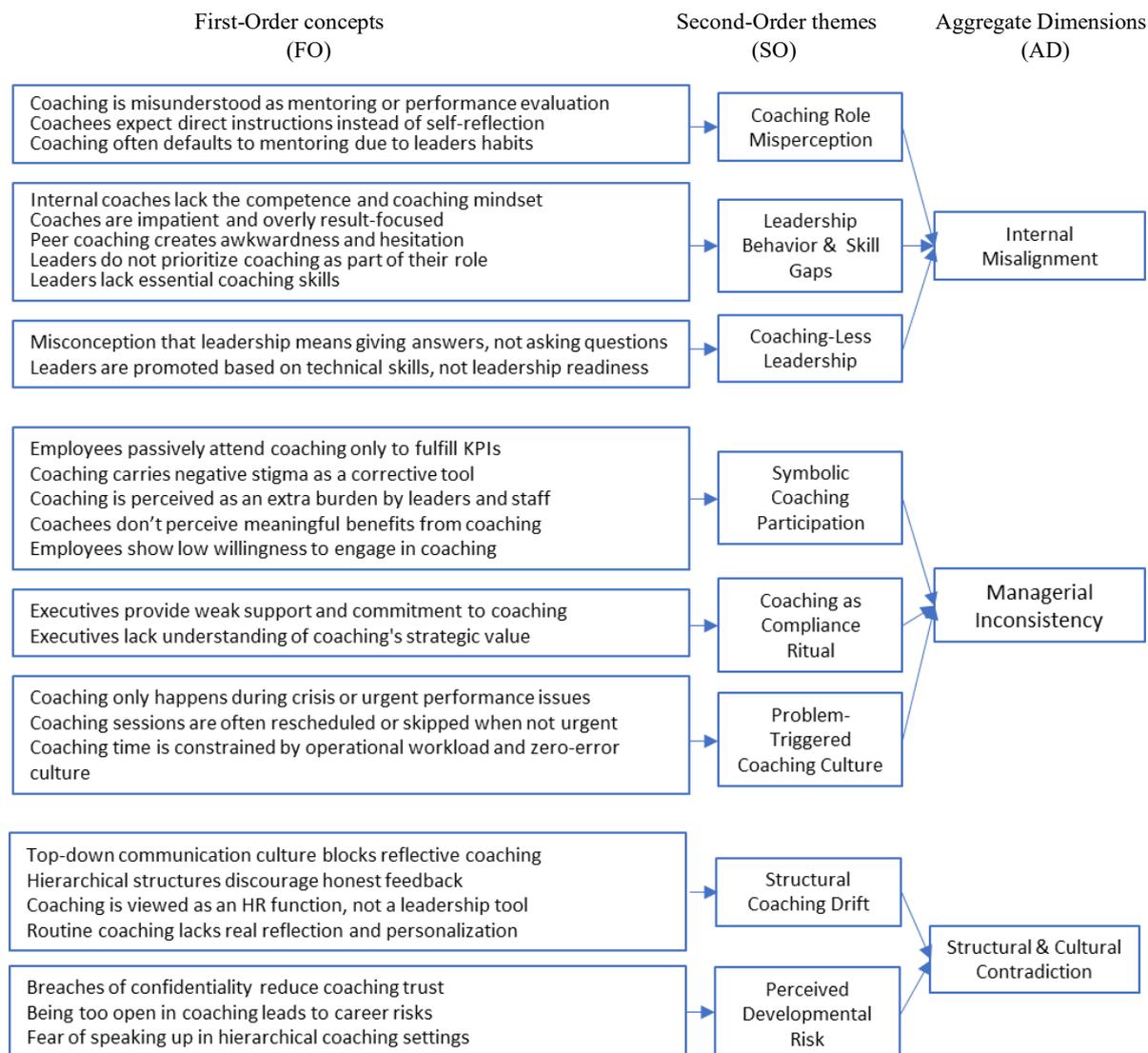


Figure 1. Data structure of coaching ineffectiveness in the banking context

This visually illustrates the inductive progression from first-order concepts to second-order themes and aggregate dimensions.

