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# I'M A LEADER! NOW WHAT?! A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF NOVICE LEADERS' PERCEPTIONS OF A THEORY-INFORMED EXECUTIVE COACHING PROCESS

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A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE COLLEGE

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# ABSTRACT

The transition into leadership is a critical phase for novice leaders, yet limited research explores how they interpret the support offered during this formative period. While executive coaching is traditionally associated with seasoned professionals, this study examines its potential value when intentionally designed to aid first-time leaders in navigating identity shifts, relational complexity, and organizational culture. Given that nearly 40% of novice leaders exit their roles within 18 months due to adaptation and alignment challenges, understanding how coaching is experienced during this vulnerable period is vital.

This study explores how novice leaders perceive a theory-informed executive coaching process grounded in Emotional Intelligence and Self-Determination Theory. Through a qualitative case study approach across four industries, participants engaged in structured coaching while reflecting on their leadership journey through journals and interviews. Findings reveal that coaching enhanced participants' emotional awareness, motivation, and self-perception, contributing to increased clarity, confidence, and alignment with the leadership role. Participants described coaching as a pivotal developmental space that helped them process uncertainty, manage relational dynamics, and build leadership identity. Rather than focusing on outcomes alone, this study centers on leaders' lived experiences. These findings contribute to leadership development literature and offer practical insights into how coaching interventions, when grounded in theory, can support novice leaders during a high-risk period of transition.

# CHAPTER I—THE INTRODUCTION

## Introduction

Leadership development has been consistently highlighted as a sizable investment ranging from $300-$800 million annually for the United States' top companies (O'Connell, 2010). An investment amount of this magnitude reflects the importance placed on the development of leaders across all sectors. For instance, Day et al. (2021) find that leadership training and development consumes nearly 35% of the total learning and development budget. A report prepared by the Center for Creative Leadership (2019) contends that 79% of responding organizations intended to increase their leadership development budgets, with only 9% indicating a reduction. Over a quarter of the respondents expressed an intention to increase the budget for leadership development by 10-25%, while 1 in 12 reported intentions upward of 25-50% to the annual LD budget. Executives were set to receive the largest allocation of the budgeted dollars, while entry-level leadership positions were projected to receive the least. (Center for Creative Leadership, 2019).

Relatedly, novice leadership remains an underexplored area in leadership development research, especially during an individual's first leadership role. A novice leader typically refers to someone new to a formal leadership position with fewer than two years of experience. Studies indicate that these leaders often face unique challenges as they transition from individual contributor positions to leadership roles, necessitating specialized support and mentorship to build their leadership competencies (Daresh & Playko, 1992; Kalbarczyk et al., 2022). Despite this critical developmental phase, research addressing novice leaders' specific needs and developmental trajectories remains limited, underscoring a significant gap in the leadership

literature. Even though research is limited, what evidence does exist paints a concerning picture. Some reports have highlighted that failure rates among novice leaders might reach as high as 40% within the first 18 months, with other studies indicating rates approaching 60% after two years (Brooke, 2018; Proventus HR, 2022). However, these figures can vary depending on the context and support structures available to the leaders in question. Leadership scholars indicate that many novice leaders fail to meet expectations because of inadequate preparation, unclear role expectations, and limited organizational support (Keller & Meaney, 2018; Pradco, 2024; Wells, 2023).

Day and Harrison (2007) define the process of leadership development as experiences that increase skills, abilities, and competencies in an interpersonal context, such as flexibility, team building, change management, self-awareness, or interpersonal skills. The relevant leadership needs of today are discussed in a report issued by Harvard Business Publishing (2024), which found via a survey of 1,134 Leadership & Development HR professionals that 70% of respondents said it was “important or very important” for today's leaders to master a broader range of effective leadership behaviors. Categorically, soft skills were well represented, with 48% citing the importance of enhancing emotional and social intelligence, 44% citing the skill to manage conflict among team members, and 40% citing the ability to provide clarity and direction in dynamic situations. Yet another Harvard Business Publishing report (2023) of 1,274 Leadership & Development HR professionals spanning 20 countries declares that 76% of their respondents reported high emotional and social intelligence as crucial leadership skills currently in need. Not far behind, 75% reported additional skills such as empathy in communication, feedback sharing, listening, managing conflicts, persuading, and influence as vital skills needed for leaders to succeed (Harvard Business Publishing, 2023).

Leadership competencies aligned with modern contexts that can be learned and enhanced (Anderson & Sun, 2017; Liu et al., 2021; Miscenko et al., 2017; Nash & Bangert, 2014). Executive leadership coaching has emerged as a shared learning and support development process focused on enhancing competencies (Grant, 2013). Evidence suggests that leadership coaching is related to significant improvements in areas such as self-confidence, self-awareness, and interpersonal sensitivity, alongside enhanced adaptability, emotional awareness, reduced stress, and strengthened belief in leadership effectiveness (Anthony, 2017; Braks, 2020; Brown et al., 202; Gray, 2016; Halliwell et al., 2023; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Kovacs & Corrie, 2017; Lockmiller, 2014; Mackie, 2007; Szekely et al., 2023; Yip et al., 2017). Grant (2014) distinguishes executive coaching as:

*"A helping relationship formed between a client (the coachee) who has leadership, managerial, or supervisory authority and responsibility in an organization, and a coach who uses a range of cognitive and behavioral techniques in order to help the client achieve a mutually defined set of goals with the aim of improving his or her leadership skills, professional performance, well-being and the effectiveness of the organization."(p.2)*

MacKie (2007) conducted a literature review evaluating the effectiveness of executive coaching, noting that while much of the research is uncontrolled and anecdotal, there is evidence supporting positive outcomes. His analysis draws on psychotherapy and adult learning models to suggest that coaching interventions can influence key areas like emotional regulation and leadership impact. MacKie (2007) also highlights the need for controlled studies to assess these outcomes better, noting that despite limited rigorous evaluation, executive coaching has been

linked to improved self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal skills, all critical for novice leaders adapting to leadership roles.

Kokesch and Anderson (2001) provided a comprehensive review of the existing literature, revealing a distinct gap in empirical research but citing several studies that illustrate coaching's effectiveness. For instance, their work identifies that coaching interventions often target emotional intelligence, leadership development, and stress reduction, key areas for new leaders. They also emphasize the importance of data collection from multiple sources, such as peers, subordinates, and self-evaluations, to triangulate the effectiveness of coaching interventions, which have been shown to improve leadership capabilities and overall job performance.

Swart and Harcup (2013) extended this analysis by focusing on how coaching helps managers develop insight and sense-making abilities, which can prove essential for novice leaders navigating complex and new roles. In their study, they conducted interviews with partners at law firms to explore how coaching interventions helped translate individual learning into collective organizational learning. The researchers found that coaching promoted an organizational feedback culture and empowered leaders to apply their personal development to broader team dynamics. The study demonstrated that coaching significantly impacted individual leadership development and organizational performance, as it fostered collective learning processes and enabled leaders to navigate organizational changes more effectively.

Research consistently highlights the long-term benefits of coaching beyond immediate skill development, suggesting it is critical in fostering retention and sustained success in leadership (Crowell, 2010). For example, Tompkins (2018) found that organizations integrating

coaching practices experienced higher employee retention due to increased job satisfaction and a sense of being valued. Coaching helped leaders feel supported, reducing turnover while fostering a commitment to organizational goals (Boysen-Rotelli, 2020; Silver, 2009). In a similar study, Ely et al. (2010) demonstrated that coaching-driven leadership development improved both individual and organizational outcomes through personalized feedback and competency growth. Leaders who received coaching reported sustained improvements in their leadership behaviors, including decision-making and team management.

In the emerging years of executive coaching, Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson (2001) emphasized in their findings that coaching facilitated deeper self-reflection, which enabled leaders to align personal goals with organizational objectives. Person-organizational alignment drove role-specific success while also promoting long-term career development by preparing leaders for future challenges. During the more established phase of executive coaching research, Anthony (2017) conveys in his study how leadership coaching positively correlated with transformational leadership behaviors such as individualized consideration and delegation. These enhanced behaviors improved team dynamics, organizational climate, and follower engagement, laying a foundation for sustained leadership effectiveness.

The executive coaching industry itself, created from the ashes of a disciplinary approach during the 1960s, has blossomed into a $2 billion industry as of 2016, with over 53,000 coaches globally (Jones, 2017). According to a study by McGover et al. (2001), companies reported financial returns between $100,000 and $1,000,000, not accounting for inflation, from their executive coaching investments as early as 2001. A later study from the Corporate Leadership

Council (2013) reported returns as high as 529% to companies that invested in coaching, further validating the effectiveness of investing in coaching activities.

Research in this field collectively highlights executive coaching as a personal and professional development mechanism. A qualitative study by Skinner (2014) reveals how coaching fosters individualized leadership approaches, allowing leaders to define their leadership style rather than conforming to traditional norms: “Their executive coaching experience helped them to define their personalized approach to leadership rather than internalizing prevailing male norms of leading” (Skinner, 2014, p. 107). Expanding on this, Szekely et al. (2023) conducted a systematic literature review emphasizing that executive coaching facilitates identity work by offering a reflective space for meaning-making and leadership narrative development. This process allows leaders to reframe experiences and integrate new perspectives into their leadership identity.

Comparably, Day et al. (2021) discussed coaching as a critical activity within comprehensive leadership development initiatives. Their research indicates that leadership development programs that integrate coaching produce measurable improvements in learning, leadership behaviors, and organizational outcomes such as increased profits and reduced turnover. Together, these studies demonstrate that executive coaching serves as both a developmental and transformative tool. It bridges personal identity work with organizational leadership demands fostering adaptive capabilities, enhancing decision-making, and reinforcing behaviors essential for long-term leadership success.

Although executive coaching is recognized as an effective strategy for leadership development, the current literature underexplores its specific impact on novice leaders. Existing

empirical evidence suggests that executive coaching enhances a leader's productivity and social awareness, subsequently improving interpersonal relationships and the ability to develop others (Bono et al., 2009; Ely et al., 2010). Still yet, even with a growing body of evidence on executive coaching's general effectiveness, further research is needed to understand how it can be optimized to support novice leaders in enhancing key leadership competencies.

**Literature Gap**

While leadership development has been a popular focus of study (Dalakoura, 2009; Day et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2020; Murphy & Johnson, 2011), novice leadership has remained relatively underexplored. Despite a growing body of research on leadership development, much of the focus has been on experienced leaders, leaving a critical gap in understanding how novice leaders navigate the unique challenges of transitioning into leadership roles for the first time. This oversight has significant implications, as the steep learning curve and lack of targeted support place new leaders at a heightened risk of turnover and leadership failure. Accordingly, the vast majority of executive coaching research has centered on leaders with more tenured experience in the leadership role (Anthony, 2017; Braks, 2020; Mackie, 2017; Nicolau et al., 2023; Skinner, 2014; Swart & Harcup, 2012;), often overlooking the unique challenges associated with leaders who are assuming the role for the first time.

The inexperience in formal leadership positions and the demands place novice leaders in a susceptible position to experience a heightened turnover rate (Arruda, 2023). Data suggest that by the 24$^{th}$ month, up to 60% of newly placed managers have succumbed to turnover due to insufficient training, cultural misfits, lack of organizational support, and other skills associated with leading teams effectively (Aruda, 2023; Brooke, 2018; Pradco, 2024; Proventus HR, 2022).

Keller and Meaney (2018) note multiple aspects of the transitioning leaders' struggles, stating that 74% (as cited by Paese & Wellings, 2015) of US leaders think they are unprepared for their new roles. Further, 68% of transitioning leaders struggle with issues related to internal politics, culture, and teams (Smart & Smart, 1998; Wheeler, 2005). Many companies rely on mentoring approaches to support new leaders, but evidence on these programs suggests that they fall short of the novice leaders' needs, prompting the authors to reconsider approaches toward leadership orientation programs. In a survey evaluating orientation methods, mentoring was noted as the primary supportive structure; however, only 47% of external and 29% of internal hires found mentoring helpful. Secondarily, standard orientations were rated as favorable by only 19% of external hires and 11% of internal promotions (as cited by McKinsey & Co., 2015; The Institute of Executive Development, 2008; Wheeler, 2005), considered to be a poorly received transactional approach. The above data coincides with Day et al.'s (2021) study, where they discuss the heavy emphasis of leadership development placed on skill acquisition by organizations rather than adaptation frameworks such as resilience-building practices, which has leaders more prepared for the uncertainty of their roles.

As it pertains to the proper lens for exploring leadership development, a multifaceted approach is essential. Theories such as Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Emotional Intelligence (EQ) have been extensively studied as frameworks for understanding leadership effectiveness (Dippenaar & Schaap, 2017; Mathew, 2014; Spence & Oades, 2011). However, their integration within executive coaching, particularly for novice leaders, remains an opportunity for exploration. This study bridges that gap by applying these theoretical perspectives as foundational elements in understanding how executive coaching fosters multiple aspects of leadership development among novice leaders. Specifically, SDT was used to examine

how coaching supports intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and personal growth. EQ provided a lens for understanding how coaching enhances emotional regulation, empathy, and interpersonal effectiveness.

Using the Self-Determination Theory as a lens, Deci et al. (2017) identify key social-contextual factors, including a leader's interpersonal style, which can predict followers' high-quality motivation in the workplace. In executive coaching, Szekely et al. (2023) discuss the role of SDT in helping to develop a leader's identity, impacting their motivation to lead, all the while suggesting that executive coaching demonstrated effectiveness in accelerating the identity formation for leaders. These insights help reinforce the potential for using executive coaching as a tool to expedite the leadership development process for those new to the leadership position. Still, little empirical evidence explicitly addresses how SDT interacts with novice leaders when combined with executive coaching. Viven et al. (2020) further discuss the need for more research from a practitioner's perspective, primarily through field-based or quasi-experimental designs. Their study demonstrated lasting improvements in leaders' abilities to support psychological needs in the workplace, with definitive changes persisting one year after the intervention, lending compelling evidence that such interventions can expedite the benefits of SDT for novice leaders.

In a similar fashion, Emotional Intelligence (EQ) has been consistently linked to leadership success. A meta-analysis by Joseph and Newman (2010) confirmed a strong relationship between EQ and job performance outcomes, further supported by Cherniss (2003), who identified emotional competency deficits as contributors to leadership derailment. Importantly, Hodzic et al. (2015) demonstrated that EQ, as a competency, can be enhanced

through targeted interventions, leading to improved employability and performance. These findings are particularly relevant for novice leaders, whose emotional competencies may be underdeveloped, given their limited experience managing team dynamics and complex interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, Wittmer and Hopkins (2018) argue that executive coaching is an effective tool for cultivating EQ by enhancing critical components such as emotional self-awareness and awareness of others. Despite these advancements, there is still limited research on the specific impact of EQ-focused coaching on novice leaders, creating a gap in understanding how these interventions support their early development.

Addressing these gaps is essential for developing targeted coaching interventions that support novice leaders during their first years of leadership. Collectively, these frameworks provide a comprehensive lens for exploring how coaching can influence motivation, emotional regulation, and transformative leadership behaviors, which are central pillars for novice leaders navigating new leadership roles. While existing research supports the effectiveness of these theories in leadership development, there are gaps that remain regarding their specific application within executive coaching contexts for novice leaders. The existing literature primarily emphasizes seasoned leaders or the broader general leadership populations, with limited empirical evidence addressing how coaching interventions informed by SDT and EQ intersect with the developmental needs of those new to leadership. This study addresses these gaps by integrating these theoretical perspectives to explore how executive coaching interacts with leadership growth in novice leaders, offering insights into how coaching enhances motivation and emotional intelligence behaviors during the early stages of leadership development.

While leadership development often emphasizes the acquisition of skills and behaviors, early-career leaders face an equally significant challenge: internalizing their new role and transitioning from "doing leadership" to "being a leader." This shift involves not only external competency but also a deeper, often unspoken process of forming a leadership identity, a self-perception of oneself as a leader that influences motivation, behavior, and confidence (Komives et al., 2005; DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Though not the primary focus of this study, the reflective nature of executive coaching may support this identity work, creating a space for novice leaders to process their experiences, integrate their values, and increase their sense of alignment with the leadership role (Szekely et al., 2024; Yip et al., 2020). As such, this study acknowledges that growth in self-perception and confidence may serve as important indicators of developmental impact.

**Study Purpose**

The study aimed to address a gap in the leadership development literature by exploring how novice leaders perceived their experience in a structured, theory-informed executive coaching process. Grounded in a social constructivist paradigm, this qualitative case study examined how coaching, intentionally designed around the principles of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Emotional Intelligence (EQ), was interpreted and experienced by first-time leaders during the early stages of their leadership journey.

Rather than seeking to measure direct outcomes or skill acquisition, the study focused on how novice leaders make sense of their development, motivation, and emotional growth through the lens of the coaching experience. The goal was to gain a deeper understanding of how

executive coaching can be meaningfully tailored to meet the needs of leaders during this high-stakes period of transition.

