

**Gan, G. C., & Chong, C. W. (2015). Coaching relationship in executive coaching: a Malaysian study. *Journal of Management Development*, 34(4), 476-493.**

A major supportive element of coaching-based research is cross-cultural generalizability. When particular findings are derived from a non-Western academic study, they arguably lend even greater support to certain aspects of the literature within the scholarship of coaching than those drawn from typical Western organizational and managerial settings. This is because we can rule out, to a significant degree, the part that the organizational setting and overarching cultural context plays in contributing to the efficacy of a particular coaching approach or modality.

A recent study of 172 Malaysian executives, each of whom were recipients of several coaching sessions, was conducted to explore the implications of trust, commitment and coach-coachee rapport in the Malaysian executive coaching context. More specifically, executives who were responsible for both leading direct reports and setting company policy direction were selected for the study; which was quantitative in format and based upon a distributed survey questionnaire utilizing a validated scale. The survey instrument was used to explore specific items within the broader constructs of trust (e.g. "I feel secure with my coach), rapport (e.g. "Mutual understanding is established between my coach and I"), and commitment (e.g. "I am willing to be coached).

The principal takeaway from this study was that establishing rapport represents the very first step in coaching engagement; serving to reduce perceived differences and leverage similarities, and reduce potential doubts and anxieties. Another key finding from the study was that coachees who demonstrate a commitment to being coached help to build a quality relationship with their coach, inasmuch as they work to fulfilling their end of the coaching relationship with dedication and willingness. Interestingly, trust was not revealed to be significantly associated with effective coaching - potentially reflecting a genuine cultural divide between Asian and Western settings; for which literature surrounding the latter has generally attested to the central pride of place trust has in fostering effective coaching relationships.

This study informs the broader coaching literature by reaffirming a need to focus on the pre-coaching stage; the timeframe prior to formally commencing the coaching engagement. At this juncture, rapport between coach and coachee can be established, as can a willingness to commit to the coaching process on the part of the coachee. Taken together, the findings from this article should serve as a reminder to anyone with an interest in coaching effectiveness to take the time to proactively lay the groundwork ahead of proceeding with formal coaching arrangements.