4.2. Presentation of Second-Order Themes

Table 2 outlines all second-order themes, their corresponding aggregate dimensions, and their theoretical positioning as emergent, replication, or modification. This section presents eight second-order themes (SOs) derived from the inductive analysis, each aligned with one of the three aggregate dimensions. While the previous section outlined the data structure, the present study elaborates on the content of each theme, showing how it reflects recurring patterns in the data and contributes to understanding coaching ineffectiveness in the banking sector. Each theme is presented with three components: (1) an overview of its empirical grounding, (2) its theoretical positioning and contribution type (emergent, replication, or modification), and (3) its significance within the broader aggregate dimension. The interdependencies between themes and their cumulative effects are discussed in a later section.

4.2.1. Coaching Role Misperception (SO1)

This theme captures recurring confusion among managers and coachees regarding the meaning and function of coaching. Participants frequently described situations in which coaching was equated with training, mentoring, or performance evaluations. As one coach noted:

“People confuse coaching with mentoring and performance discussions.” (Coach A)

Across interviews, first-order concepts such as “coachees expect direct instructions” and “coaching defaults to mentoring due to leaders’ habits” reflected a recurring pattern in which coaching interactions were shaped by directive expectations rather than developmental dialogue.

4.2.2. Leadership Behavior and Skill Gaps (SO2)

This theme highlights recurring concerns expressed by participants regarding limited coaching capabilities and inconsistent behaviors among line managers. Although they were assigned as internal coaches, many leaders were described as lacking active listening skills, developmental orientation, and interpersonal sensitivity. One coach noted:

“...Not all leaders perceive coaching as something important...” (Coach T)

Across interviews, first-order concepts such as “inadequate coaching mindset,” “impatient,” and “do not prioritize coaching” described recurring patterns in which coaching interactions were shaped by limited skill readiness and inconsistent leadership behaviors.

4.2.3. Coaching-Less Leadership (SO3)

This theme captures recurring descriptions of limited coaching behaviors in everyday leadership practices, despite leaders’ formal exposure to coaching programs. Participants frequently described situations in which coaching was framed as a formal initiative rather than an integral part of daily leadership practice. One coach shared:

“For them, their understanding is that when they talk about a people leader, they believe they should talk a lot and share a lot of information. However, this is a misunderstanding. Instead, they should focus on gaining more information by asking more questions.” (Coach W)

Across interviews, first-order concepts such as “misconception about leadership” and “lack of readiness” described recurring patterns in which coaching behaviors were infrequently observed in leaders’ day-to-day routines.

4.2.4. Symbolic Coaching Participation (SO4)

This theme captures recurring descriptions of coaching participation as a symbolic activity rather than a developmental practice. Several coaches reported that managers joined coaching programs primarily to meet formal requirements rather than to engage in learning or growth. One coach recalled:

“We’re just fulfilling KPI targets. That’s it,” said Coach T, quoting an employee.

Across interviews, first-order concepts such as “passive attendance,” “negative stigma,” and “perceived burden” described recurring patterns in which coaching participation was experienced as an obligation with limited perceived relevance or value for participants.

4.2.5. Coaching as Compliance Ritual (SO5)

This theme captures recurring descriptions of coaching practices being treated as routine formalities in the absence of visible commitment from top leadership. Participants frequently noted that limited executive involvement or modelling was associated with coaching activities being carried out primarily to meet formal expectations rather than developmental objectives. One coach explained:

“...For coaching to succeed, top management must understand its importance and how it benefits company performance. If top management lacks this understanding, the program will certainly not work because there is neither concern nor commitment to it...” (Coach L)

Across interviews, first-order concepts such as “lack of executive support” and “no strategic understanding of coaching” described recurring patterns in which coaching initiatives were experienced as procedural obligations rather than integrated leadership practices.