The following research question guides the study:

How do novice leaders perceive the experience of a theory-informed executive coaching process?

Findings may contribute to the design of more intentional and effective executive coaching programs by offering evidence-based insights into how novice leaders experience coaching across diverse industries. Additionally, the study may help organizations understand the developmental impact of theory-informed coaching processes and how such interventions can be transferred and adapted across varied leadership contexts.

**Study Setting**

The researcher utilized a convenient, purposeful sampling process to obtain participants. The study occurred within multiple organizational settings, including education, healthcare technology, construction, and a small business. There were eight participants who were novice leaders assigned to their first formal leadership position. For each work site, there was an individual who received coaching and one who did not. The educational participants were novice principals at a lower elementary school in one of Oklahoma's largest school districts. The for-profit healthcare technology participants were newly hired or promoted first-time managers within one of Oklahoma's fastest-growing start-ups. The more established for-profit corporate organization reflected a newly appointed project manager within one of the largest construction companies in Oklahoma. Lastly, the small-business participants were first-time

sales managers within a nationally branded insurance company comparable to a franchise format, possessing a strong brand managed locally by a smaller team structure.

Depending on the coachee's preference, the coaching interventions was delivered virtually, utilizing videoconferencing and/or telephone coaching. Participants engaged in four months of executive coaching. In addition to coaching sessions, participants completed pre- and post-study assessments, including Emotional Intelligence (EQ-i 2.0), which was descriptively discussed in the findings. Further qualitative data was collected through journaling activities where participants documented their leadership experiences and challenges through assigned monthly reflections.

The diverse study setting, spanning multiple industries, allowed for a comprehensive analysis of how executive coaching impacts novice leaders in different organizational contexts. This cross-industry approach provided valuable insights into the generalizability and applicability of coaching interventions.

**Contributions**

By examining the integration of Self-Determination Theory and Emotional Intelligence within executive coaching, this study aims to provide insights into how coaching can enhance leadership effectiveness for those serving in their inaugural leadership roles. Its contributions are multifaceted and hold implications for both theory and practice.

1. Enhanced understanding of leadership development needs: By focusing specifically on novice leaders, this study has the potential to offer new insights into the unique challenges and developmental needs of leaders in their first year. This is an essential

contribution, as most current leadership development programs need to differentiate between the needs of novice and experienced leaders.

2. Potential contribution to theoretical frameworks: The study integrates Self-Determination Theory and Emotional Intelligence as a guided framework. These theories have been widely recognized for their role in leadership effectiveness, but their specific application to novice leaders in the context of executive coaching remains underexplored. This research will potentially extend the theoretical understanding of how these frameworks can inform leadership coaching practices.
3. Practical implications: The findings will provide actionable recommendations for organizations seeking to implement executive coaching programs tailored to the needs of novice leaders. Organizations can design more effective leadership development initiatives that support novice leaders' transition into leadership roles by identifying the key competencies that executive coaching can enhance.
4. Cross-industry insights: By including participants from various industries, this study will offer insights into how executive coaching can be effectively applied across different sectors. This cross-industry approach will contribute to the generalizability of the study's findings and demonstrate the transferability of coaching practices across organizational contexts.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study seeks to address the significant gap in the literature regarding the impact of executive coaching on the leadership development of novice leaders. By focusing on the first year of leadership and integrating key theoretical frameworks such as Self-

Determination Theory and Emotional Intelligence, this research will provide valuable insights into how executive coaching can be tailored to meet the unique needs of novice leaders.

This study's potential contributions are wide-reaching, offering theoretical advancements and practical recommendations for leadership development programs. As organizations increasingly recognize the importance of effective leadership, this study will provide evidence-based insights into how executive coaching can be leveraged to support novice leaders, ultimately enhancing their leadership effectiveness and organizational outcomes.

# CHAPTER II—LITERATURE REVIEW

## Introduction

Leadership development has been a cornerstone of organizational success and sustainability across all sectors throughout history (Day et al., 2013). However, novice leadership, representing a distinct and critical subcomponent of leadership development, remains insufficiently explored (Miscenko, 2017; Yip et al., 2020). This is significant in the sense that novice leaders often face unique challenges during their transition in their leadership roles, which oftentimes leads to elevated turnover rates. Research indicates that approximately 40% of new leaders fail within their first 18 months due to factors such as cultural misalignment, unclear expectations, and insufficient support (Brooke, 2018; Proventus HR, 2022).

This literature review focused on problems of inadequate support for novice leaders by examining research in broad areas. First, evidence on challenges faced by novice leaders was addressed. Second, research on novice leadership development was explored. Lastly, executive

coaching was reviewed, along with evidence on coaching novice leaders. This section builds into the chapter conclusion with a synthesis of the literature.

**Challenges Faced by Novice Leaders**

A core reason new leaders struggle during their inaugural journey is inadequate preparation and support from their organizations (Ahmed, 2023). Studies show that freshly minted leaders often lack the tools necessary to navigate their new roles effectively, including building teams, understanding organizational dynamics, and aligning with company culture (Proventus HR, 2022; Wells, 2023). The transition to leadership requires fundamentally different skills than those needed to excel as an individual contributor. However, many new leaders are promoted without receiving the requisite training to succeed (Pradco, 2024). Research by CEB Global highlights the magnitude of the issue, revealing that 60% of new managers fail by their second year due to inadequate preparation for the complexities of leadership (Arruda, 2023). This failure is attributed to insufficient development in key managerial skills, undermining leaders' ability to adapt to their new responsibilities.

A pervasive challenge for novice leaders is navigating role ambiguity and unclear expectations, which can erode confidence and impede effectiveness. Keller and Meaney (2018) provide an in-depth analysis of leadership transitions based on qualitative interviews and surveys across various industries. Their findings reveal that nearly half of the leaders they studied struggled with critical issues such as understanding organizational culture, managing internal politics, and establishing team credibility. These challenges stem largely from vague role definitions and a lack of structured guidance during their transitions. Proventus HR (2022)

emphasizes that clear organizational support during this period is crucial, as it directly influences trust-building and credibility, two important components of effective leadership.

The issue of unclear expectations is compounded when novice leaders must balance authority with approachability, often without clarity on how to manage these dual roles. Wells (2023) observed that many new leaders reported confusion about performance metrics and team management protocols, which contributed to feelings of inadequacy and lowered morale. Without proper orientation and support, leaders are forced to learn through trial and error, which can strain team dynamics and reduce productivity.

Leadership transitions are commonly accompanied by high levels of stress, which can significantly impact a novice leader's well-being and performance. Keller and Meaney (2018) characterize these transitions as "high-stakes" periods that many leaders rank among their most stressful life experiences, comparable to personal crises such as divorce. Their longitudinal research highlights that new leaders experience this heightened stress due to the dual pressures of meeting organizational expectations and managing team dynamics. The combination of high demands and low support can quickly lead to emotional exhaustion, decision fatigue, and disengagement.

Ahmed (2023) further illustrates this phenomenon in her study of novice school principals, noting that the absence of structured onboarding processes exacerbated their stress and feelings of isolation. Participants described being overwhelmed by their responsibilities, particularly due to heavy workloads and the pressure to resolve complex administrative issues without adequate preparation. Similarly, Wells (2023) found that a lack of organizational support

during the initial transition period contributed to higher burnout rates, as new leaders often struggled to balance strategic priorities with immediate operational demands.

The education sector provides a compelling example of the unique challenges faced by novice leaders, highlighting how sector-specific demands compound the struggles of leadership transitions. In a qualitative study of novice school principals, Ahmed (2023) used in-depth interviews to identify key themes, including overwhelming workloads, lack of formal induction processes, and isolation. Principals reported that their transitions were made more difficult by the absence of structured support, leaving them ill-equipped to simultaneously manage staff, student needs, and district expectations. This lack of preparation heightened their stress and led to feelings of professional inadequacy, which undermined their confidence and decision-making capabilities.

Ahmed's findings extend beyond the education sector, underscoring a universal truth: novice leaders who are not supported with strategic onboarding and ongoing mentorship are highly susceptible to burnout, regardless of industry. The study highlights how mentorship, peer networks, and professional coaching can serve as critical support systems to help novice leaders navigate the complexities of their roles and reduce the risk of burnout.

The challenges experienced by novice leaders—ranging from role ambiguity and stress to isolation and burnout—are often compounded by the absence of comprehensive onboarding programs. Keller and Meaney (2018) emphasize that without structured guidance during the first 90 days, novice leaders are more likely to experience performance setbacks and strained team dynamics. Ahmed's (2023) findings further support this, revealing that novice leaders who

lacked formal induction processes struggled with administrative tasks and building stakeholder relationships, a key component of leadership success.

Additionally, Proventus HR (2022) and Wells (2023) identify a recurring theme, organizations often prioritize technical training over leadership development, leaving novice leaders without the interpersonal and strategic skills they need to succeed. This gap in leadership preparedness highlights a significant opportunity for organizations to invest in targeted coaching and leadership development programs that address the specific challenges faced by novice leaders during their transitions.

The challenges faced by novice leaders, inadequate preparation, role ambiguity, high stress, and lack of sector-specific support systems, are pervasive across industries. Research from Keller and Meaney (2018), Ahmed (2023), and Wells (2023) consistently emphasizes the importance of structured onboarding, clear role expectations, and leadership development programs in mitigating these challenges. Additionally, studies such as Ahmed's (2023) sector-specific exploration in education reinforce that the consequences of poor transition support are universal, with effects that include burnout, turnover, and decreased organizational performance.

**Leadership Development of Novice Leaders**

Leadership development is a dynamic and lifelong process. While early life experiences may shape leadership potential, the transition into a formal leadership role presents unique challenges that require targeted interventions (Johnson & Murphy, 2011; Yip et al., 2020). For novice leaders, this transition is a critical juncture that involves redefining their professional identity, building new skills, and managing complex team dynamics.

Murphy and Johnson's (2011) long-lens approach emphasizes that leadership development is a cumulative process influenced by experiences over time. Early life experiences, such as participating in team activities or managing family responsibilities, may build foundational skills like resilience and adaptability. However, these traits alone are insufficient for the complexities of professional leadership. For novice leaders, developmental strategies must focus on addressing the immediate challenges of transitioning into leadership roles, such as navigating role ambiguity, managing interpersonal relationships, and establishing credibility.

Liu, Venkatesh, Murphy, and Riggio (2020) highlight the importance of tailoring developmental strategies to a leader's current life stage. Their dynamic framework emphasizes the role of reflection and experience processing in shaping leadership behaviors. Coaching serves as a tool within this framework, helping novice leaders draw insights from their experiences and apply them effectively to their new responsibilities (Anthony, 2017). This approach reinforces the idea that leadership development for novice leaders must meet them where they are, focusing on the challenges of their immediate context rather than abstract or long-term goals.

Traditional leadership models often portray leaders as solitary figures who exert control and make decisions independently. However, these models can be counterproductive for novice leaders, who often face overwhelming pressures when adopting a "heroic" leadership stance. Schweiger, Muller, and Guttel (2020) observed that many new leaders default to this model during stressful situations, leading to frustration and ineffective decision-making. According to their results, despite exposure to collaborative leadership concepts, newer leaders frequently struggle to relinquish control, which hampers their ability to engage teams effectively.

In contrast, modern leadership theory emphasizes processual leadership, which views leadership as a collaborative and adaptive process. Day et al. (2021) argue that novice leaders benefit from approaches that prioritize teamwork, trust-building, and adaptability over rigid control. Processual leadership aligns well with the developmental needs of novice leaders, as it encourages them to share responsibilities, involve their teams in decision-making, and remain flexible in dynamic environments. Coaching can play a pivotal role in helping novice leaders shift from heroic to collaborative leadership by fostering self-awareness and guiding them to adopt more adaptive practices. As Yip et al. (2020) note, coaching provides a space for leaders to explore their leadership identity, question assumptions, and experiment with new behaviors.

Beyond skills and knowledge, novice leaders often grapple with questions of identity—Who am I as a leader? Do others see me as one? Research shows that leadership identity is not innate, but formed over time through social interactions and reflection (Komives et al., 2005; DeRue & Ashford, 2010). This process, known as *leadership identity construction*, includes internalizing a leader identity, being recognized by others as a leader, and finding alignment with one's personal values and professional expectations (Szekely et al., 2024; Yip et al., 2020). Executive coaching, while often associated with behavioral outcomes, has been found to create the space for this type of identity work, especially in high-stakes transitions like those faced by novice leaders (Rathmell et al., 2019; Freischlag, 2019). While this study does not explicitly measure identity development, it acknowledges that leadership identity may emerge as a developmental byproduct of increased self-awareness, emotional regulation, and confidence facilitated by coaching.

Addressing these developmental openings requires a comprehensive leadership growth approach beyond isolated coaching interventions. Effective leadership development programs are indispensable for equipping novice leaders with the skills, self-awareness, and support systems needed to navigate their transitions successfully. These programs often incorporate multiple components, such as experiential learning, emotional intelligence development, and mentorship, that work in tandem with coaching to address the unique needs of emerging leaders (Center for Leadership Development, 2016; CoachHub, 2022).

**Leadership Development Programs and Novice Leaders**

Leadership development programs tailored to the unique needs of novice leaders can provide critical support during this transitional period. Day et al. (2020) advocate for a holistic approach that integrates experiential learning, emotional intelligence development, and mentorship to address the challenges novice leaders face.

Emotional intelligence (EI) and communication skills are fundamental competencies that can underpin effective leadership. Bar-On (2006) highlights that leaders with high EI are better equipped to regulate their emotions, manage interpersonal relationships, and foster positive team dynamics. Similarly, Schweiger et al. (2020) emphasize that developing self-awareness and interpersonal skills enables novice leaders to build trust and cohesion within their teams. These emotional competencies are particularly crucial during leadership transitions, as Grant (2013) and Swart & Harcup (2012) found that emotionally intelligent leaders demonstrate greater resilience under pressure.

Closely intertwined with EI, strong communication skills are indispensable for effective leadership. Day et al., (2021) argue that communication fosters trust, articulates vision, and enhances collaboration. Leadership development programs that integrate EI and communication training provide novice leaders with strategies for active listening, delivering constructive feedback, and managing difficult conversations, all skills that are vital for building credibility and navigating team dynamics. By strengthening both emotional intelligence and communication, these programs equip leaders with the tools necessary to foster engagement, maintain strong relationships, and successfully lead through challenges.

Mentorship and coaching provide additional layers of support for novice leaders. Day et al. (2021) highlight the role of mentors in offering guidance, perspective, and feedback, helping novice leaders navigate organizational dynamics. Mentors, often experienced leaders, can help novices understand the unwritten rules of leadership within their organization and build professional networks. Coaching complements mentorship by addressing specific challenges through personalized interventions. Together, these approaches create a supportive framework for novice leaders to refine their skills and build confidence in their abilities.

Experiential learning plays an important role in leadership development. Murphy and Johnson (2011) emphasize the importance of hands-on experiences, such as simulations and real-world leadership opportunities, in fostering decision-making and problem-solving skills. These experiences provide novice leaders with a safe environment to practice and refine their abilities, preparing them for the complexities of leadership roles.

Day et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of a multi-component approach to leadership development, integrating several key elements to support novice leaders. Experiential learning,

as discussed by Murphy and Johnson (2011), provides opportunities for leaders to engage in real-world challenges, fostering practical decision-making and problem-solving skills. Emotional intelligence development, highlighted by Bar-On (2006), focuses on enhancing self-regulation and empathy, both essential for effective leadership and team management. Communication and team-building training, explored by Day et al. (2021), further supports leadership growth by developing interpersonal skills critical for building trust and fostering collaboration within teams.

Additionally, mentorship and coaching, which Day et al. (2021) identify as vital components of leadership development, offer continuous guidance and promote reflective learning through personalized feedback and support. Together, these components form a comprehensive, holistic framework designed to address the multifaceted needs of novice leaders and support their growth throughout their leadership journeys.

**Executive Coaching**

Executive coaching, a structured and evidence-based process, has evolved significantly over the past century, transitioning from a remedial tool to a strategic development method. As its scope has broadened, coaching now plays a pivotal role in fostering leadership growth, particularly for novice leaders navigating the complexities of modern organizations. This section explores the historical evolution of executive coaching, its diverse methodologies, and its impact on leadership development, with an emphasis on supporting novice leaders.

The origins of executive coaching are rooted in Organizational Development (OD) practices of the mid-twentieth century, which primarily aimed to address performance issues among senior leaders. Early interventions often carried a stigma, as coaching was associated with

remediating problematic behaviors or “fixing” underperforming executives (Kilburg, 1996; Stinnett, 2003). Companies like Personnel Decisions, Inc. (PDI) formalized these practices in the 1960s and 1970s, but their focus remained on narrow performance improvement goals (Stinnett, 2003).

