The Role of Coaching, in Social Responsibility and Consciousness Development based on Primary Research Findings

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Abstract: This study examines the role of coaching in developing the awareness, careers, and life planning of Generation Z (1995-2009) and Generation Alpha (2010-), with a particular focus on social responsibility and sustainable development. In an era defined by the transition from VUCA to BANI, younger generations are facing unprecedented complexity that requires self-awareness, resilience, and soft skills such as empathy, communication, collaboration, and systems thinking. Coaching, complemented by frameworks such as Inner Development Goals (IDG), offers a structured approach to developing these competencies, thereby supporting both individual growth and social sustainability.

In 2024, mixed-method primary research was conducted in Hungary and Albania, starting with qualitative mini-focus group interviews to refine a standardized questionnaire, followed by quantitative data collection using a non-representative, heterogeneous snowball sampling method. The Hungarian sample consisted of 2,033 respondents, while the Albanian sample consisted of 131 respondents, predominantly from Generation Z. The data analysis used descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and post hoc tests.

The results show that Albanian respondents consistently attributed greater importance to coaching in dimensions such as self-development, career path determination, community building, and the promotion of social responsibility. In Hungary, Generation X and female respondents were most supportive of the impact of coaching on Generation Z. Both samples highlighted the link between increased awareness and stronger social responsibility.

The results suggest that integrating coaching and awareness-raising programs into higher education – in the form of life planning spaces, workshops, and individual or group coaching – can significantly strengthen students' self-awareness, goal orientation, and proactive commitment. This dual effect – personal and collective – makes coaching a transformative tool in shaping a sustainable, future-oriented generation.

Keywords: Generation Z; awareness; coaching; social responsibility

1   Introduction

In today's society, Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2009) and Generation Alpha (born in 2010 and later) are becoming increasingly influential players in the labor market, community, and education [1]. Their values, such as awareness, environmental consciousness, and mental well-being, are taking center stage, which also presents an opportunity to strengthen social sustainability. Developing individual awareness, including self-knowledge, goal orientation, and community building, is particularly relevant for them [1-3]. In this context, coaching can serve as a tool for career and life planning, self-awareness support, and strengthening social responsibility [4] [5]. The positive effects of coaching, such as the discovery of personal values and inner motivations, goal setting, and motivation mapping, can reinforce sustainable lifestyles and community thinking.[6] This development method also reinforces future-oriented thinking and a proactive attitude, which are essential in the face of rapidly changing global challenges. The former VUCA world has been replaced by the BANI world, which provides an even more uncertain environment for today's new generation, requiring new coping strategies[7] [8]. Achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires not only technological and economic solutions, but also strong internal competencies and soft skills such as empathy, communication, cooperation, creative problem solving, and systemic thinking [9-13] . Coaching, supplemented by frameworks that support internal development, such as Inner Development Goals (IDG), can effectively contribute to the development of these skills, especially among younger generations [14] [15]. Universities around the world are increasingly integrating awareness-raising and career orientation programs. The "life design" approach, which originated in Stanford University's Designing Your Life course, represents a holistic and people-centered approach: it helps people consciously shape not only their career goals, but their entire career path and quality of life [16]. Other institutions, such as the Johns Hopkins University Imagine Center, complement career and life planning with services that support mental health, strengthen community connections, and develop value-based decision-making [17]. In the higher education environment, coaching and conscious living programs play a key role in promoting students' self- , increasing their resilience, and enabling them to actively contribute to social and environmental sustainability while planning their own life paths. This dual, individual and collective impact gives coaching its real power to shape society among the younger generations [18-21].

2   Literature Review

According to the International Coach Federation (ICF), coaching is a thought-provoking and creative process of working with clients to inspire them to achieve their personal and professional potential [22]. The history of coaching dates back to

the second half of the 20th Century, when Timothy Gallwey, a tennis coach, first began using this new approach in sports, focusing on the mental and psychological preparation of athletes rather than solely on external factors. This led to the definition of the external and internal self, which determined the outcome of a tennis match during the internal game [23]. Coaching first appeared in Hungary in the 1990s, initially used to fine-tune the organizational culture of multinational companies. However, the practice only became more widespread in the mid-2000s, and the first professional organization was established in 2011 [24]. Coaching as a profession, tool, and opportunity continues to evolve, with professional organizations, a Code of Ethics, and certification criteria regulating how coaching can be used as a professional support and development method.