4.2.6. Problem-Triggered Coaching Culture (SO6)

This theme describes recurring descriptions of coaching being initiated primarily in response to emerging problems rather than as part of a proactive development strategy. Participants frequently noted that coaching was introduced after underperformance or interpersonal issues. One coach explained:

“... Coaching happens when things become urgent, when there is a need to have a conversation with someone to find out more. It is triggered because there is something that must be discussed...” (Coach I)

Across interviews, first-order concepts such as “coaching for urgent performance issues” and “constrained by operational workload” described recurring patterns in which coaching activities were initiated reactively in response to immediate concerns.

4.2.7. Structural Coaching Drift (SO7)

This theme captures recurring descriptions of coaching practices receiving less attention amid operational demands and structural arrangements. Participants noted that although coaching was initially introduced with strategic intent, it was increasingly deprioritized as daily operational routines took precedence. One coach remarked:

“...The reason is always their daily operational routines. As a result, coaching has yet to become part of the organizational culture. The challenge is that we are constantly being chased by urgent tasks...” (Coach S)

Across interviews, first-order concepts such as “top-down communication,” “coaching as HR function,” and “routine coaching without reflection” routine coaching without reflection described recurring patterns in which coaching activities were discussed as peripheral to everyday leadership practices.

4.2.8. Perceived Developmental Risk (SO8)

This theme captures recurring descriptions of coachees’ reluctance to speak openly during coaching interactions because of concerns about potential personal or professional consequences. Participants described discomfort in sharing candid views, particularly in hierarchical settings where performance was closely monitored. One coach observed:

“...When it’s between a boss and a subordinate, sometimes the subordinate is afraid to speak up, right? ...But if there’s a structural relationship especially with their boss I don’t think they can truly be open.” (Coach I)

Across interviews, first-order concepts such as “fear of hierarchy,” “career risk,” and “breach of confidentiality” described recurring patterns in which openness during coaching interactions was constrained by concerns related to status and potential consequences.

Table 2. Second-Order Themes, Aggregate Dimensions, Theoretical Contribution Categories, and Literature Support

| SO | SO Theme | Aggregate Dimension | Category of SO Theme | Theoretical Focus | Foundational | Mid-Theory | Recent |
|------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|---|------------------------------------|---|---|
| SO 1 | Coaching Role Misperception | Internal Misalignment | Replication | Confirm prior findings that unclear coaching roles reduce engagement and blur | (Joo, 2005) Coaching effectiveness | (Grant, 2017) Role ambiguity undermines coaching outcomes | (Ben-Hador, 2024; Ferro et al., 2024; G. Jones & Gorell, 2021; Kruger & Terblanche, |

| | | | | | | | |
|------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|---|---|--|---|
| | | | | accountability (Grant, 2017 ; Joo, 2005). | | | 2025 ; Milner et al., 2023). |
| SO 2 | Leadership Behavior and Skill Gaps | Internal Misalignment | Replication | This supports the claim that leaders' coaching mindset and skillset are critical success factors for sustained coaching impact (Ely et al., 2010). | (Ely et al., 2010) Coaching competencies and transfer | (R. J. Jones et al., 2016) Workplace coaching | (Cidral et al., 2023 ; Halliwell et al., 2023 ; Hu et al., 2024 ; Mbokota & Myres, 2024 ; Mühlberger et al., 2025) |
| SO 3 | Coaching-Less Leadership | Internal Misalignment | Modification | Extends the concept of leadership development effectiveness by emphasizing the systemic neglect of coaching as a leadership behavior (Lord & Hall, 2005). | (Lord & Hall, 2005) Leadership identity development | (Bozer & Jones, 2018) Coaching sustainability Barrier | (Chegini et al., 2020 ; Halliwell et al., 2023 ; Karlsen & Berg, 2020 ; Liu & Xiang, 2020 ; Wang et al., 2025) |
| SO 4 | Symbolic Coaching Participation | Managerial Inconsistency | Emergent | Leadership practices often serve symbolic/ritual purposes, projecting legitimacy without substantive change (Clegg et al., 2007). | (Clegg et al., 2007) leadership rituals | (Islam, 2015) Leadership as performativity/ empty rituals | (Citraningsih & Noviandari, 2022 ; Fitzsimmons & Callan, 2020 ; Lotta et al., 2024 ; Picard & Islam, 2020 ; Vitanova, 2021) |
| SO 5 | Coaching as Compliance Ritual | Managerial Inconsistency | Modification | Reframes mandatory coaching as a ritualistic compliance mechanism, extending theories of decoupling in institutional settings (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). | (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) Institutional theory and ceremonial compliance | (Heimstädt, 2017) Decoupling in organizational practices | (Alodhialah, 2025 ; Anderson, 2017 ; Kalfa et al., 2018 ; Passarelli et al., 2022 ; Rogers, 2022) |
| SO 6 | Problem-Triggered Coaching Culture | Managerial Inconsistency | Modification | Reveals a new cultural pattern in which coaching is deployed reactively during crises, diverging from proactive development norms | (Feldman & Lankau, 2005) Coaching culture and readiness | (Bozer & Jones, 2018) Workplace coaching | (Burleigh et al., 2023 ; Coetzee et al., 2023 ; Jansen et al., 2024 ; Lee et al., 2019 ; Nichol et al., 2022) |