The field began to shift in the 1980s as coaching evolved into a developmental tool for high-potential leaders. This period marked the emergence of structured coaching models and professional credentialing standards, which enhanced its legitimacy (Boysen-Rotelli, 2020; Theeboom, 2014). Evidence-based practices, such as validated assessments and feedback mechanisms, became central to coaching during the 1990s and 2000s, further broadening its applications. Jones et al. (2016) and Nicolau et al. (2023) demonstrated that coaching is effective in improving self-awareness, resilience, and leadership adaptability, and it aligns these outcomes with broader organizational objectives.

By the 2010s, coaching had gained global recognition as a transformative leadership development tool, addressing psychological and operational challenges in complex environments (Swart & Harcup, 2013). This evolution laid the groundwork for applying coaching methodologies to novice leaders, enabling them to build foundational skills while adapting to dynamic workplace demands.

Executive coaching itself employs various methods, each designed to meet specific developmental needs. These approaches, grounded in evidence-based practices, emphasize personalized interventions that align with individual and organizational goals.

1. Goal-oriented coaching emphasizes establishing specific, measurable objectives through collaborative processes. Rooted in goal-setting theory, this approach enhances focus and motivation, enabling leaders to track progress toward short- and long-term goals (Kovacs & Corrie, 2017; Latham & Locke, 2012). For novice leaders, goal-oriented coaching provides clarity and structure, which are essential during the early stages of their leadership journey.
2. Cognitive-behavioral coaching integrates principles of cognitive-behavioral therapy to help leaders identify and reshape unhelpful thought patterns. MacKie's (2014) study demonstrated significant improvements in transformational leadership behaviors among executives using this approach, highlighting its potential to enhance resilience and emotional regulation for novice leaders.
3. Narrative coaching focuses on identity formation by exploring participants' stories and experiences. Yip et al. (2020) emphasize its value for novice leaders, as it facilitates the integration of personal and professional experiences into cohesive leadership styles. This method helps leaders navigate identity shifts and develop authenticity during transitional periods.
4. Systemic and relational coaching considers the broader organizational context, addressing the interplay between individual behaviors and systemic factors. Kahn's (2019) "Coaching on the Axis" model highlights the importance of fostering collaboration and adaptability, particularly in dynamic team environments. This approach provides valuable insights into navigating organizational relationships and cultural norms for novice leaders.

These methodologies highlight executive coaching's versatility, offering tailored strategies to address the diverse challenges leaders face at all stages. For novice leaders, these approaches can build foundational skills, enhance self-awareness, and foster adaptability.

However, regardless of methodology, research consistently demonstrates the positive impact of executive coaching on both individual and organizational outcomes. Jones et al.'s (2016) meta-analysis identified key mechanisms driving coaching effectiveness, including structured feedback, goal alignment, and strong coach-coachee relationships. These mechanisms contribute to enhanced performance, team productivity, and employee retention, which are essential for organizational success.

Coaching also fosters emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and resilience, traits that are necessary for effective leadership. Nicolau et al. (2023) examined 20 randomized controlled trials and found that coaching significantly improved leaders' self-efficacy, psychological capital, and behavioral adaptability. These findings highlight coaching's capacity to address stress management, improve decision-making, and strengthen interpersonal relationships, preparing leaders to navigate complex challenges.

**Developmental Gaps in Leadership Coaching**

Despite the well-documented challenges faced by novice leaders, a significant development gap persists in the availability and application of effective leadership coaching. Research reveals that only a small percentage of organizations employ tailored coaching and assimilation plans, despite strong evidence supporting their efficacy in supporting leadership transitions (Keller & Meaney, 2018).

As examined by Lockmiller (2014), executive coaching offers a practical solution by equipping new leaders with the tools to clarify roles and cultivate developmental strategies. However, tailored coaching programs for novice leaders remain scarce. Ahmed's (2023) study highlights how insufficient organizational support during leadership transitions exacerbates challenges for new leaders, emphasizing the necessity of structured coaching initiatives. For instance, Ahmed found that novice principals experienced substantial stress due to inadequate pre-appointment training.

Similarly, Keller and Meaney (2018) and Brooke (2018) emphasize the importance of providing leadership coaching during the critical first 90 days to ensure successful onboarding and cultural integration. Graham (2020) reinforces this point by examining how new front-line leaders in a cancer care facility could have benefited from coaching activities, addressing their unique stressors and responsibilities. His study highlights the transformative impact of targeted coaching on both leader efficacy and organizational outcomes.

Leadership coaching supports development in several key areas, including identifying strengths and weaknesses, enhancing communication, strengthening emotional intelligence, and fostering diverse perspectives (Anthony, 2017; Dippenaar & Schaap, 2017; Grant, 2013; Mackie, 2014; Swart & Harcup, 2012; The Leadership Coaches, 2024). However, a gap persists in the focus of many coaching programs. Studies highlight a prevailing short-term focus on immediate performance improvements rather than holistic, long-term leadership growth.

A study by CoachHub (2022) outlines the dual focus of leadership development coaching: external management skills and personal growth through self-awareness and emotional intelligence. These findings align with broader research indicating that coaching not only

prepares leaders for their immediate roles but also builds a foundation for long-term success. Despite these insights, most organizations fail to tailor their coaching specifically to the developmental needs of novice leaders during transitions.

Novice leaders frequently encounter challenges during their transition into leadership, including uncertainty in their role, shifts in identity, and heightened responsibilities they do not feel equipped to navigate. Executive coaching addresses these challenges by providing a structured and supportive environment for skill development. Yip et al. (2020) highlight how narrative coaching fosters identity formation, while systemic approaches emphasize navigating relationships and organizational culture (Kahn, 2019). Together, these methods equip novice leaders with the tools to build confidence, manage stress, and establish team credibility.

Tailored coaching interventions also help novice leaders develop emotional intelligence and communication competencies, which are important in managing team dynamics, fostering collaboration, and navigating organizational complexities (Crowell, 2010; Kahn, 2019). By addressing the unique needs of novice leaders, coaching enables them to transition more effectively into their roles while building a foundation for long-term growth.

**Coaching Novice Leaders: Sector-Specific Studies**

Sector-specific research provides valuable insights into how executive coaching influences novice leaders in diverse professional contexts. While much of the literature on coaching focuses on senior leaders, these studies illustrate how tailored coaching programs can support novice leaders across different industries.

Stallworth (2014) conducted a district-level study exploring leadership coaching for 32 novice principals during their first two years in the role. Using a mixed-methods approach, Stallworth assessed the development of authentic leadership traits such as self-awareness, relational transparency, and balanced processing through the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) and qualitative interviews. Participants reported significant growth in their ability to reflect on their leadership identity, engage transparently with stakeholders, and navigate complex school dynamics. However, Stallworth's findings revealed variability in outcomes, suggesting that novice leaders' experiences with coaching are heavily influenced by the alignment of coaching strategies with their individual needs and contexts. This variability brings to light the importance of tailoring coaching interventions to meet novice leaders where they are, a key consideration for understanding their perceptions of coaching effectiveness.

Silver et al. (2009) conducted a qualitative study examining a university-based coaching program designed for 17 program participants, integrating theoretical training with real-world leadership tasks. The study employed a comparative case study design and gathered data through semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis over the course of a year. Participants included new administrators, leadership coaches, and site-based internship supervisors, providing a multi-perspective evaluation of the program's effectiveness. Findings revealed that participants overwhelmingly perceived coaching as instrumental in enhancing their decision-making confidence and leadership practices. The program's emphasis on personalized support and differentiated coaching strategies was a key factor in its success.

James-Ward (2013) conducted a qualitative case study examining the experiences of four novice principals in urban districts over one to three years of leadership coaching. The study's

methodological strength lies in its use of multiple qualitative data sources, including participant observations, open-ended surveys, and the researcher's coaching notes, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of how coaching influenced self-reflection, identity formation, and instructional leadership. Findings revealed that novice principals valued the collaborative nature of coaching, particularly its role in fostering problem-solving, confidence-building, and instructional decision-making. Participants reported that coaching helped them navigate the complexities of their roles, offering both practical strategies and emotional support.

Carter (2015) employed an Action Learning Action Research (ALAR) methodology to examine how 10 novice HRD practitioners perceived the impact of action learning coaching on their development. The qualitative case study design, incorporating questionnaires, virtual meetings, researcher observations, and post-set interviews, provided rich descriptive data on participants' experiences. Participants in the study generally perceived action learning coaching as helpful in developing collaborative problem-solving skills, mindfulness, and reflective practice, contributing to their ability to navigate complex work environments. However, limitations in the study design, particularly in the virtual format, presented challenges in establishing trust and rapport among participants, which was thought to have restricted the depth of self-disclosure and critical reflection.

While Carter's study highlighted the complexities of novice leadership in organizational development, similar challenges have been documented in the healthcare sector, particularly within academic medical institutions where clinicians transition into executive roles. Rathmell et al., (2019) presented a longitudinal case study examining the leadership transition of a physician-scientist newly appointed to a divisional leadership role within an academic medical center. Over

a two-year period, executive coaching supported the novice leader's development through structured reflection, scenario-based leadership practice, and identity formation. Key findings emphasized coaching's role in helping the participant manage emotional complexity, establish strategic structure, and define a personal leadership voice within a high-stakes environment. The study illustrates how executive coaching when paired with psychological safety and guided inquiry, can accelerate the development of leadership behaviors and internal confidence in identity-rich contexts like academic medicine.

Similarly, Freischlag (2019) offered a first-person narrative reflecting on her own leadership transition from physician to academic leader, highlighting how executive coaching helped her navigate self-doubt, resistance, and the relational dynamics of leadership. Coaching provided a space to reflect on values, develop emotional regulation, and engage in the deliberate practice of leadership. Her experience stresses the importance of personalized coaching that not only enhances skill but also affirms one's emerging sense of self as a leader. Together, these healthcare-specific accounts demonstrate how executive coaching facilitates both behavioral development and internal transformation, reinforcing the broader notion that leadership identity may evolve as an emergent outcome of reflective coaching practice.

**Findings and Insights on Coaching Novice Leaders**

The literature on coaching novice leaders reveals consistent patterns in how coaching fosters leadership development during pivotal career transitions. Despite differences in sectors and methodologies, several key themes emerge, including the development of self-awareness and confidence, the importance of trust within the coaching relationship, and the evolving nature of

coaching's impact over time. Together, these insights illustrate coaching as a dynamic and developmental process that grows with the leader's experience and needs.

One prominent theme is the role of coaching in enhancing self-awareness, building confidence, and supporting leadership identity development. Stallworth (2014) found that novice principals experienced meaningful growth in self-awareness and confidence, attributing these gains to the reflective nature of their coaching experiences. Participants reported that coaching created a space for them to process their leadership experiences, recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and ultimately clarify their leadership identity. Carter's (2015) study on novice HRD practitioners further supports these findings, demonstrating how coaching facilitated self-reflection and mindfulness, which in turn helped participants navigate complex professional environments with greater assurance. This theme is echoed in academic healthcare settings as well. Freischlag (2019) and Rathmell et al. (2019) describe how coaching supports leadership identity formation and emotional confidence among physicians transitioning into executive roles. These reflections underline the relevance of coaching as a developmental tool not only in education or corporate contexts but also in high-pressure environments like medicine, where leaders must balance technical expertise with relational and strategic demands. Yip et al. (2020) add another dimension, highlighting the value of narrative coaching for novice leaders. By exploring their personal and professional stories, leaders developed cohesive leadership narratives that reinforced their sense of authenticity and alignment between their personal values and professional roles. This type of coaching was especially impactful during career transitions, as it encouraged leaders to integrate their experiences into a unified leadership identity.

Closely connected to these developmental outcomes is the critical role of trust and relational dynamics in coaching success. Silver et al. (2009) and Carter (2015) emphasize that a strong, trusting relationship between coach and coachee is central to effective coaching. Silver et al.'s study of novice school administrators revealed that participants found coaching most effective when it fostered a supportive environment built on trust. Such an environment enabled leaders to engage in open dialogue, share challenges candidly, and accept constructive feedback without fear of judgment. Similarly, Carter's (2015) research on action learning coaching highlighted trust as a key factor influencing participants' willingness to self-disclose and engage deeply in the coaching process. However, Carter also observed that the virtual coaching format used in the study limited opportunities for rapport-building, which restricted the depth of participant engagement. This finding underscores the importance of delivery format and the challenges virtual coaching may pose to relational trust-building.

In addition to these immediate benefits, the literature also illustrates how novice leaders' perceptions of coaching evolve as they gain experience. Lochmiller's (2014) longitudinal study offers valuable insights into this progression by tracking novice principals' coaching experiences over three years. During the first year, participants primarily valued coaching for its directive support, which helped them address immediate challenges and build foundational leadership skills. By the second year, their perspectives shifted, with coaching becoming more reflective and facilitative, fostering problem-solving skills and a greater sense of autonomy. In the third year, participants viewed coaching as a collaborative partnership, engaging in strategic discussions that refined their leadership identity and decision-making processes. Lochmiller's study highlights how coaching transitions from providing guidance in the early stages of

leadership to serving as a platform for reflection and strategic collaboration as novice leaders grow more confident and self-sufficient.

Taken together, these insights from Stallworth (2014), Carter (2015), Yip et al. (2020), Silver et al. (2009), Lochmiller (2014), and healthcare-specific accounts (Freischlag, 2019; Rathmell et al., 2019) reveal a cohesive narrative about the impact of coaching on novice leaders. Coaching consistently enhances self-awareness, confidence, and leadership identity, while trust remains a cornerstone of effective coaching relationships. Moreover, coaching evolves alongside the leader's development, shifting from directive support during initial transitions to a reflective and collaborative process over time. These findings reinforce that coaching is not only a valuable intervention but also a dynamic developmental journey that supports novice leaders across diverse professional contexts.

Though the literature provides valuable insights into how coaching enhances novice leaders' self-awareness, confidence, and leadership identity, it also informs us of areas where further research is needed. Specifically, despite a strong consensus on the importance of trust in coaching relationships and the evolving nature of coaching needs, questions remain regarding how these outcomes manifest across different industries and leadership contexts. Identifying these gaps is critical to framing how this study contributes to the broader discourse on novice leadership development.

**Summary of Gaps in the Literature**

While research on coaching has provided valuable insights, significant gaps remain, particularly in understanding its impact on novice leaders across different sectors. Existing

studies, such as those by Nicolau et al. (2023) and Jones et al. (2016), examine coaching outcomes broadly but do not distinguish between novice and experienced leaders. This lack of differentiation overlooks the unique challenges novice leaders face, as highlighted by Yip et al. (2020) and Stallworth (2014), who emphasize the need for targeted coaching interventions that address early leadership development.

Another limitation is the sector-specific nature of coaching research. Studies by Stallworth (2014) and Silver et al. (2009) focus on coaching within education, particularly for novice principals and school administrators, while Carter (2015) explores coaching within the human resource development (HRD) sector. These findings offer valuable insights into industry-specific coaching practices but reinforce the fragmented approach to coaching research. The broader applicability of coaching across diverse industries remains underexplored, leaving an important gap in understanding how coaching strategies can be effectively generalized or adapted across multiple professional settings.

Future research should seek to address these gaps by examining how coaching interventions can be tailored specifically for novice leaders and exploring coaching outcomes across multiple industries within a unified research framework. Such studies would provide a more comprehensive understanding of coaching's role in leadership development, ensuring that novice leaders receive the targeted support necessary for their growth and success.

Lochmiller's (2014) three-year longitudinal study is one of the few that track novice leaders' coaching experiences over time. Most studies, such as Stallworth (2014) and Carter (2015), rely on cross-sectional designs that capture coaching outcomes at a single point in time. Longitudinal studies are critical for understanding how coaching impacts leadership development

over the course of a leader's career. Future research should prioritize longitudinal designs to capture the evolving nature of coaching outcomes and their long-term impact on novice leaders.

While several studies emphasize the importance of trust and relational dynamics in coaching (Silver et al., 2009; Carter, 2015), few explore how these dynamics specifically influence novice leaders' developmental outcomes. Additionally, the impact of virtual coaching formats on relationship-building remains an underexplored area as noted in Carter's study. With the growing prevalence of virtual coaching, research should investigate how digital platforms affect trust, rapport, and coaching efficacy for novice leaders.

In summary, the existing literature provides a strong foundation for understanding the challenges novice leaders face and the developmental value of executive coaching. However, notable gaps persist in how these findings are applied across industries and leadership contexts. Most studies have examined coaching outcomes within isolated sectors or focused on experienced leaders, leaving a critical void in understanding how coaching supports those navigating leadership for the first time. Moreover, limited attention has been given to the long-term developmental impact of coaching or how it interacts with motivational and emotional growth processes central to early leadership transitions. This study seeks to address these gaps by exploring how novice leaders across multiple industries perceive a theory-informed executive coaching process grounded in Self-Determination Theory and Emotional Intelligence. By focusing on lived experiences rather than quantitative outcomes, the study contributes new insights into how coaching fosters motivation, emotional awareness, and identity formation during a leader's inaugural transition, advancing both the theoretical and practical understanding of coaching as a developmental tool for novice leaders.