Coaching tailored to Generation Z is of paramount importance today in terms of workplace commitment and retention. Hart (2025) points out that coaching, continuous feedback, and the management of autonomous opportunities can reduce turnover and strengthen the sustainability of organizations [25] [26]. The beneficial and developmental effects of coaching will soon be needed by Generation Alpha as well, as they enter a fast-paced, complex, technology-driven world where they will need to keep pace in order to thrive [27].

It is never too early to start education related to awareness, and coaching methods and processes are increasingly available to students in higher education institutions to support this. American universities, such as Johns Hopkins and Wake Forest, are transforming their career services to focus on work-life balance, mental well-being, and life planning. Generation Z wants work-life balance and mental well-being in the workplace, so universities are transforming career counselling to meet the unique needs of Generation Z. The concept of "life design" is not just about finding a job, but about guiding students toward a fulfilling, value-driven lifestyle.

Hungarian research shows that conscious living is closely linked to self-awareness and social responsibility. According to primary research conducted among Generation Z, self-identity and awareness are key factors, and incorporating them into education is essential. The research also reveals that the majority of respondents are open to career and life planning programs and would even participate in individual coaching to gain a clearer picture of their career path [28]. Internal development, which is closely linked to awareness, has been defined in the Internal Development Goals (IDG) framework for sustainability.

With its five dimensions and 23 internal skills, the Inner Development Goals (IDG) framework is a comprehensive model for linking inner development and sustainable behavior. It is already being used by several universities in university seminars, where students have shown significant results in self-reflection, complexity awareness, perspective change, and optimism [29-31].

3   Material and Method

We conducted primary research in Hungary and Albania to compare sample data obtained in the two countries.

The primary research was a two-stage research project in the fall of 2024. In the first phase, we conducted qualitative research in September 2024 using semi-structured interview outlines and mini-focus group interviews to prepare for the second phase, quantitative data collection, and to test the standardized questionnaire used in that phase.

The quantitative questionnaire tested and finalized as a result of the qualitative research was used in the second research phase for both the Hungarian and Albanian samples. The topics of the quantitative research tool included the assessment and practice of conscious living, the analysis of individual life goals and values, the relationship between conscious living and self-awareness, and the possibilities for self-awareness and self-development in higher education. The questionnaire typically used closed questions, with three open questions in the form of free association. The closed questions included both nominal (single and multiple choice, ranking questions) and metric measurement questions (Likert and semantic differential scales).

For the scaled questions, we used a scale ranging from 1 to 4. The reason for this was, on the one hand, the individual scale preference typical of Hungarian respondents: due to the school grading system, our domestic respondents are most comfortable with a five-point scale, as opposed to scales ranging from 1 to 7, 1 to 9, or 1 to 10. We opted for an even scale because, in the case of an odd scale (1-5), the middle value (3) is a kind of escape route for respondents, and the appearance of "indifferent" consumers choosing the middle value and their possible excessive proportion complicates the segmentation process from both a statistical and professional point of view. Therefore, we opted for a paired scale, which, by excluding the middle value, encourages respondents to take a stricter stance, thus contributing to successful segmentation [32].

During the quantitative data collection, we used a non-representative, random sampling procedure for both the Hungarian and Albanian samples, using a heterogeneous snowball sampling method with seeds. Sampling began with the identification of seeds, which were reported by full-time students of the Keleti Károly Faculty of Economics at Obuda University and the EUT. We visited them and asked the selected individuals to participate in the study and to recommend other people from their social networks. This referral process formed the basis for expanding the sample size through subsequent waves of recruitment. The referral process was iterative, with each participant nominating others who recommended further participants. This chain referral mechanism made it possible to recruit individuals who would have been difficult or impossible to reach using traditional sampling methods (e.g., Generation Z and Alpha). By leveraging existing social

connections and networks and using a heterogeneous snowball sampling method, we received 2033 evaluable questionnaires in the Hungarian sample and 131 in the Albanian sample. We achieved different sample sizes for the two samples, and neither sample was representative, so the results for both samples are local in nature. Due to the differing sample sizes, we compare the results obtained from the two countries rather than comparing them from a statistical point of view.