| | | | | | | | |
|------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------|---|--|--|--|
| | | | | (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). | | | |
| SO 7 | Structural Coaching Drift | Structural & Cultural Contradiction | Emergent | Highlights how coaching initiatives lose strategic alignment over time because of structural fragmentation, a phenomenon that has been underexplored in coaching literature (Jarzabkowski, 2007). | (Jarzabkowski, 2007) Strategy-as-practice in organizational drift | (Pettersen & Schulman, 2019) Organizational drift | (Bristol-Alagbariya et al., 2024 ; Buryk et al., 2025 ; Kruger & Terblanche, 2025 ; Moleka, 2024 ; Peláez Zuberbuhler, Salanova, & Martínez, 2020) |
| SO 8 | Perceived Developmental Risk | Structural & Cultural Contradiction | Replication | Identifies trust-related developmental vulnerability as a hidden inhibitor of coaching engagement in hierarchical cultures (Edmondson, 1999). | (Edmondson, 1999) Psychological safety and learning behaviors | (Schiemann et al., 2019) Establishing trustworthiness during coaching | (Ebrahimi, 2024 ; Passmore et al., 2025 ; Pramana et al., 2025 ; Terblanche, 2023 ; Zhao & Jowett, 2022) |

4.3. Discussion and Cross-Theme Synthesis

4.3.1. Introduction and Cross-Theme Synthesis

The analysis of eight second-order themes revealed a cascade of misalignment that progressively undermined coaching effectiveness in the banking sector. Beginning with internal role confusion and behavioral gaps, coaching weakened through symbolic and reactive managerial practices and was ultimately eroded under structural and cultural contradictions, such as fear of openness and strategic drift. These misalignments were recursive and mutually reinforcing, showing that coaching ineffectiveness cannot be reduced to isolated factors but must be understood as a systemic organizational phenomenon.

To illustrate these interdependencies, this paper introduces a conceptual framework (Figure 2) that captures the cascade of misalignment across leadership behavior, managerial systems, and organizational contexts. The present study then reflects on the broader implications for theory and practice before concluding with study limitations and directions for future research.

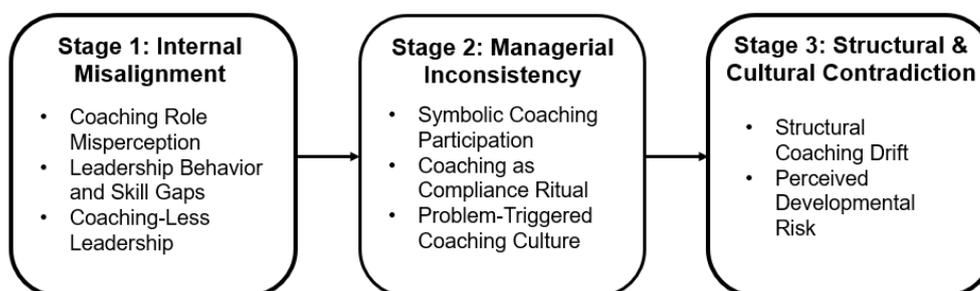


Figure 2. The cascade of misalignment framework illustrates how internal misalignment, managerial inconsistency, and structural-cultural contradictions interact to weaken coaching effectiveness.