# CHAPTER III—THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study explores the development of novice leaders through a theory-informed executive coaching process grounded in self-determination theory (SDT) and emotional intelligence (EQ). These frameworks serve not only as theoretical underpinnings but also as the foundation of the coaching model used throughout the intervention. Collectively, SDT and EQ provide a robust and complementary lens for understanding the psychological, emotional, and relational dynamics that novice leaders must navigate during early leadership transitions. While not the sole predictors of leadership success, these frameworks are widely recognized as pillars of excellence within the leadership literature (Abraham & Scaria, 2017; Anderson & Sun, 2017; Bar-On, 2006; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Goleman, 2021; Guy, 2020; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Laschinger et al., 2016; Spence et al., 2011).

The coaching experience examined in this study is intentionally shaped by the constructs of SDT and EQ. These frameworks guide the structure of the intervention, the selection of tools and reflections, and the interpretation of participant experiences. This chapter outlines how each theory contributes to the design and intent of the coaching process and informs the study's purpose: to explore how novice leaders perceive their experience in a structured, theory-informed coaching engagement.

## Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory, developed by Deci and Ryan (2000), identifies three core psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—as essential to intrinsic motivation and optimal functioning. These principles are embedded in the coaching process used

in this study and offer a foundational lens for interpreting how novice leaders experience personal agency, professional growth, and connection.

Autonomy is cultivated by encouraging leaders to take ownership of their development goals. Coaching sessions promote reflection and strategic thinking, helping participants align actions with their values and context. As Guy (2020) emphasizes, autonomy is not simply independence, but rather volition within a supported structure. The coaching process reinforces this by creating space for choice, voice, and self-direction. Spence et al. (2011) assert that coaching fosters autonomy through its reflective and non-directive approach, and Nalipay et al. (2020) confirm the cross-cultural relevance of autonomy, reinforcing its applicability across industries and demographics.

Competence refers to the need to feel capable and effective in one's leadership actions. This is supported through developmental feedback, scenario-based problem solving, and confidence-building strategies within coaching. Zhou et al. (2020) associate competence with greater resilience and self-development, particularly during periods of uncertainty. Nalipay et al. (2020) also note that while Western contexts may prioritize competence as a leadership trait, its role is still culturally relevant even when expressed differently. Coaching helps novice leaders develop this sense of capability through personalized support and skill refinement (Spence et al., 2011). Relatedness, the need to feel connected and valued, is built through the trust-based coaching relationship itself. The presence of a consistent, supportive coach fosters belonging, emotional safety, and the opportunity to share leadership challenges without judgment. Matahela and van Rensburg (2022) emphasize the role of professional relationships in creating motivation and resilience, outcomes that are central to this coaching process. By integrating SDT into the

coaching model, the process helps meet novice leaders' core psychological needs, creating the conditions for sustained motivation, leadership growth, and internalized development.

**Emotional Intelligence (EQ)**

Emotional intelligence further deepens the coaching model by equipping novice leaders to recognize, regulate, and manage emotions, both their own and others'. Goleman (1995) originally defined EQ as the ability to perceive, understand, and manage emotions, a competency critical to interpersonal effectiveness and leadership performance. The coaching process in this study includes structured opportunities to build self-awareness, emotional regulation, social awareness, and relationship management.

Self-awareness is foundational to EQ and is introduced early through tools like the EQ-i 2.0, followed by guided journaling and reflective practices. These tools help leaders uncover emotional triggers and begin identifying patterns that influence their leadership behavior. Goleman (2021) argues that self-aware leaders exhibit more grounded decision-making, emotional stability, and confidence, outcomes actively developed through the coaching process. Social awareness focuses on recognizing emotional cues in others and understanding relational dynamics. Coaching activities incorporate empathy-building exercises and real-world leadership scenarios to help leaders interpret team dynamics and interpersonal feedback. Goleman (2021) identifies this as a critical skill for fostering collaboration, which is vital for novice leaders managing new or inherited teams.

Relationship management involves effectively navigating conversations, building trust, and managing conflict. Coaching conversations help novice leaders strengthen these skills by

practicing emotionally intelligent responses and exploring communication strategies in complex team contexts. Rosete and Ciarrochi (2005) found that emotionally intelligent leaders tend to achieve higher organizational outcomes and are rated more favorably by others—evidence that supports the inclusion of EQ development in coaching programs.

Bar-On's (2006) Emotional-Social Intelligence (ESI) model expands on Goleman's framework, offering a more comprehensive breakdown of EQ into five composite scales: self-perception, self-expression, interpersonal skills, decision-making, and stress management. These components form the structure of the EQ-i 2.0 tool used in this study. Ackley (2016) emphasizes that these emotional competencies are not innate but can be developed through intentional coaching interventions—a premise reflected in this study's design.

**Framework in Practice**

The coaching model implemented in this study is not generic, it is purposefully informed by SDT and EQ theory. These frameworks shape the session structure, coaching questions, reflective prompts, and the learning tools used throughout the process. Participant journals, EQ assessments, and qualitative interviews help capture how leaders perceive their experience of the coaching process through the lens of motivation, emotional awareness, and interpersonal effectiveness.

While this theory-informed framework offers a structured and evidence-based approach to leadership development, limitations must be acknowledged. The focus on individual growth may not fully address organizational or cultural barriers. EQ-focused strategies may also prioritize interpersonal dynamics over broader systems-level leadership. Additionally, while

SDT's constructs are widely validated, contextual factors such as organizational hierarchy or cultural expectations may moderate their expression and relevance. These complexities present opportunities for future research and practical refinement.

# CHAPTER IV—METHODS

## Introduction

This study employs a qualitative case study design to explore how novice leaders perceive the experience of participating in a theory-informed executive coaching process. The coaching intervention is grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Emotional Intelligence (EQ), which serve as the foundation for the design, structure, and facilitation of each coaching engagement. This approach enables an in-depth examination of the lived experiences of novice leaders during their first year of leadership, with attention to how they make sense of their development, motivation, and emotional awareness through the lens of the coaching process.

To enrich the study's interpretive depth, a comparison group of novice leaders who do not participate in executive coaching is included. This allows for a comparative understanding of how coaching is perceived differently by those who receive structured, theory-informed support versus those who navigate early leadership challenges without formal coaching. While not seeking to measure effectiveness in a traditional experimental sense, the comparison provides a meaningful context for interpreting how the coaching process is experienced by novice leaders and what unique value participants may derive from coaching relative to novice leaders who do not receive coaching.

The design of this study is well-suited to uncover nuanced patterns in how coaching supports leaders in navigating challenges such as role ambiguity, emotional strain, interpersonal dynamics, and leadership identity formation. These areas are often underrepresented in leadership development research, especially among first-time leaders. By centering participant perception and integrating a comparative perspective, the study offers insight into how theory-based coaching can foster self-awareness, agency, motivation, and emotional intelligence within complex organizational environments.

Findings will inform the refinement of coaching practices and leadership development strategies, offering practical guidance for organizations seeking to support emerging leaders more effectively. By bridging theory and lived experience, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on coaching as a developmental tool, particularly when informed by evidence-based psychological and emotional frameworks.

## Positionality Statement

As a researcher in the field of novice leadership, my positionality is shaped by my personal, professional, and academic experiences, which inevitably influence my approach to the study of novice leadership development. I acknowledge that my background, beliefs, and values significantly shape my perspective and interpretations.

### *Personal Background*

I was blessed to grow up in a poverty environment and would become the first in my family to graduate college. This experience instilled a deep appreciation for perseverance, resource development, and education, which all aggregate to a transformative power. My journey

has made me particularly sensitive to equity and access to resources, partly fueling my commitment to understanding and addressing the challenges of underrepresented and underserved communities.

*Professional Experience*

My professional background includes extensive experience in leadership roles across various sectors, including starting my insurance agency from scratch and founding a non-profit organization. These experiences have provided me with a practical understanding of the complexities and demands of leadership. I have firsthand knowledge of the challenges leaders face, especially in the early stages of their careers, and this informs my empathy and insight into the experiences of novice principals.

*Researcher Positionality*

As the primary researcher and executive coach for this study, I hold a dual role that uniquely positions me within the research context. My role as coach provided direct access to the coached participants' developmental experiences, fostering deep rapport and contextual insight that enriched the quality of the data collected. However, this proximity also presents potential challenges related to subjectivity, role influence, and researcher bias.  This was not the case for the control participants, as interactions were limited.

I approached this study from a constructivist perspective, acknowledging that meaning is co-constructed through interaction and that my interpretations are influenced by my personal values and professional coaching lens. My background in executive coaching, coupled with my

commitment to leadership development, informed the structure of the coaching sessions and shaped the way I engaged with participants throughout the process.

To reduce potential bias in data analysis, I employed a structured coding framework based on pre-established theoretical models—Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and the Bar-On model of Emotional Intelligence. These frameworks guided the creation of a priori codes and ensured that the analysis remained grounded in established constructs rather than subjective impressions. Additionally, I utilized pattern coding methods as described by Saldana, Miles, and Huberman (2016) to identify recurring themes across participants in a systematic and consistent manner. Where possible, I incorporated verbatim quotes to allow participants' voices to stand on their own and minimize interpretive distortion.

While my dual role may influence how participants responded or how I interpreted meaning, it also allowed for a richer, more empathetic understanding of the coaching process. By acknowledging this positionality and taking intentional steps to mitigate its influence, particularly through theory-driven coding and member feedback, I aimed to balance practitioner insight with scholarly integrity and contribute meaningful findings to the discourse on novice leadership development.

*Reflexivity and Bias*

My commitment to equity and personal experiences with overcoming challenges may lead me to focus on specific aspects of leadership development over others. To mitigate these biases, I employ reflexive practices throughout my research process, including:

- Self-reflection**:** I regularly reflect on my beliefs, values, and assumptions to understand how they influence my research.
- Peer Debriefing: Engaging with colleagues and mentors to challenge my interpretations and provide alternative perspectives.
- Member Checking: Seeking participant feedback to ensure my findings accurately represent their experiences.
- Third-Party Interviewing: To minimize social desirability bias, a third party will conduct the final interview with the coached participants, prompting reflection on their experience.

**Research Design**

The study employs a qualitative case study research design to explore how executive coaching impacts the leadership development of novice leaders across various industries. A case study approach is well-suited for investigating complex, real-world phenomena within their specific contexts, offering a detailed examination of the lived experiences of novice leaders (Yin, 2018). This method allows for an in-depth exploration of both individual and collective experiences, providing a holistic understanding of leadership development through coaching interventions**.** By framing the research as a case study, the focus remains on understanding the unique circumstances, challenges, and developmental trajectories of novice leaders as they navigate their first leadership roles.

To align with this design, the study defines its "case" as the leadership development process of novice leaders who engage in executive coaching while including a comparative element through the non-coached control group. A case study approach captures the complexity

and interplay of factors influencing leadership growth and identity development, emphasizing the real-world challenges novice leaders face during their inaugural leadership roles (Day et al., 2021).

The qualitative approach remains appropriate for capturing participants' rich, reflective experiences and providing in-depth insights into their leadership journeys (Kahn, 2011). By integrating multiple data sources, participant journals, in-depth interviews, and insights from the control group, the study ensures methodological rigor and triangulation, enhancing the credibility of findings (Yin, 2018). This case study design prioritizes the participants' voices, offering a detailed understanding of how coaching interventions influence their leadership development, personal growth, and identity formation. By focusing on the lived experiences of these novice leaders, this study aims to uncover the nuanced ways in which executive coaching shapes leadership trajectories. Additionally, the comparative element provides insight into how coaching uniquely addresses challenges faced by novice leaders, offering practical implications for leadership development programs across industries.

**Study Setting and Participants**

Participants will be selected from four distinct industry settings to provide a cross-sectional view of how executive coaching impacts novice leaders across sectors.

- Education: Novice principals from a large urban school district in Northeastern Oklahoma.
- Healthcare Technology Start-Up: Newly promoted first-time managers within one of the fastest-growing start-up companies in Oklahoma.

- Established Corporate Sector: Recently promoted first-time project managers in one of the largest construction companies in Oklahoma.
- Small Business (Franchise Model): First-time sales managers in a nationally branded insurance company, individually owned locally.

Eight novice leaders, all of whom are within the first two years of their first formal leadership role, will be recruited using a convenient, purposive sampling method. Half of the participants will receive executive coaching, while the other half will serve as a control group for comparison. Each industry will have one coached and one non-coached participant. The coaching will be delivered virtually using videoconferencing, ensuring accessibility across the diverse industries represented in the study.

**Coaching Framework**

The executive coaching intervention integrates three psychological methodologies during the coaching engagement. The first, a strength-based coaching model (Mackie, 2014), rooted in positive psychology (Passmore & Evans-Krimme, 2021; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) while integrating the principles of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2017), and Emotional Intelligence Theory (Bar-On, 2006). The coaching methodology emphasizes the empowerment of novice leaders by developing their emotional competencies, leadership behaviors, and decision-making capabilities, which aid in the identity shift accompanying the inaugural leadership transition (Miscenko et al., 2017). The second, cognitive behavioral theory (CBT), establishes a problem-centered exploration of issues within the coaching session brought forth by the coachee (Passmore, 2007). This is a sufficient tactic in heightening awareness for the novice leader when catabolic issues continue to resurface, disrupting their ability to progress.

Lastly, the consulting approach focuses on learning to broaden the skills and abilities of the novice leader, developing the necessary tools and capabilities to succeed in the role (Joo, 2005). There will be time allotted within the sessions for focused learning and inter-session assignments to broaden the horizontal growth of the novice leaders' skills and abilities.

Participants will undergo a six-month coaching process structured as follows:

- Session Length: 45-minute coaching sessions.
- Session Frequency: Weekly sessions for 12 sessions.

The coaching engagement duration reflects the time examined to potentially combat lag time (4-8 months) between leadership learning and the facilitation of leadership behavior enactment (Day et al., 2013). The focus areas of each coaching session align with the key competencies outlined in Self-Determination Theory and Emotional Intelligence, ensuring the intervention is holistic and targeted at fostering leadership growth (Corrie & Kovacs, 2017).

The coaching methodology will integrate both personal development and organizational goals, with the coach and client co-creating the agenda for each session. The session will focus on the following:

- Developing Emotional Intelligence: Sessions will aim to enhance the leaders' self-perception, self-expression, interpersonal skills, decision-making, and stress management (Bar-On, 2006). Proprietary self-reflective forms were issued in between sessions for coaching participants to enhance awareness of SDT constructs.
- Self-Determination: Sessions will explore how participants can support their intrinsic motivation by fulfilling needs related to autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci &

Ryan, 2000). Proprietary self-reflective forms were used in between sessions for coaching participants to fill out to enhance awareness of EQ constructs.

The researcher will be the coach, possessing an International Coaching Federation (ICF) certified coaching designation. The coach will utilize the Institute for Professional Excellence in Coaching (iPEC) methodology as part of the coaching intervention. Forbes recently recognized the organization as one of the top 5 coaching certification programs globally (Weingus, 2023). The proprietary Energy Leadership Index (ELI) framework is a unique assessment and coaching tool designed to measure a leader's energy across seven distinct levels of consciousness, ranging from highly reactive to highly constructive energy (McLemore, 2017). These levels serve as a lens through which leaders can become aware of how they perceive, approach, and react to various situations in both personal and professional settings.

In this study, the ELI assessment will be administered to the coaching participants during the initial phase of the intervention to assess their current energy levels. The results will provide a baseline of the leader's energetic engagement, which will be used as a foundation for coaching conversations. The ELI categorized energy into:

- Catabolic (Levels 1 and 2): These lower energy levels are associated with feelings of stress, self-doubt, fear, and conflict.
- Anabolic (Levels 3 to 7): These higher levels are linked to creativity, collaboration, and visionary thinking.

Coaching sessions will incorporate the language of energy levels as a way to help novice leaders understand their behaviors, thoughts, and emotions more intensely. Through this lens, leaders will learn to:

- Identify Catabolic Responses: Leaders will reflect on instances where they experience catabolic energy (i.e., frustration or conflict) and how these responses limit their effectiveness. This reflection will support the development of self-awareness and emotional regulation.
- Shift to Anabolic Energy: Coaching will guide participants in identifying strategies to shift from lower energy reactions to more anabolic, empowering responses. This shift is critical for enhancing emotionally intelligent leadership behaviors, such as inspiring vision and motivating teams.
- Leverage High-Energy States: Participants will explore maximizing anabolic energy, particularly at levels 5 and 6, where innovation and collaborative leadership thrive.

By integrating the ELI coaching methodology into the intervention, leaders will gain insights into how their energy affects their decision-making and leadership presence. The ELI language will be a consistent part of coaching conversations, reinforcing the connection between energy levels and emotional intelligence leadership practices.