The aim of the research was to examine the Hungarian and Albanian samples to see what they think about the role of coaching, the role of coaching in developing awareness, and where the potential target group relevant to coaching can be found in the two samples.

The main socio-demographic composition of the Hungarian sample was as follows: 40% of respondents were male and 60% were female, 37% live in the capital, another 41% live in cities, and only 22% live in villages. 37% currently have a secondary education, while the rest are still in secondary school.

In terms of the socio-demographic characteristics of the Albanian sample, 70% of respondents were female and 30% were male. In terms of highest level of education, those with higher education qualifications were the most represented in the sample (82%), followed by those with secondary education qualifications (12%). In terms of place of residence, 57% of the sample live in the capital, and a further 41% live in other cities.

We used descriptive statistics and correlation analyses with SPSS 26.0 software to process the quantitative results and test the hypotheses. To examine the correlation between the results measured on a metric scale, we used variance analysis, specifically the ANOVA method, which is suitable for comparing single-point, multiple sample averages. We compared the mean of a metric dependent variable between two or more groups. Based on the post-hoc test, we determined which pairs of groups had significant differences. In doing so, we used significance values to determine the existence of correlations (sig< = 0.05). We analyzed the internal correlations by comparing the group averages using the F-statistic, i.e., taking into account the variance ratio of the variances of the means within the samples. In the correlation tests described in the study, where the significance value according to the ANOVA table was below 0.05, the statistical relationship between the two variables was confirmed [33].

4   Results

First, we examined how the sample members perceive the role of coaching and its contribution to more conscious career and life planning.

Albanian respondents consider coaching techniques to be particularly important for career planning (Table 1). Hungarian sample members also had a positive opinion, but the lower average value suggests that the recognition of the role of coaching in career planning in Hungary is still below international standards.

Table 1

Assessment of the role of coaching within the sample

	Albanian sample			Hungarian sample		
In your opinion, to what extent does coaching contribute to more conscious career and life planning?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
	131	3.15	0.745	2033	2.78	0.840

Source: own research, 2024. N=2033; 131

This is an interesting result because, while the Hungarian Chapter of the International Coaching Federation has been operating in Hungary since 2012, according to the 2022 ICF Report, there is still no such organization in Albania, which suggests that coaching is less well known as a professional support method [34]. This raises further questions about how and in what ways coaching has emerged in the lives of young Albanians. The same report also showed that only 19% of respondents belong to Generation Z, and of those, only 33% said they were fully aware of the importance of professional coaching.

We then further refined the role of coaching by asking additional questions that focused specifically on its role in shaping society and building communities.

We examined the extent to which coaching can contribute to the development of an individual's ability to shape society. Based on the results, we found that Albanian respondents in particular, but also Hungarian sample members, agreed that coaching plays a supportive role in this regard.

Numerous studies emphasize that coaching plays a decisive role in the development of accurate self-knowledge and self-esteem [34-37]. Our research confirmed this, with Albanians attaching particular importance to the self-knowledge-enhancing effect of coaching.

In addition, we examined the contribution of coaching to finding a career path and life purpose. In this case, too, Albanian respondents agreed more with the statement, confirming the importance of coaching as a useful support service not only for self-awareness but also for career planning [38].

Several studies have examined the differences between generations, whether in terms of job preferences or dimensions of consciousness [12] [39].

We asked about the community-building effect of coaching and its impact on the success of self-organizing community initiatives in the case of the new generations,

i.e., Generations Alpha and Z [40]. Both Hungarian and Albanian respondents considered the role of coaching to be important in these community-building initiatives.

Overall, we found that Albanian respondents rated the role and importance of coaching more highly in every aspect we examined, whether it was the impact on self-awareness, self-development, successful career planning, or the role in support during community building (Table 2).