4.3.2. Theoretical Contributions and Conceptual Implications

From a theoretical perspective, the Cascade of Misalignment framework contributes to coaching and HRD scholarship in three distinct ways. First, as a replication contribution, the framework advances a systemic progression model of coaching erosion. Rather than attributing ineffectiveness to individual gaps, coaching is shown to degrade through recursive misalignments across micro, meso, and macro levels, thereby reinforcing existing multilevel explanations of coaching effectiveness within hierarchical contexts.

Second, as a contribution, the framework extends prior coaching research by integrating individual-level misperceptions, managerial inconsistencies, and institutional logics into a cross-level explanatory model. This integration reframes established coaching constructs by situating them within compliance-driven and structurally constrained organizational environments, moving beyond predominantly dyadic or individual-centric perspectives in HRD scholarship.

Third, as an emergent contribution, the framework highlights trust and structural conditions as latent inhibitors of coaching effectiveness. By positioning perceived developmental risk and structural coaching drift as central mechanisms, the study introduces previously underarticulated processes through which coaching erosion unfolds, adding nuance to existing discussions on psychological safety and strategic alignment.

4.3.3. Practical Contributions for Coaching Program Design

The findings of this study offer several practical contributions to the design and implementation of organizational coaching programs, particularly within hierarchical and compliance-driven contexts. First, coaching initiatives require pre-intervention alignment and role clarity. Organizations need to clearly differentiate coaching from mentoring, supervision, and performance evaluation to prevent role confusion and unrealistic expectations among coaches and coachees. Second, accountability structures for coaching should move beyond attendance and KPI completion. Reliance on participation metrics alone risks reinforcing symbolic compliance. Instead, organizations should incorporate developmental indicators, such as reflective learning outcomes, behavioral change markers, and qualitative assessments of coaching impact.

Third, the findings highlight the importance of cultural enablers, including confidentiality, psychological safety, and visible executive modelling. Without these conditions, coaching is likely to be perceived as risky or stigmatizing, limiting openness and trust in coaching relationships. Finally, coaching should be treated as a dynamic organizational capability rather than a stand-alone intervention. Tools such as diagnostic checklists, coaching climate surveys, and periodic alignment reviews can help organizations detect hidden misalignments early and prevent coaching practices from drifting into ritualized or ineffective routines.

5. Conclusions

5.1. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that coaching erosion is best understood as a cascade of misalignment rather than isolated programmatic ineffectiveness. By reframing coaching through systemic and recursive dynamics, the framework offers both conceptual advancement and practical guidance for designing sustainable coaching initiatives. For organizations, the findings emphasize the importance of aligning intent, practice, and structure; for scholars, they open pathways to refine coaching theory through multilevel and contextualized analyses.

5.2. Research Limitations

This study draws primarily on the perspectives of 23 professional coaches within Indonesian banking, limiting generalizability. This study is limited by drawing primarily on the perspectives of 23 professional coaches in Indonesian banking, which restricts its generalizability to other industries or cultural contexts. The data were primarily collected from professional coaches without extensive input from coachees, managers, or executives. In addition, the cross-sectional design does not capture how coaching erosion evolves over time.

5.3. Suggestion and Directions for Future Research

Organizations should ensure a clear alignment of coaching objectives, leadership expectations, and role definitions before implementation. Coaching initiatives should be integrated into performance systems beyond symbolic KPI compliance. Strong leadership commitment and institutional support are essential for sustaining coaching effectiveness. Future research should incorporate multiple actors, cross-sectoral comparisons, and a longitudinal design. While this study conceptualizes coaching erosion as a cascading process across three stages, future research may explore whether reinforcing dynamics exist between these levels. For example, structural barriers may not only emerge as final outcomes but could also exacerbate earlier role misperceptions or managerial inconsistencies. Investigating such recursive dynamics would enrich our understanding of how coaching ineffectiveness evolves over time.

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