**Data Collection**

The study will collect data through participant journals and in-depth interviews, offering a comprehensive understanding of leadership challenges, growth, and identity development. Participant journals will allow leaders to reflect on their experiences throughout the coaching

process, offering real-time accounts of their progress and obstacles encountered. In-depth interviews will serve to explore these reflections further, drawing out themes related to emotional intelligence behaviors and motivation factors rooted in Self-Determination Theory (Szekely et al., 2023). The control group's data will provide a comparative perspective, highlighting differences in developmental experiences and outcomes between coached and non-coached leaders.

The qualitative component consists of Monthly Leadership Reflection Journals, Weekly Wisdom Journals completed by participants, and a post-intervention EQi 2.0. These instruments will capture the following:

- Reflections on leadership identity and challenges (Yip et al., 2020).
- Emotional growth and relational management.
- Insights into how executive coaching has influenced decision-making and leadership behaviors.

The interview questions were designed around the generic constructs of self-determination theory to provide a guided conversation that explores novice leaders' experience with the framework of their current leadership role. They will be conducted in phases: before and following the conclusion of the intervention. Cognitive interviewing was utilized with peers to solidify the questions' purpose and align them with the study's objectives. The researcher will conduct the first interview; however, to aid in eliminating researcher bias, the final interview, which may prompt the participants to discuss aspects of the coaching experience delivered by the investigator as the coach, will be conducted by an external third party.

The thematic analysis of these tactics will aid in identifying recurring patterns related to leadership development and the application of coaching principles (Corrie & Kovacs, 2017).

**Data Analysis**

The coding process followed an iterative and systematic approach to identify themes and patterns related to leadership development. Data was be collected through participant reflection journals and interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis began with the first cycle process, open (a-priori), where initial codes will be generated from the literature, followed by process, emotion, and values coding (Saldana et al., 2016). For decoding, the elicited documents were combined with interviews conducted at the intervention's beginning and conclusion. Interviews provide information structured to extract a researcher's data objective precisely. In contrast, reflective documents provide the observed participant the time and space to provide more objective information cultivated exclusively from their perceived experience (Charmaz, 2014).

Once the initial codes are established, they were grouped into broader themes that align with the study's research framework, mainly focusing on emotional intelligence and self-determination theory. The second cycle coding process involved pattern coding, examining relationships between codes to identify connections between participants' experiences of leadership challenges, coaching interventions, and leadership growth (Charmaz, 2006). Lastly, selective coding was applied to refine the themes, ensuring that the final categories reflect the most significant patterns across the data (Creswell, 2013). Throughout the process, a customized Excel worksheet managed and organized the data, tracking codes and themes across the large volume of qualitative data. Peer debriefing and member checking was used to enhance the

trustworthiness of the findings, ensuring that the interpretations accurately represent the participants' experiences.

**Data Collection & Analysis Schedule**

*Table 1. Qualitative Activity Schedule Overview*

| Week | Phase | Activities |
|---|---|---|
| Week 1 | Data Collection | Initial interviews, set up data collection systems, and weekly journal collection. |
| Week 2-4 | Data Collection | Weekly Journal collection, Coaching reflections, Organize data |
| Week 5-8 | Data Collection | Collect journals, refine codes |
| Week 9 | Consolidation & Preliminary Coding | Consolidate data, apply initial codes, memo writing |
| Week 10-12 | Consolidation & Review | Compare data sets, review coding consistency, memo writing |
| Week 13-14 | Comprehensive Coding | Detailed coding, identify sub-themes, memo writing |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Week 15-17 | Theme Building | Data categorization, theme building, constant comparison |
| Week 18-19 | Triangulation | Cross-validation of themes, data comparison, memo writing |
| Week 20 | Final Coding & Report Writing | Final coding, data interpretation, report writing |

**A Priori Code Results**

As stated earlier, the analysis utilized a-priori coding**,** aligning the data with established theoretical frameworks, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), and Emotional Intelligence (EQ), to examine how coaching interventions addressed these key leadership competencies. Additionally, Process Coding, Emotion Coding, and Values Coding were used to capture the actions, emotional responses, and personal beliefs expressed by novice leaders during their coaching experiences to further extract their perceptions of the process. This multi-layered coding approach ensured a comprehensive examination of how coaching facilitates leadership identity formation and emotional intelligence development. Through iterative coding cycles, emergent themes were systematically categorized to generate meaningful insights into the coaching experiences of novice leaders. The following findings highlight key themes that emerged from the literature, illustrating how coaching influenced their leadership development, emotional growth, and professional identity formation.

**Process Coding (P) – Capturing Leadership Actions & Transitions**

- Navigating Leadership Identity and Role Transition (SDT, EQ) (P)

  Novice leaders often experience role ambiguity and self-doubt as they transition into leadership. Coaching provides structured support that fosters confidence, internal motivation, and the development of a self-perception aligned with leadership responsibilities.

- Developing Emotional and Social Competencies (EQ) (P)

  Through coaching, novice leaders enhance emotional regulation, self-awareness, and communication, all of which are critical for effective leadership and interpersonal influence.

- Building Autonomy in Leadership (SDT) (P)

  Coaching supports autonomous decision-making by helping leaders develop a sense of ownership over their roles, align with intrinsic motivation, and operate with increasing independence from external validation.

- Evolving Coaching Focus Over Time (SDT, EQ) (P)

  Coaching engagements evolve from practical, operational guidance to more reflective and strategic dialogue. This shift helps novice leaders move from reactive problem-solving to proactive, values-aligned decision-making.

- Integrating Coaching Strategies into Daily Leadership Practices (EQ, SDT) (P)

  Leaders apply feedback, emotional intelligence techniques, and self-regulatory frameworks developed in coaching to address day-to-day leadership challenges, reinforcing growth and effectiveness.

**Emotion Coding (E) – Capturing Leaders' Emotional Responses to Coaching**

- Confidence Building Through Coaching Support (EQ) (E)

  Leaders express growing confidence in decision-making and problem-solving as coaching provides a psychologically safe space for feedback, reflection, and guided development.

- Emotional Stress and Leadership Ambiguity (EQ, SDT) (E)

  Novice leaders report experiencing stress, self-doubt, and imposter syndrome, often tied to unclear expectations and a lack of leadership identity clarity during transition periods.

- Trust and Relational Security in Coaching (EQ, SDT) (E)

  Coaching is perceived as most effective when it fosters relational safety and trust, allowing leaders to explore vulnerabilities and confront internal barriers to growth.

- Frustration with Unstructured Leadership Development (SDT) (E)

  Leaders express concern over the lack of structured onboarding or development pathways, reinforcing coaching as a vital tool for adaptive learning and goal-setting.

- Relief from Coaching as a Supportive Mechanism (EQ) (E)

  Participants describe coaching as a stress-relieving intervention that enhances emotional regulation, resilience, and coping capacity amidst leadership demands.

**Values Coding (V) – Identifying Leadership Beliefs & Perceptions of Coaching**

- Perceived Value of Coaching for Leadership Growth (EQ, SDT) (V)

  Leaders view coaching as instrumental in aligning personal values with leadership actions, enhancing authenticity, and supporting consistent, principle-based decision-making.

- Ethical and Transparent Leadership Development (EQ) (V)

  Coaching is credited with reinforcing ethical awareness, self-reflection, and relational transparency, which leaders perceive as foundational to trust-building and team cohesion.
- Commitment to Self-Reflection and Growth (SDT, EQ) (V)

  Novice leaders express a strong desire for continuous development and view coaching as a long-term investment in personal and professional growth.
- Belief in the Long-Term Benefits of Coaching (SDT) (V)

  Participants emphasize that coaching should not be confined to onboarding, but should be viewed as an ongoing resource that supports leadership adaptation over time.
- Alignment of Personal Values with Leadership Responsibilities (SDT, EQ) (V)

  Leaders describe coaching as instrumental in reconciling personal values with organizational expectations, ultimately fostering congruence in decision-making and leadership style.

**Coding Framework Note**

Using the pattern coding framework from Saldana et al., (2016), the A Priori codes were summarized across four interrelated lenses: categories or themes, causes or explanations, relationships among people, and the existing theoretical constructs (Self-Determination Theory and Emotional Intelligence). While not a central construct, leadership identity naturally emerged from the reflective and developmental processes observed in coaching.

## Categories and Themes

This study explored the leadership development of novice leaders and revealed distinct patterns related to autonomy, competence, relatedness, motivation, and leadership challenges within the findings of the A Priori coding. Executive coaching provides a structured intervention to support these areas, yet varying industry contexts and individual experiences influence how these themes manifest.

1. *Autonomy in Leadership* – Novice leaders experience different levels of decision-making freedom, shaping their leadership confidence and effectiveness.
2. *Building Competence* – Leaders struggle with trusting their abilities but grow through structured feedback, coaching, and self-reflection.
3. *The Power of Relationships* – Trust within teams and with supervisors impacts leadership success and the ability to influence others.
4. *Resilience in the Face of Resistance* – Leaders face challenges such as burnout, change resistance, and stress, requiring emotional regulation and adaptive strategies.
5. *Navigating Motivation and Purpose* – Leaders sustain their drive by reconnecting with core values, focusing on mission-driven leadership, and seeking professional growth.

## Limitations

This study employs a convenient, purposeful sampling method, relying on the researcher's available network, which introduces limitations in selecting participating organizations. While this method ensures access to a diverse range of industries, it also restricts the inclusion of organizations that may have been more representative or optimal for studying the specific constructs of novice leadership development and coaching. Additionally, the diversity of

industries supports the broader, transcendent goal of the intervention; however, certain organizational factors, which may moderate the results, are not accounted for. For instance, one participating organization has a well-established leadership development strategy, as indicated by separating their HR and Leadership Development departments. This structure could provide more substantial support to the novice leader being studied, potentially influencing their development and coaching outcomes differently from participants in organizations without such robust leadership infrastructures.

Another potential limitation involves the dual role of the researcher as both the coach and the primary investigator. While this approach allows for a deeper understanding of the coaching process, it introduces potential biases into the study. The researcher’s direct involvement as the coach may unintentionally influence participants' engagement in the intervention or their responses during interviews. Additionally, participants may feel compelled to provide more favorable feedback during the final interviews, consciously or unconsciously, due to their direct relationship with the coach. These dynamics could impact the reliability of self-reported data, particularly regarding the perceived benefits of the coaching process.

Furthermore, the study does not include a readiness assessment to gauge the coaching participants' willingness or motivation to engage in the coaching intervention. Research has shown that participant readiness can notably moderate coaching outcomes (Jones et al., 2015), with individuals more prepared for coaching often demonstrating greater engagement and more successful development. In this study, participants are selected by their organizations based on need and convenience, without additional selection criteria beyond being identified as novice leaders. The absence of a readiness component may affect the variability of results, as

participants with differing motivation levels or openness to coaching could respond to the intervention differently.

Lastly, the study does not account for the variability in participants' prior leadership development experiences, achievements, or personal backgrounds, which may act as mediating factors. Some participants may not have undergone a traditional leadership development journey, which could influence their receptiveness to the coaching process. For example, individuals with a personal history of overcoming significant challenges may be more inclined to adopt coaching practices and benefit more quickly from the intervention. Conversely, participants without such experiences may take longer to engage with and internalize the coaching activities. This variability in past experiences presents another factor that could moderate the study outcomes but remains unaccounted for in the current research design.

# CHAPTER V—RESULTS

## Case 1: Leader A-A (Coached) and Leader A-B (Non-Coached) – Organization A

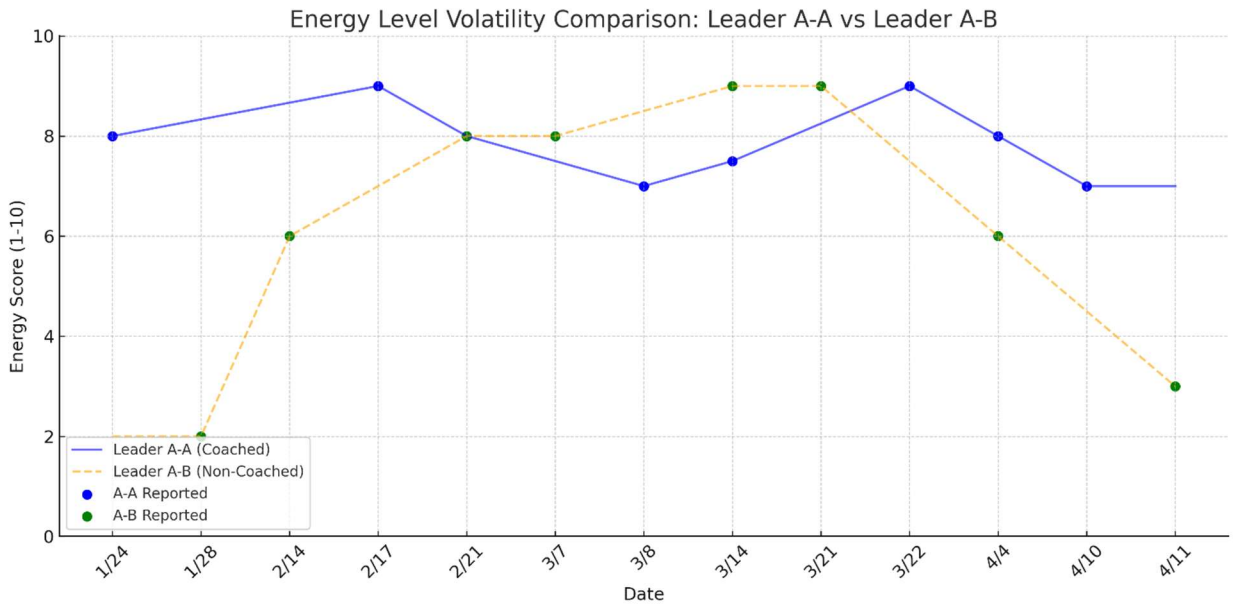
The results from Case 1 present evidence across three central themes that emerged during the 12-week observation of Leaders A-A (coached) and A-B (non-coached): Energy Stability, Emotional Intelligence Development, and Leadership Identity Development**.** These themes are presented and described first by comparing the developmental experiences of the two novice leaders within the same organizational context, and second by examining points of convergence and divergence in how they processed the transition into formal leadership roles. This structure provides both within-case and cross-case insight into how coaching shaped the leaders' psychological and emotional trajectories during their early leadership tenure.

### Theme 1: Energy Stability

Figure 1 displays the weekly energy ratings reported by both leaders. While both experienced fluctuations, their trajectories diverged. Leader A-A sustained consistently high scores, remaining between 7 and 9 across most of the engagement, with only a brief dip before returning to elevated levels. Leader A-B showed greater volatility, ranging from a low of 2 to a peak of 9, followed by a sharp decline in the final weeks. These differences reveal contrasting patterns of stability, recovery, and pacing, which were further reflected in their weekly narratives.

Energy stability experienced by leader A-A and reported in Figure-1 also emerged as a finding from entries in her reflection journal. Entries in her weekly reflections provide additional insight into her emotional stability. In her Month 1 weekly reflections, she acknowledged the challenge of maintaining energy in her leadership role, noting: *"I'm still*

*Figure 1—Self-Reported Energy Volatility Chart—Organization A*




*learning how to lead without exhausting myself mentally and emotionally."* As her leadership engagement progressed, her reflections described a growing focus on emotional regulation and boundaries. In a mid-engagement weekly reflection, she stated: *"Even though I can't control how people from other companies act, I can always control how I react."* This insight converges with the stability shown in her energy ratings. Her reflections demonstrate an awareness of her energy levels as well as strategies to regulate emotional responses during leadership demands.

In her late-stage weekly reflections, Leader A-A described her leadership experience as *"calm, consistent, and confident,"* which aligns with her consistently high energy scores during the final phase of the engagement. In these later reflections, she also emphasized the benefit of reflection itself as a means of managing energy, writing that coaching allowed her *"to slow down and take the time to focus on myself."* This shift in perspective influenced how she evaluated success, noting: *"Success to me is no longer about just working all the time, it's about quality*

*production."* These reflections, paired with consistently stable energy scores, suggest that Leader A-A was able to manage emotional demands and sustain energy throughout the engagement.

Leader A-B's energy chart reveals a more volatile trajectory during the 12-week observation period. His self-reported energy ratings, collected through weekly energy check-ins, ranged from a low of 2 to a peak of 9. While his energy steadily increased through the midpoint of the engagement, his scores declined sharply in the final weeks, returning to early low levels. This pattern suggests difficulty sustaining emotional energy and recovering from periods of depletion over time. Leader A-B's weekly reflections provide qualitative context to the volatile pattern. In later reflections, as his energy scores declined, he described increasing emotional strain, writing: *"I am mentally overwhelmed that I am not able to focus on multiple things at once. I need to prioritize my own mental health to widen my plate."* This statement coincided with the downward trend in his self-reported energy and reflects growing cognitive overload and emotional fatigue that he experienced.