Table 2

Assessing the individual and social impact and role of coaching

	Albanian sample			Hungarian sample		
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The application of coaching methods promotes the development of the social skills of new generations.	131	3.27	0.721	2033	2.77	0.874
Coaching can help individuals better understand themselves	131	3.35	0.733	2033	2.97	0.866
Coaching can help you find your career path and purpose in life	131	3.28	0.797	2033	2.93	0.876
Coaching support for new generations (Alpha, Z) can also play a community-building role.	131	3.24	0.766	2033	2.90	0.884
Coaching support for new generations (Alpha, Z) can increase the success of self-organizing community initiatives.	131	3.22	0.777	2033	2.88	0.867

Source: own research, 2024. N=2033; 131

We also analyzed the role of coaching in future planning and social responsibility, as well as in raising awareness, focusing specifically on the new generations (Table 3). In these dimensions, Albanian respondents also showed a higher degree of agreement, believing that coaching plays a decisive role among the new generation in terms of individual future planning, raising awareness, and strengthening social responsibility.

In our view, Albanians are more aware of and appreciate the role and complex impact of coaching than Hungarians. We believe that this more positive assessment is due to a higher level of awareness and more in-depth knowledge. Unfortunately,

this would require more in-depth analysis/research, which we are unable to provide based on the ICF data.

Table 3

Assessment of the complexity of coaching among Hungarian and Albanian respondents

Statements	Albanian sample			Hungarian sample		
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation.
In your opinion, how open is Generation Z to coaching support? (1=not at all open, 4=completely open)	131	2.66	0.839	2033	2.67	0.803
In your opinion, to what extent does raising awareness strengthen individuals' sense of social responsibility (1 = none, 4 = completely)?	131	3.05	0.727	2033	2.77	0.769
In your opinion, what role does coaching play in the future planning of new generations? (1=not important, 4=crucial)	131	3.05	0.758	2033	2.77	0.809
The impact of coaching on future planning awareness? (1 = no impact, 4 = significant impact)	131	3.08	0.765	2033	2.85	0.835

Source: own research, 2024. N=2033; 131

In the next stage of our research, we examined the extent to which each generation believes Generation Z is open to coaching support. The aim of this correlation analysis was to see whether there are differences in opinion between the generations and which generation is most likely to support Generation Z in accepting coaching.

The results showed that only the Hungarian sample showed a correlation, and in this case, Generation X believes most strongly in Generation Z's openness to coaching support (Table 4). When examining the correlation in terms of gender, we can say the same for female respondents, with only the Hungarian sample showing a significant correlation (Table 5).

Table 4

Generation Z's openness to coaching support, according to different generations

How open is Generation Z to coaching support according to the assessment of different generations?	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Generation X	248	**2.84**	0.773
Generation Z	1511	2.65	0.803
Alpha	63	2.38	0.812
Millennial generation	171	**2.80**	0.796
Baby Boomers	40	2.60	0.810
Total	2033	2.67	0.803

Source: own research, 2024. N=2033; sig=0.000

Table 5

Generation Z's openness to coaching support, gender perspective

Generation Z's openness to coaching support across genders	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
male	1011	2.56	0.814
female	1022	**2.79**	0.775
Total	2033	2.67	0.803

Source: own research, 2024. N=2033; sig=0.000

Coaching increases individual awareness, strengthens self-knowledge, and supports self-development, which has been confirmed by numerous studies. It has also been proven that individual social responsibility can play a decisive role in addressing the economic and social problems of our time. For this reason, we analyzed separately whether, according to the respondents, individual social responsibility can be strengthened by raising awareness. The results confirmed that, according to the respondents, it can. In light of this, we can say that coaching, as a technique for raising awareness, can also support and strengthen individual social responsibility, which confirms the relevance of coaching not only in addressing and solving individual problems, but also global ones.

We analyzed this issue separately for each generation and found that, as a result of the correlation analysis, Generation X and women had the most positive opinions in this regard. This correlation analysis also showed a significant relationship only in the Hungarian sample (Table 6 and Table 7).

The Albanian sample showed no significant correlation.