Near the end of the study, as his energy scores continued to descend, he reflected on the cost of meeting professional demands: *"This has resulted in more hours and stress on a personal front."* He also expressed frustration with missed opportunities for assertiveness and follow-through, stating: *"I wish I wouldn't have rewritten the whole email and stood up for myself a bit more."* These reflections suggest mounting internal conflict and limited ability to regain equilibrium during stressful periods. Throughout the final phase of the engagement, his reflections continued to describe a sense of exhaustion and depleted emotional reserves. He noted directly: *"I need a mental break."* Additionally, his comments captured the reactive nature of his leadership experience at that point: *"I'm exhausted and feel like I'm giving everything just*

*to keep the wheel turning,"* and *"When everything feels chaotic, I don't have time to reset before I react."* These insights mirror the sharp energy decline and illustrate a leadership experience marked by emotional reactivity and limited recovery.

Taken together, the energy trajectories presented in Figure 4 illustrate two distinct patterns of emotional energy regulation. Leader A-A's stable and consistent energy scores, supported by reflective insights recorded in her weekly reflections, suggest an ability to maintain psychological pacing and recover from emotional dips throughout the engagement. In contrast, Leader A-B's fluctuating and eventually declining energy scores, combined with reflective descriptions of emotional strain and fatigue, indicate challenges in sustaining emotional energy under leadership demands. These differences reflect varying experiences of emotional pacing and energy regulation during the leadership transition. While energy stability highlights contrasting approaches to emotional energy management, further distinctions emerged in how each leader developed intrapersonal and interpersonal capacities. The following section examines how the coached and non-coached leaders experienced divergent patterns across the emotional intelligence domains assessed through the EQ-i 2.0.

**Theme 2: Divergent Paths of Emotional Intelligence Development**

This theme presents the emotional intelligence development of Leader A-A (coached) and Leader A-B (non-coached), drawing from their pre- and post-engagement EQ-i 2.0 assessment results and weekly reflections. Table 2 shows the pre- and post-assessment scores across all EQ-i 2.0 subscales for both leaders. These quantitative patterns are further supported by reflection data, illustrating differences in how each leader processed emotional demands and developed self-regulation capacities during the engagement.

*Table 2: EQ-i 2.0 Pre/Post Assessment Results for Leaders A-A and A-B*

| Subscale | A-A Pre | A-A Post | A-A Δ | A-B Pre | A-B Post | A-B Δ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Self-Perception Composite** | 97 | 124 | 27 | 112 | 107 | -5 |
| Self-Regard | 97 | 123 | 26 | 99 | 98 | -1 |
| Self-Actualization | 112 | 125 | 13 | 119 | 122 | 3 |
| Emotional Self-Awareness | 79 | 122 | 43 | 115 | 102 | -13 |
| **Self-Expression Composite** | 98 | 128 | 30 | 109 | 106 | -3 |
| Emotional Expression | 95 | 123 | 28 | 116 | 111 | -5 |
| Assertiveness | 91 | 119 | 28 | 109 | 93 | -16 |
| Independence | 107 | 120 | 13 | 95 | 106 | 11 |
| **Interpersonal Composite** | 109 | 125 | 16 | 115 | 116 | 1 |
| Interpersonal Relationships | 113 | 125 | 12 | 108 | 106 | -2 |
| Empathy | 107 | 119 | 12 | 110 | 119 | 9 |
| Social Responsibility | 101 | 124 | 23 | 122 | 116 | -6 |
| **Decision-Making Composite** | 99 | 127 | 28 | 100 | 95 | -5 |
| Problem Solving | 93 | 118 | 25 | 102 | 102 | 0 |
| Reality Testing | 87 | 126 | 39 | 107 | 86 | -21 |
| Impulse Control | 117 | 122 | 5 | 92 | 100 | 8 |
| **Stress Management Composite** | 99 | 122 | 23 | 100 | 104 | 4 |
| Flexibility | 90 | 119 | 29 | 96 | 111 | 15 |
| Stress Tolerance | 99 | 118 | 19 | 104 | 97 | -7 |
| Optimism | 108 | 118 | 10 | 100 | 101 | 1 |

Leader A-A's EQ-i 2.0 results showed measurable development across all five composite scales and each of the 15 subscales. Her most significant gains occurred in Emotional Self-Awareness (+43), Reality Testing (+39), Flexibility (+29), and Emotional Expression (+28). Emotional Self-Awareness measures the ability to recognize and understand one's emotions, while Reality Testing assesses the capacity to remain grounded in objective information rather than emotional distortions. Flexibility reflects the ability to adapt thoughts and behaviors in response to change, while Emotional Expression refers to the ability to convey feelings clearly and constructively to others. Gains across these subscales suggest increased emotional clarity, adaptability, and communication of emotional states.

Leader A-A's weekly reflections provide additional insight into this developmental trajectory. In early reflections, she described difficulty managing emotional exhaustion, noting: *"I'm still learning how to lead without exhausting myself mentally and emotionally."* This early awareness aligns with her initial low score in Emotional Self-Awareness (pre-score: 79).

Over the course of the engagement, her reflections increasingly focused on identifying personal drivers and regulating responses to external stressors. Midway through the engagement, she noted: *"Recognizing and reflecting on what my drivers are can help me keep those as a top priority."* This reflective statement corresponds with her post-engagement Emotional Self-Awareness score increase to 122. Her Reality Testing score also improved significantly, moving from 87 to 126. Reality Testing reflects a leader's ability to remain anchored in objective information during decision-making. In later reflections, Leader A-A acknowledged this shift, stating: *"Even though I can't control how people from other companies act, I can always control how I react."* This suggests increasing emotional regulation and situational clarity, consistent

with her assessment gains. Finally, her reflections at the conclusion of the engagement emphasized her emerging confidence. She wrote: *"I no longer just think I'm a great leader—I know I am."* This self-assessment aligns with her overall increases in Self-Regard (+26) and Stress Tolerance (+19), suggesting a more resilient and grounded leadership mindset.

Together, Leader A-A's EQ-i 2.0 results and reflection data indicate growth in emotional awareness, regulation, and confidence across the engagement. In contrast, Leader A-B's EQ-i 2.0 results showed mixed development across the five composite scales. While he experienced modest gains in Flexibility (+15), Independence (+11), and Empathy (+9), he also recorded significant declines in key intrapersonal subscales. Flexibility, which measures adaptability in thoughts and behaviors during changing situations, showed moderate improvement. Independence, reflecting decision-making without overreliance on others, and Empathy, which captures awareness of others' emotions, also showed small gains. These results suggest that Leader A-B maintained some strengths in adaptability, independent action, and relational awareness throughout the engagement. However, his Emotional Self-Awareness score decreased by 13 points (from 115 to 102), and his Reality Testing score declined by 21 points (from 107 to 86). Emotional Self-Awareness measures the capacity to recognize and understand one's emotional state, while Reality Testing reflects a leader's ability to remain grounded in objective perceptions, particularly under stress. These declines indicate reduced emotional clarity and a diminished ability to evaluate situations objectively during the engagement period.

Leader A-B's weekly reflections provide qualitative insight into these assessment patterns. As his energy scores declined in the latter half of the engagement, he described increased emotional strain. In later reflections, he wrote: *"I am mentally overwhelmed that I am*

*not able to focus on multiple things at once. I need to prioritize my own mental health to widen my plate."* This description aligns with the downward trend in his emotional self-awareness and perceived clarity of decision-making. His Reality Testing decline also aligns with his reflection content. In Month 3, he noted: *"This has resulted in more hours and stress on a personal front."* He further described difficulty asserting himself, stating: *"I wish I wouldn't have rewritten the whole email and stood up for myself a bit more."* These statements indicate tension between internal emotional processing and external decision-making, consistent with reduced Reality Testing and Assertiveness (−16). In his later reflections, Leader A-B continued to describe emotional fatigue and a diminished capacity to manage emotional demands, writing: *"I need a mental break."* While some intrapersonal strengths, such as Flexibility and Independence, showed growth, his assessment scores and reflections together suggest an overall pattern of declining emotional clarity and stability as the engagement progressed.

In sum, the emotional intelligence trajectories of Leaders A-A and A-B reflect two distinct patterns of development. Leader A-A showed consistent increases across all EQ-i 2.0 subscales, particularly in Emotional Self-Awareness, Reality Testing, and Flexibility. Her weekly reflections support this quantitative pattern, illustrating increasing clarity around emotional triggers and response regulation. Leader A-B, in contrast, exhibited mixed outcomes, with gains in some interpersonal domains but notable declines in emotional clarity and situational evaluation. His reflections further illustrate increasing emotional strain and difficulty sustaining composure under pressure. Together, the EQ-i 2.0 assessment data and reflection evidence indicate divergent emotional intelligence development pathways for the two leaders over the course of the engagement. While these findings highlight distinct patterns of emotional development, further differences emerged in how each leader processed their leadership role and

internalized their leadership identity. The following section explores how Leader A-A and Leader A-B experienced leadership identity formation within the broader context of their developmental experiences.

**Theme 3: Coaching as Reflective Space for Leadership Identity**

The leadership identity theme examines how Leader A-A and Leader A-B engaged with leadership identity development, as evidenced through their weekly reflections collected throughout the engagement. Reflections provided insight into how each leader processed their leadership role, navigated role ambiguity, and articulated their sense of self as a leader over time. The differences between the two leaders' reflections suggest varying opportunities for identity exploration and integration during their leadership transition. Leader A-A's weekly reflections showed a progressive shift in how she described her leadership identity. Early in the engagement, she expressed uncertainty about her role, reflecting: *"It's like you're waiting for someone else to say that you are a leader. And I guess I've just started to realize that I get to say that."* This reflection illustrates early role ambiguity and a reliance on external validation. As the engagement continued, her reflections became more focused on self-awareness and values. She wrote: *"Recognizing and reflecting on what my drivers are can help me keep those as a top priority."* This shift suggests she was beginning to explore how her personal values influenced her leadership approach.

In later reflections, Leader A-A described shifts in how she evaluated her contributions as a leader. She noted: *"Success to me is no longer about just working all the time, it's about quality production."* This reflection indicates a move away from equating leadership with constant activity, toward a focus on intentional outcomes and meaningful contribution. Toward

the end of the engagement, her self-descriptions further reflected a sense of stability and confidence, as she described herself as *"calm, consistent, and confident."* This progression in language suggests increasing clarity in her leadership identity and a more grounded sense of self in the leadership role. In full, Leader A-A's reflections indicate a pattern of gradual identity clarification. Throughout the engagement, her weekly reflections shifted from uncertainty and self-doubt to a more coherent understanding of her leadership role, informed by her personal values and perceived strengths.

Leader A-B's weekly reflections presented a contrasting pattern. His reflections focused primarily on task execution and responding to immediate leadership demands, with limited discussion of identity or role definition. In one reflection, he described his leadership experience as driven by external demands: *"I didn't really have time to think too much about it. I just had to do it."* This comment illustrates a focus on action over reflection, suggesting minimal opportunity for deeper identity exploration. As the engagement continued, Leader A-B continued to describe a leadership experience characterized by urgency and reactivity. He stated: *"There's been no time to reflect, really. We're just moving from crisis to crisis."* This reflection further emphasizes a lack of reflective processing in his leadership role, as immediate demands limited time for self-assessment or exploration of leadership meaning. His later reflections indicated increasing strain and a narrowing focus on survival. He noted feeling *"stretched a little thin on all sides right now,"* and later reflected: *"I'm not sure how I would even define leadership right now. I think it's just surviving and keeping everyone going."* These statements suggest that, rather than articulating a developing leadership identity, Leader A-B's focus remained centered on endurance and task completion without integration of personal values or role clarity.

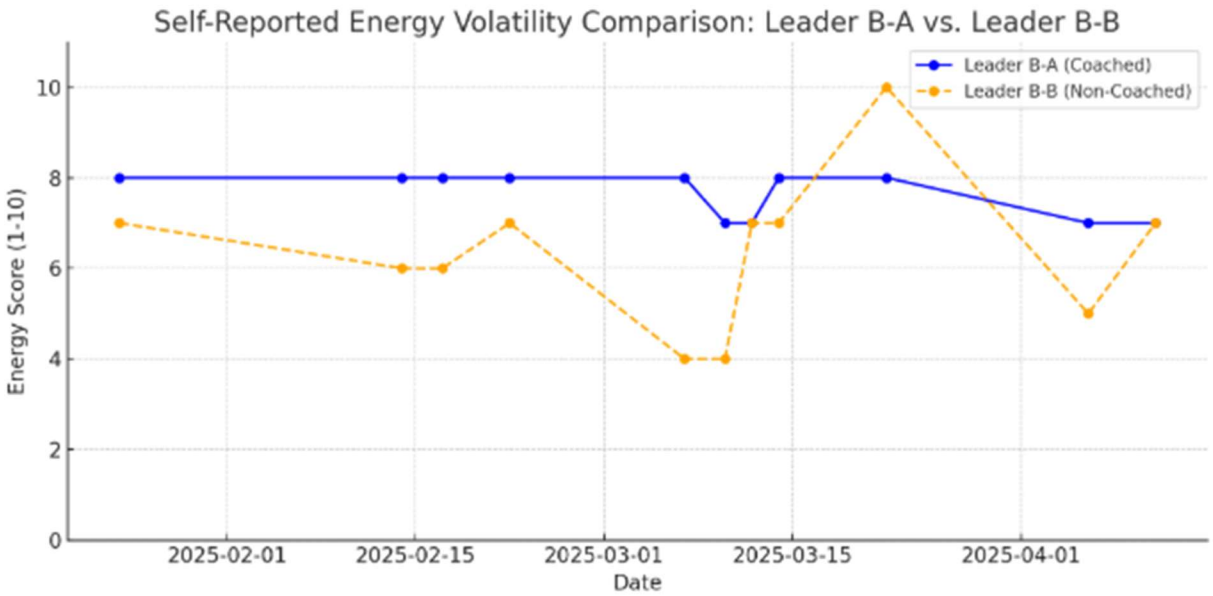
Collectively, the reflection data indicate that Leader A-A and Leader A-B experienced differing levels of leadership identity development during the engagement. Leader A-A's weekly reflections showed a gradual shift from role ambiguity toward a clearer, more confident leadership self-concept. Her reflections increasingly linked personal values to leadership behaviors and self-assessments, suggesting a growing internalization of her leadership role. In contrast, Leader A-B's reflections emphasized ongoing task demands and limited opportunity for identity processing. His reflections focused on meeting external demands and managing immediate challenges, and he described leadership primarily as endurance rather than as an integrated role. These contrasting reflection patterns suggest differing experiences in how each leader processed and articulated their leadership identity during the engagement.

**Case 2: Leader B-A (Coached) and Leader B-B (Non-Coached) – Organization B**

In this case, the data revealed distinct contrasts in how the two novice leaders approached their roles during the 12-week engagement. Patterns across their self-reported energy, EQ-i 2.0 assessments, and reflective narratives pointed to three recurring areas of differentiation: Energy Stability, Emotional Intelligence Development, and Leadership Identity Formation. In unison, these themes illustrate how leaders working within the same organizational conditions displayed diverging trajectories of regulation, adaptability, and identity expression.

**Theme 1: Energy Stability**

*Figure 2—Self-Reported Energy Volatility Chart—Organization B*




Leader B-A demonstrated moderate yet steady energy ratings throughout the study. Her scores consistently ranged between 7 and 8, with only a single dip reported near the end of the engagement. In her weekly reflections, she frequently connected energy stability to mindset awareness and self-care practices. Early in the study, she wrote: *"I need to take care of myself to be my best and put a plan into action to make sure I am not spread thin."* This awareness was accompanied by efforts to manage mental fatigue, particularly in moments of negative thinking. As she described: *"I have been able to catch myself in it and switch it (many times) to have better energy and be productive."* She also began to explore how internal belief systems shaped her energy regulation: *"I need to continue to grow in my belief that I am limitless… my only obstacle is my thoughts."* These insights suggested a growing capacity for resilience through self-directed cognitive reframing. Later reflections revealed how she was able to return to a state of composure even after difficult weeks. One entry noted: *"I was more stressed this week, but*

*was able to come back with a positive attitude and sense of peace."* These trends were consistent with her EQ-i 2.0 post-assessment growth in flexibility, self-regard, and stress tolerance.

Leader B-B entered the study with higher initial energy scores and a strong sense of conviction in her early reflections. She described moments of effective leadership with confidence, writing: *"I'm really proud of the way I navigated a conflict with a parent and teacher. I stayed grounded in what I felt was right and let that guide my response,"* and *"It's not about pleasing everyone—it's about standing in what you know is best for kids."* These entries reflected decisiveness, alignment with values, and a clear sense of purpose, all possible contributors to her elevated energy ratings during the early phase of the study. As the engagement continued, however, her reflections revealed mounting emotional strain. In Month 3, she wrote: *"This was a very hard week… it did make me reflect on my own leadership. Is there something I am doing or not doing that is leading to the high number of absences?"* Operational burdens also became more prominent: *"Each morning was a huge puzzle of covering positions and supporting students."* While she remained committed to her values, *"I will continue to be as transparent as possible,"* her energy scores dropped sharply in the final weeks. A brief spike during spring break appeared to reflect temporary relief rather than a broader upward trend.

Overall, these reflections illustrate two distinct energy trajectories. Leader B-A maintained emotional steadiness and regularly engaged in practices aimed at intentional recovery and mindset alignment. Leader B-B exhibited strong early conviction but experienced growing fatigue over time, with fewer signs of emotional replenishment. Though both operated under similar external conditions, the ways they navigated emotional demands diverged in stability and sustainability.

**Theme 2: Emotional Intelligence Development**

Differences in emotional intelligence development between the two novice leaders were evident across the 12-week engagement. Table 3 presents the pre- and post-assessment scores for each EQ-i 2.0 subscale. These results are considered alongside weekly reflections to illustrate how each leader experienced and responded to the emotional demands of their role, revealing contrasting patterns of regulation, adaptability, and interpersonal engagement.

*Table 3—EQi 2.0 Pre/Post Results Comparison*

| Subscale | B-A Pre | B-A Post | B-A Δ | B-B Pre | B-B Post | B-B Δ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Self-Perception Composite** | 92 | 104 | 12 | 106 | 102 | -4 |
| Self-Regard | 80 | 95 | 15 | 103 | 103 | 0 |
| Self-Actualization | 102 | 112 | 10 | 112 | 99 | -13 |
| Emotional Self-Awareness | 98 | 109 | 11 | 102 | 102 | 0 |
| **Self-Expression Composite** | 96 | 100 | 4 | 100 | 100 | 0 |
| Emotional Expression | 108 | 108 | 0 | 108 | 103 | -5 |
| Assertiveness | 101 | 101 | 0 | 97 | 101 | 4 |
| Independence | 80 | 90 | 10 | 93 | 96 | 3 |
| **Interpersonal Composite** | 116 | 117 | 1 | 102 | 106 | 4 |
| Interpersonal Relationships | 106 | 114 | 8 | 100 | 106 | 6 |
| Empathy | 122 | 116 | -8 | 102 | 102 | 0 |
| Social Responsibility | 112 | 116 | 4 | 104 | 108 | 4 |
| **Decision-Making Composite** | 87 | 104 | 17 | 100 | 104 | 4 |
| Problem Solving | 96 | 105 | 9 | 99 | 96 | -3 |
| Reality Testing | 89 | 111 | 22 | 93 | 108 | -15 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Impulse Control | 84 | 94 | 10 | 106 | 106 | 0 |
| **Stress Management Composite** | 94 | 105 | 11 | 97 | 103 | -6 |
| Flexibility | 97 | 105 | 8 | 102 | 97 | -5 |
| Stress Tolerance | 91 | 97 | 6 | 88 | 100 | 12 |
| Optimism | 98 | 112 | 14 | 101 | 112 | 11 |

Leader B-A's EQ-i 2.0 results indicated measurable growth across several key areas of emotional intelligence. Her most notable gains were in Reality Testing (+22), Problem Solving (+9), Optimism (+14), and Stress Tolerance (+6). Reality Testing reflects the ability to assess situations based on objective information rather than emotional distortion. Problem-Solving measures the capacity to approach and resolve problems effectively under emotional stress. Optimism captures a hopeful attitude and resilience in the face of setbacks, while Stress Tolerance refers to the ability to manage adverse situations without becoming emotionally overwhelmed.

Her weekly reflections align with these improvements. Early in the engagement, she demonstrated awareness of emotional overextension, writing: *"I need to take care of myself to be my best and put a plan into action to make sure I am not spread thin."* As the engagement progressed, her entries reflect an expanding capacity to apply cognitive reframing and solution orientation: *"I have been able to catch myself in it and switch it (many times) to have better energy and be productive."* This self-awareness is further connected to her increased Problem Solving and Stress Tolerance scores. Her development in Optimism and Reality Testing is reflected in entries that link her mindset to outcomes. She wrote: *"I need to continue to grow in my belief that I am limitless… my only obstacle is my thoughts."* And later: *"I was more stressed*

*this week, but was able to come back with a positive attitude and sense of peace."* These quotes suggest an increased ability to regulate emotional responses and maintain perspective under pressure, consistent with her elevated post-engagement scores in those domains.

In contrast, Leader B-B's EQ-i 2.0 results reflected a more mixed trajectory. Her largest gains occurred in Stress Tolerance (+12), Optimism (+11), and Interpersonal Relationships (+6). These increases suggest some growth in managing emotional pressure, maintaining hopeful outlooks, and sustaining relationships under strain. However, she also recorded declines in Self-Actualization (−13), Emotional Expression (−5), and Flexibility (−5). Self-Actualization refers to the pursuit of personally meaningful goals and continued growth, while Emotional Expression and Flexibility reflect, respectively, the ability to communicate emotions and adapt to change.

Reflections from Leader B-B offer insight into these patterns. While she maintained a clear sense of purpose, *"It's not about pleasing everyone—it's about standing in what you know is best for kids,"* her later entries revealed increased emotional strain and uncertainty. She wrote: *"This was a very hard week… it did make me reflect on my own leadership. Is there something I am doing or not doing that is leading to the high number of absences?"* These reflections reflect self-questioning and potential disruption to her sense of forward momentum, consistent with the observed decrease in Self-Actualization. Her entry supports her declining score in Emotional Expression: *"I am trying to remain calm, but also feel I need to be more transparent in my emotions without being reactive."* Similarly, her reduced Flexibility may be connected to later descriptions of cognitive overload, such as: *"Each morning was a huge puzzle of covering positions and supporting students."* These statements suggest rising strain and reduced adaptability in the face of mounting challenges.

Taken together, the EQ trajectories of Leaders B-A and B-B reveal contrasting developmental patterns. Leader B-A showed targeted growth in key areas tied to stress regulation and cognitive-emotional processing, supported by reflective strategies and intentional mindset shifts. Leader B-B, while demonstrating relational commitment and personal conviction, experienced emotional strain that may have influenced her capacity for self-expression and flexible adaptation. These patterns reflect how emotional intelligence development can diverge based on the interplay of mindset, pressure, and recovery strategies.

**Theme 3: Coaching as Reflective Space for Leadership Identity**

This theme presents how the two leaders described and reflected on their leadership identity during the 12-week engagement. Weekly reflections provide the primary source of evidence, highlighting differences in the extent to which each leader expressed clarity, self-concept, and role definition across the study period.

Leader B-A's reflections suggest a developing pattern of identity clarification. In early entries, she began to examine the relationship between her internal state and leadership performance: *"I need to make sure I am my best self to give my best self for others. If something doesn't serve me, why am I choosing it and doing it."* As the engagement progressed, she articulated a stronger sense of belief in her personal growth and capacity: *"I need to focus on confidence and belief in myself! Knowing that I am doing my best and focus on continuing to grow and learn."* These entries suggest that she was not only navigating her role but actively exploring who she was within it. This self-reflection often involved values-based thinking and agency. In one entry, she wrote: *"My outlook affects what is happening and my happiness. If I can look at the positive, my energy stays high."* Her reflections show a leader increasingly

framing challenges through a lens of emotional authorship. Later, she wrote: *"Everything is a choice. How I act is a choice. What I think about and the energy I put forth."* This suggests a growing sense of leadership identity rooted in personal accountability and mindset regulation, as opposed to solely reacting to external events.

In contrast, Leader B-B's reflections remained centered on daily logistics and problem-solving, with fewer references to internal identity formation. She described: *"Each morning was a huge puzzle of covering positions and supporting students,"* a framing that emphasizes tactical demands over self-concept. Even in moments of self-assessment, identity was implied rather than explored. For instance, she noted: *"This week I was faced with the fact that I am still learning to navigate difficult conversations with staff and parents."* While this comment demonstrates self-awareness, it is focused more on functional skills than on personal meaning or leadership vision. Her exploration of identity was often embedded within commentary on operational strain. In one reflection, she shared: *"I am still learning to navigate difficult situations between staff members,"* a pattern that points to ongoing growth but does not reflect deeper exploration of how these experiences were shaping her sense of self as a leader. Her reflections were consistently task-oriented and externally responsive.

Overall, the data show contrasting patterns in how each leader approached identity. Leader B-A increasingly engaged with internal questions of alignment, self-belief, and choice, suggesting movement toward an integrated leadership identity. Leader B-B's reflections, while insightful and grounded in professional responsibility, reflected more limited engagement with questions of leadership meaning or personal development. These differences highlight the

variable ways novice leaders may begin constructing their leadership identity within similar environmental contexts.

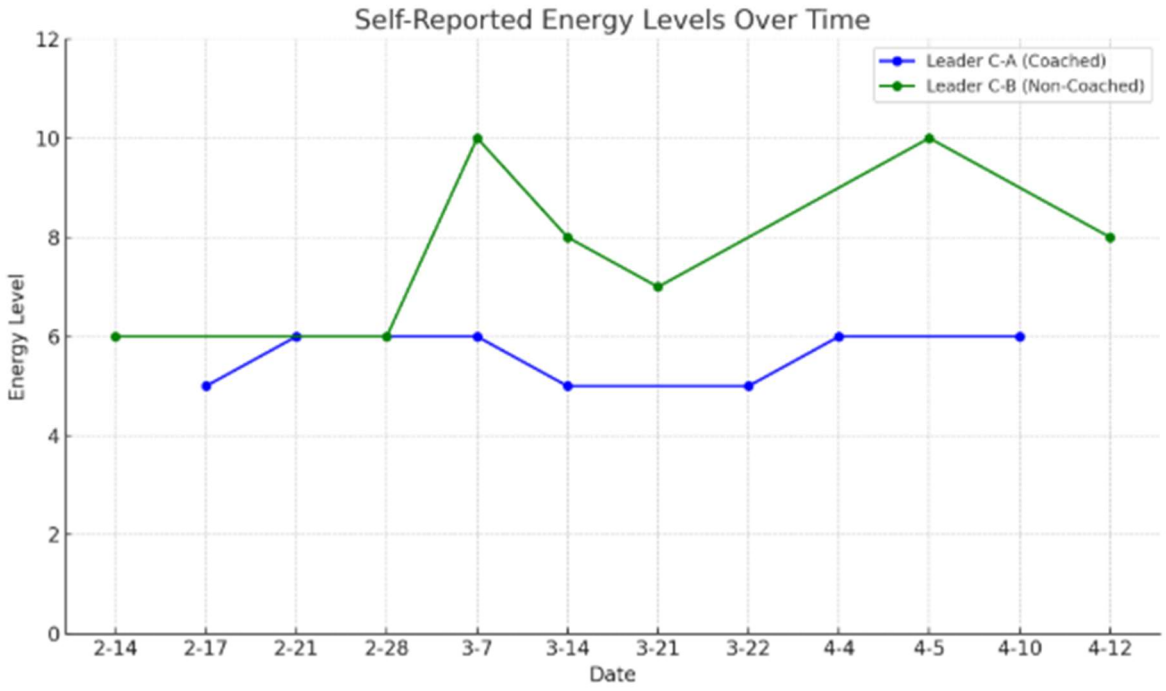
## Case 3: Leader C-A (Coached) and Leader C-B (Non-Coached) – Organization C

The results for this case emphasized the role of scope and responsibility in shaping each novice leader's developmental trajectory. However, both leaders reported data across the same measures, including weekly energy ratings, EQ-i 2.0 assessments, and reflective narratives; their outcomes, however, diverged in meaningful ways. The analysis surfaced three core themes: Energy Stability, Emotional Intelligence Development, and Leadership Identity Development, each illustrating how the leaders managed demands and interpreted their leadership experiences over time.

### Theme 1: Energy Stability

Across the 12-week period, the two leaders reported noticeably different energy patterns. Leader C-A's ratings stayed within a narrow band, typically between 5 and 6, reflecting a steady trajectory with minimal fluctuation. Leader C-B's ratings spanned a wider range, from 6 to 10, with sharper week-to-week shifts. These contrasting patterns point to differences in volatility, recovery, and pacing, later reinforced by each leader's weekly reflections.

*Figure 3—Self-Reported Energy Volatility Chart—Organization C*




Leader C-A's energy scores reflect a notable steadiness across the engagement period. In her Month 1 reflections, she described the emotional toll of leadership transitions, stating: *"It has felt overwhelming to realize what wasn't getting done and trying to fill in the gaps."* Despite these challenges, she began to recognize the power of reframing: *"Whether or not I solve a problem, I am not defined by it!"* This early insight helped her develop emotional boundaries and contributed to maintaining steady energy levels during high-change periods. By Month 2, she articulated a growing awareness of emotional leakage, reflecting: *"I've realized that I don't need to keep giving away my power anymore—it's draining my energy."* These realizations point to a developing capacity for regulating energy through mindset and boundaries.

Leader C-A's weekly reflections also reveal how external drains were managed through restorative practices and cognitive shifts. She consistently identified connection and service as

sources of renewal, writing: *"The times I've had the chance to connect with colleagues... and create a safe space where I can help empower them to become better leaders"* gave her energy. Even in the presence of external stressors, such as health challenges and organizational transitions, she emphasized resilience, stating: *"I overcame obstacles with more ease... I am evolving."* These patterns of introspective processing, self-regulation, and emotional anchoring aligned closely with her consistent energy ratings across the 12-week engagement.

In contrast, Leader C-B's energy profile showed greater volatility and larger swings. In his Month 1 reflections, he described entering the engagement with moderate energy, reporting a 6 and sharing that he was *"going through a little rough patch"* amid *"a ton of change at work."* Though energized by problem-solving, *"Every Monday when I walk in, I'm pumped to solve all of our problems,"* his reflections also revealed a recurring sense of overwhelm, especially when others did not meet his expectations: *"When people don't match energy, are not committed, and did not execute as fast as I wanted."* These moments of friction coincided with dips in energy and suggest a reactive energy cycle tied to external performance.

Midway through the engagement, Leader C-B's reflections fluctuated between excitement for strategy and frustration with operational demands. He noted: *"Our executive offsite gave me a ton of energy,"* but quickly contrasted this with the stress of implementation: *"Oh crap, now we gotta do all that stuff."* These statements indicate short bursts of high energy followed by declines linked to execution strain. In Week 9, he described needing to *"white knuckle stuff"* due to detractors and external resistance, reinforcing the theme of energy depletion in response to interpersonal tension. Later reflections showed increasing emotional fatigue, even as he attempted to reframe his experience. In Week 12, he shared that he was *"thankful for good*

*leaders, learning from people who have been there before,"* but also revealed signs of burnout in earlier comments: *"I kind of burned myself out this year... I didn't have a ton of fun."* While moments of gratitude and high performance were evident, the underlying pattern showed difficulty sustaining emotional equilibrium across the engagement.

Taken together, the energy patterns of Leader C-A and Leader C-B illustrate two divergent approaches to emotional energy regulation. Leader C-A's steady scores, bolstered by reflective insights and consistent emotional recalibration, suggest psychological pacing and a growing capacity to recover from dips. In contrast, Leader C-B's fluctuating scores and reactive reflections indicate bursts of intensity punctuated by periods of depletion. These findings suggest that the presence of reflective space and intentional boundary-setting may have contributed to greater energy stability in Leader C-A's experience.

**Theme 2: Divergent Paths of Emotional Intelligence Development**

The assessment data revealed contrasting trajectories in emotional intelligence for the two leaders. Leader C-A showed consistent upward movement across all five composite domains, with notable gains in self-awareness, adaptability, and decision-making. In comparison, Leader C-B's scores reflected uneven development, including declines in several intrapersonal areas related to regulation and stress management. Table 4 provides the detailed subscale results, which are further illustrated through the leaders' weekly reflections.