Table 6

Stimulating individual social responsibility by raising awareness, (opinions of different generations)

The level of social responsibility of individuals in terms of increasing awareness, according to the opinions of each generation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Generation X	248	**2.92**	0.738
Generation Z	1511	2.76	0.755
Alpha	63	2.48	0.948
Millennial generation	171	2.80	0.825
Baby Boomers	40	2.88	0.791
Total	2033	2.77	0.769

Source: own research, 2024. N=2033; sig=0.000

Table 7

Stimulating individual social responsibility by raising awareness gender perspective

The level of social responsibility of individuals in terms of increasing awareness, according to gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev
Men	1011	2.71	0.792
female	1022	**2.84**	0.741
Total	2033	2.77	0.769

Source: own research, 2024. N=2033; sig=0.000

Finally, in a separate open question, we analyzed what respondents do to plan their careers and lives more consciously. The opinions of the two samples were very similar in this respect, and the main finding was that both Hungarian and Albanian respondents considered self-assessment and self-development to be a process in which planning plays an important role – which in turn requires awareness and self-knowledge – as well as continuous feedback and self-reflection (Figure 4).

We believe that the summary of the spontaneous responses to the open-ended question clearly shows that the respondents feel the importance of more conscious career and life planning and have already started to think about how to actively address this issue. This is an absolutely positive result, which we believe can be built upon in terms of introducing and promoting coaching as an appropriate tool and technique.

Taking into account the results and the possibilities presented in the literature, several options emerge that could provide effective support for the new generation in terms of awareness, self-knowledge, career and life planning. Awareness-raising solutions applied in a university environment, such as workshops and coaching programs, play a significant role in supporting conscious self-awareness, goal orientation, and proactive action [28]. Both individual and group coaching sessions are suitable for developing self-awareness and consciousness through individual and group reflection. "Life design" spaces and services, such as a Comfort Space,

where students can plan not only their careers but also meaningful life paths. A good example of this is the Johns Hopkins Imagine Center [41]. The number of good examples is growing, and most universities have recognized that coaching is one of the most appropriate forms of support for students' career and life planning. Another good example is Eindhoven University of Technology, where coaching is already part of the student's career path from the very beginning [42]. Education for career balance and awareness is therefore also emerging in higher education, creating opportunities for the new generation to find themselves and their own path in line with their abilities. In connection with coaching, the integration of conscious living into the curriculum is becoming necessary, as the changing generations require forms of support that are appropriate for them. Based on research conducted by Obuda University, courses are needed that support the deepening of self-knowledge, increase awareness, conscious consumption, self-identity, and social responsibility [28].

Conclusions

Coaching, especially when enriched with sustainability and awareness aspects, can be a key element in the development of generations, especially Generation Z and Alpha. This approach strengthens individual autonomy and agency and contributes to the promotion of sustainability at the societal level. In a university environment, it is particularly effective when integrated with tools that support internal development (coaching, conscious lifestyle, life design spaces), which can help foster the emergence of conscious generations capable of shaping the future [43-45]. International comparisons have shown that, compared to Hungary, some countries are more familiar with and better at using coaching methods, enabling their students to plan their careers, future, and lives in a more conscious way.
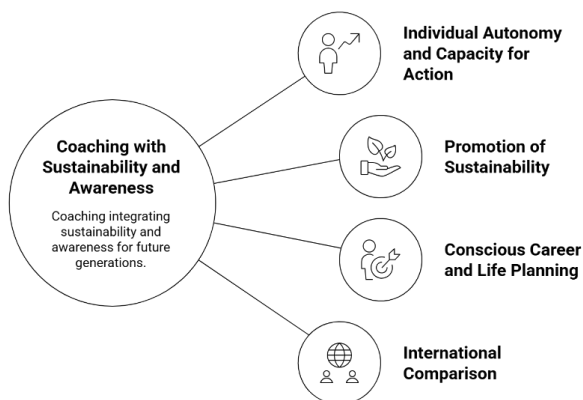

Figure 4
Own design using the Napkin.ai app

The limitations of the research include the size of the sample and the fact that it cannot be applied to the entire population. Further possibilities include a phase conducted with a larger sample and reproducible surveys, as well as the inclusion of additional countries to expand the international comparison.

Acknowledgement

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