*Table 4: EQ-i 2.0 Pre/Post Assessment Results for Leaders C-A and C-B*

| Subscale | C-A Pre | C-A Post | C-A Δ | C-B Pre | C-B Post | C-B Δ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Self-Perception Composite** | 96 | 118 | 22 | 113 | 108 | -5 |
| Self-Regard | 86 | 112 | 26 | 112 | 115 | 3 |
| Self-Actualization | 90 | 114 | 24 | 112 | 114 | 2 |
| Emotional Self-Awareness | 115 | 126 | 11 | 115 | 95 | -20 |
| **Self-Expression Composite** | 92 | 110 | 18 | 115 | 121 | 6 |
| Emotional Expression | 111 | 121 | 10 | 113 | 118 | -5 |
| Assertiveness | 86 | 101 | 15 | 123 | 123 | 0 |
| Independence | 80 | 96 | 16 | 100 | 106 | 6 |
| **Interpersonal Composite** | 105 | 120 | 15 | 119 | 119 | 0 |
| Interpersonal Relationships | 103 | 117 | 14 | 122 | 114 | -8 |
| Empathy | 113 | 124 | 11 | 124 | 124 | 0 |
| Social Responsibility | 92 | 108 | 16 | 100 | 108 | -8 |
| **Decision-Making Composite** | 95 | 125 | 30 | 116 | 107 | -9 |
| Problem Solving | 83 | 108 | 25 | 102 | 102 | 0 |
| Reality Testing | 93 | 126 | 33 | 123 | 111 | -12 |
| Impulse Control | 113 | 125 | 12 | 116 | 103 | -13 |
| **Stress Management Composite** | 81 | 105 | 24 | 113 | 100 | -13 |
| Flexibility | 85 | 116 | 31 | 102 | 102 | 0 |
| Stress Tolerance | 79 | 103 | 24 | 121 | 109 | -12 |
| Optimism | 89 | 92 | 3 | 112 | 89 | -23 |

Leader C-A showed measurable improvement across all EQ-i 2.0 subscales. Her largest gains occurred in Decision Making (+30), Flexibility (+31), Reality Testing (+33), and Stress

Management (+24), suggesting meaningful growth in her ability to regulate emotion, maintain clarity under pressure, and adapt effectively to leadership demands. Smaller but consistent gains in Emotional Self-Awareness (+11) and Self-Regard (+26) indicate strengthened self-perception and internal confidence over time. Leader C-A's reflections offer insight into the lived experience behind these quantitative shifts. In her early reflections, she named the emotional toll of perfectionism and over-responsibility: *"It has felt overwhelming to realize what wasn't getting done and trying to fill in the gaps."* This tension corresponds with her initial need for improved decision-making and impulse control. As the engagement progressed, she began naming internal boundaries and emotional recalibration as a source of strength: *"I've realized that I don't need to keep giving away my power anymore—it's draining my energy."*

Her reflection on how to support others while staying grounded aligns with her elevated interpersonal and reality testing scores. She wrote: *"The times I've had the chance to connect with colleagues... and create a safe space where I can help empower them to become better leaders—that gives me energy."* This statement reveals growth in both empathy and emotional expression, as well as an emerging ability to center others without emotional depletion. Toward the close of the engagement, she reflected on increased clarity and presence, stating: *"I overcame obstacles with more ease... I am evolving."* Together, these statements support the conclusion that Leader C-A's emotional intelligence development was both consistent and integrated into her leadership practice.

In contrast, Leader C-B's EQ-i 2.0 results revealed a more uneven pattern. While he exhibited modest gains in Self-Expression (+6) and Independence (+6), he experienced notable declines in Emotional Self-Awareness (−20), Stress Tolerance (−12), Impulse Control (−13), and

Optimism (−23). These reductions suggest increasing difficulty maintaining emotional regulation and clarity under pressure, even as he maintained outward focus on task execution and leadership performance. Leader C-B's early reflections were marked by intensity and ambition: *"Every Monday when I walk in, I'm pumped to solve all of our problems."* However, the drive to achieve was paired with early signs of strain: *"I'm going through a little rough patch right now... a ton of change at work."* While still able to generate short-term motivation, his reflections often returned to themes of tension, exhaustion, and emotional depletion. As the engagement progressed, his reflections continued to highlight emotional dissonance. In Week 9, he wrote: *"I've had to white knuckle stuff more than I would like to admit,"* signaling persistent stress despite high engagement. Although he expressed gratitude, *"Thankful for good leaders, learning from people who have been there before"*, his later reflections acknowledged burnout: *"I kind of burned myself out this year... I didn't have a ton of fun."* These statements mirror the decline in optimism and stress tolerance, revealing an emotionally reactive rather than reflective leadership experience. Notably, Leader C-B described personal development primarily through external frameworks rather than internal emotional growth. He wrote: *"I've had a huge AHA moment around the Fogg Behavior Model. It's sort of changed the way I view all interactions/decisions/product ideas and sales,"* indicating cognitive growth but little direct emotional integration. His reflection, *"I didn't do [development activities] again… 'what you're not changing you're choosing'"* points to awareness of stagnation but limited follow-through.

To close, the emotional intelligence trajectories of Leaders C-A and C-B reflect two contrasting developmental arcs. Leader C-A demonstrated upward movement across all subscales, supported by increasingly self-aware, boundary-conscious, and empathetic reflections. Leader C-B, despite initial high scores and bursts of external clarity, showed notable declines in

emotional regulation and stress management, with reflection content pointing toward emotional depletion and reactivity. Together, these findings suggest that structured coaching contributed to the integration of emotional intelligence capacities in Leader C-A's experience, while the absence of such a container may have left Leader C-B more vulnerable to emotional fatigue under growing leadership demands.

**Theme 3: Coaching as Reflective Space for Leadership Identity**

This theme explores how Leader C-A and Leader C-B processed their leadership identity throughout the engagement. Drawing from their weekly and monthly reflections, the analysis examines how each leader made sense of their role, navigated leadership challenges, and described their evolving sense of self. The contrast between these leaders highlights the role coaching may play in providing space for identity integration during leadership transition.

Leader C-A's reflections revealed a progressive and emotionally resonant journey of leadership identity formation. Early in the engagement, she began questioning whether her natural style was "enough" compared to more dominant leadership models. She wrote: *"I judged my brand of leadership because it wasn't exactly like some of the 'strong' and assertive leaders I have in my life... Effective leadership is about being authentic—embracing my strengths and acknowledging my growth areas."* This marked the beginning of a shift from external comparison to internal alignment. As the weeks progressed, she described moments of deep self-awareness and value alignment. One such moment emerged when she reflected: *"I've realized that I don't need to keep giving away my power anymore—it's draining my energy. All I really have to do is believe that I already have everything I need within myself."* These reflections suggest not just role exploration but a redefinition of leadership as something anchored in self-

trust and purpose. Later reflections demonstrated how her self-concept solidified through practice. She described her leadership impact as a "natural outpouring," noting: *"When I am able to empower those around me with what I've learned, I feel amped. I am making a difference in my team and now have eyes to see it."* This insight, where internal growth translated into external confidence, indicated a stable and personalized leadership identity emerging from coaching-supported reflection.

In contrast, Leader C-B's reflections centered predominantly on tactical execution, role pressure, and strategic responsibility. His entries focused on navigating workload and influencing organizational outcomes, with fewer references to identity exploration. In an early reflection, he noted: *"I need to find a way to get re-motivated and lock in for a few weeks at a time,"* framing leadership through the lens of productivity rather than identity. While he occasionally described moments of insight, these were rarely connected to a coherent sense of self as a leader. For instance, he stated: *"I did 1 minute manager again with my green implementation team... explaining how OKRs work and we aren't just doing generic improvement, it ties all the way up!"* This reflects competence in execution but lacks evidence of identity reflection or internalization of leadership values. Even in moments where identity could have been explored, such as role conflict or emotional strain, Leader C-B's language remained task-bound. He reflected: *"I think a weakness of distraction and pontificating on the future kept me from executing this week,"* emphasizing productivity loss rather than deeper self-examination. In another entry, he admitted: *"I don't know that I've done enough work here,"* when asked to reflect on communicating vision—again acknowledging a gap but without pursuing further identity clarity.

Collectively, these reflections show two distinct paths. Leader C-A's reflections revealed a gradual, emotionally grounded identity shift, from questioning her fit to claiming her voice and impact. Her language became increasingly confident and values-based, suggesting that coaching offered a space to integrate her authentic self into her leadership role. By contrast, Leader C-B's reflections remained oriented around performance, delegation, and execution, with minimal evidence of evolving self-concept. His language focused on maintaining pace and delivering outcomes, often at the expense of identity integration. These contrasting narratives underscore the role coaching may play in facilitating leadership identity development. While Leader C-A's identity evolved through reflective processing, Leader C-B's remained largely unexamined, suggesting that without intentional space to explore identity, leadership may be experienced as a role to perform rather than a self to become.

**Case 4: Leader D-A (Coached) and Leader D-B (Non-Coached) – Organization D**

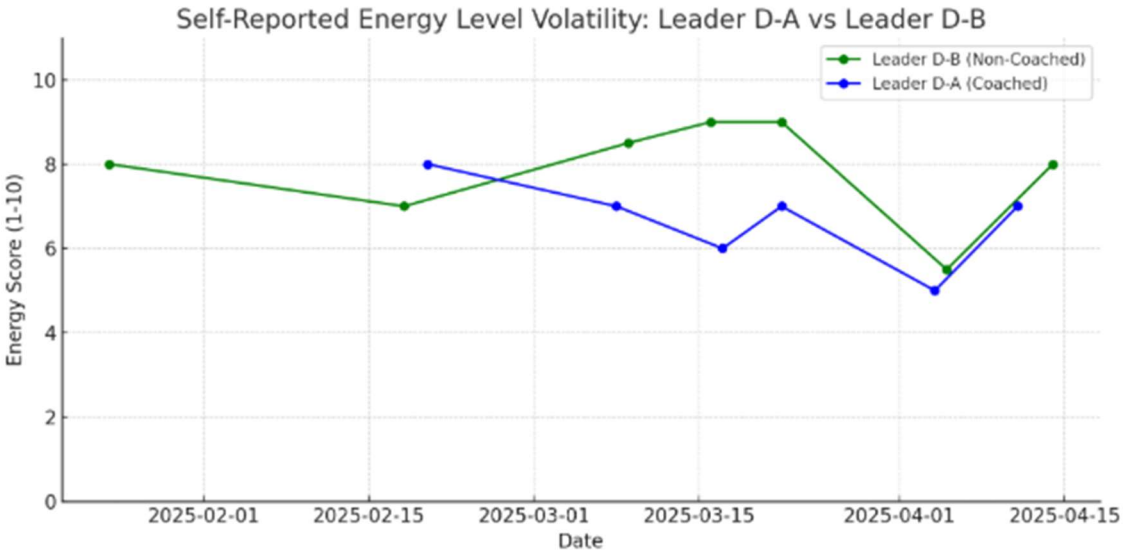
The final case revealed how two novice leaders responded to the same performance-driven culture in markedly different ways. Their weekly energy ratings, EQ-i 2.0 results, and reflective narratives consistently pointed to three themes: Energy Stability, Emotional Intelligence Development, and Leadership Identity Development. Together, the findings underscore how leaders working under similar pressures can experience divergent pathways of regulation, growth, and identity expression.

**Theme 1: Energy Stability**

Over the 12 weeks, the two leaders demonstrated contrasting energy trajectories. Leader D-A maintained relatively consistent scores with only minor fluctuations, while Leader D-B's

ratings showed sharper rises and declines. These patterns highlighted differences in volatility, recovery, and pacing that became more pronounced as the engagement progressed.

*Figure 4—Self-Reported Energy Volatility Chart—Organization D*




Leader D-A (coached) displayed moderate energy variability, with weekly scores ranging from 5 to 8. This fluctuation appeared closely tied to internal states, including boredom, judgment, and task monotony, as well as dual leadership responsibilities in both business and ministry settings. Despite these fluctuations, Leader D-A's reflections showed increasing awareness of how habits and mental framing influenced his energy. In one entry, he wrote: *"Curiosity is a powerful state for me and it affects my creativity, problem solving, assertiveness, connection with others, and more."* Later, he acknowledged that *"judgment is more energy draining than I thought,"* and described actively working to reframe his mindset through routines and value alignment. In the earlier stages of the engagement, he noted moments of energy depletion linked to uncertainty and future-oriented worry. For example, he reflected: *"Worry about the future"* as a primary energy drain, while later recognizing that *"I didn't operate with clarity, but that's something I chose not to do which means I can choose to do differently."*

These reflections reveal a developing internal locus of control and an evolving approach to energy management. Across the final weeks of the engagement, he increasingly linked energy to proactive behaviors such as *"teaching, coaching, speaking"* and establishing rhythms that supported consistency: *"The best thing I can do for my energy is follow an evening and morning routine that sets me up for success."*

Leader D-B (non-coached) exhibited the most consistent energy ratings among all non-coached participants, with scores ranging from 5.5 to 9. His reflections indicated that structured habits and external routines played a significant role in sustaining his energy. He described the benefits of early morning fitness and environmental rhythm, noting: *"Energy has been way higher since I started going to a CrossFit gym... feel like I'm winning the day by 6am."* Even when noting slight dips, he often traced these to external factors, such as: *"Didn't feel too great and wasn't very efficient with my time,"* and *"Definitely could use some sunshine and energy next week."* His approach to energy appeared anchored in momentum, task execution, and environmental control. In one instance, he reflected: *"Much of my energy was self-manufactured and a little fear-based. I knew I needed to have a good week of production."* On another occasion, he observed: *"Feels like every time I put out one fire, two more pop up… I lose a lot of energy when I feel out-of-control."* These entries highlight his reactive stamina under pressure, but also point to limited internal recalibration strategies beyond maintaining output and seeking stability through performance.

In review, the emotional trajectories of Leaders D-A and D-B illustrate distinct energy management profiles. While both maintained high external productivity, Leader D-A's energy patterns reflected a growing capacity to identify, reflect on, and regulate internal drains through

intentional routines and mindset work. Leader D-B's stability, though consistent, was more externally anchored, driven by structure, physical habits, and output pacing. These contrasting energy signatures offer insight into the internal versus external dimensions of leadership stamina during early-stage leadership development.

**Theme 2: Divergent Paths of Emotional Intelligence Development**

The EQ-i 2.0 results revealed contrasting developmental patterns between the two leaders. Leader D-A demonstrated measurable gains across most domains, while Leader D-B showed mixed outcomes, including declines in several intrapersonal capacities tied to regulation and awareness. These quantitative differences are detailed in Table 8 and are further illustrated through weekly reflections that capture how each leader described and managed the emotional demands of their role.

*Table-5—EQ-i 2.0 Pre/Post Assessment Results for Leaders D-A and D-B*

| Subscale | D-A Pre | D-A Post | D-A Δ | D-B Pre | D-B Post | D-B Δ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Self-Perception Composite** | 108 | 116 | 8 | 97 | 104 | 7 |
| Self-Regard | 112 | 123 | 11 | 92 | 112 | 20 |
| Self-Actualization | 114 | 122 | 8 | 102 | 112 | 10 |
| Emotional Self-Awareness | 98 | 102 | 4 | 98 | 91 | -7 |
| **Self-Expression Composite** | 92 | 115 | 23 | 76 | 85 | -9 |
| Emotional Expression | 96 | 116 | 20 | 83 | 90 | 7 |
| Assertiveness | 93 | 119 | 26 | 78 | 86 | 8 |
| Independence | 93 | 100 | 7 | 83 | 90 | 7 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Interpersonal Composite** | 100 | 114 | 14 | 80 | 71 | -9 |
| Interpersonal Relationships | 100 | 114 | 14 | 87 | 78 | -9 |
| Empathy | 100 | 105 | 5 | 83 | 78 | -5 |
| Social Responsibility | 100 | 120 | 20 | 76 | 68 | -8 |
| **Decision-Making Composite** | 94 | 112 | 18 | 98 | 102 | 4 |
| Problem Solving | 86 | 108 | 22 | 89 | 96 | 7 |
| Reality Testing | 100 | 104 | 4 | 97 | 100 | 3 |
| Impulse Control | 100 | 116 | 16 | 110 | 110 | 0 |
| **Stress Management Composite** | 107 | 119 | 12 | 97 | 104 | 7 |
| Flexibility | 114 | 122 | 8 | 94 | 97 | 3 |
| Stress Tolerance | 100 | 115 | 15 | 94 | 100 | 6 |
| Optimism | 104 | 112 | 8 | 104 | 115 | 11 |

Leader D-A demonstrated consistent improvement across all five EQ composites and each of the 15 subscales. His most significant growth occurred in Assertiveness (+26), Emotional Expression (+20), Problem Solving (+22), and Social Responsibility (+20). These shifts suggest increased emotional agency, improved communication, and a stronger connection to team and mission. His post-scores in Stress Management and Decision-Making composites also improved, indicating greater resilience and clarity in high-pressure situations. His qualitative reflections offer support for these quantitative trends. In Month 2, he wrote: *"I can't control how people will react in crucial conversations,"* and later reflected: *"Understanding my drivers is important and helps me not make short-sighted decisions."* These insights point to growing self-awareness and reality testing. Over time, his entries reflected deeper cognitive reframing and internal regulation: *"Clarity or lack thereof is something I have full control over,"* and *"Curiosity is a powerful state*

*for me… it affects my creativity, problem solving, assertiveness, connection with others, and more."*By Month 3, D-A demonstrated increased integration between mindset and behavior. He described how intentional routines supported energy and leadership clarity: *"The best thing I can do for my energy is follow an evening and morning routine that sets me up for success."* These reflections align with his upward shifts in Flexibility (+8), Stress Tolerance (+15), and Self-Regard (+11). His overall profile suggests multidimensional growth in both intrapersonal and interpersonal domains, supported by deliberate reflection and value-centered leadership development.

Leader D-B's emotional intelligence trajectory revealed a different pattern. While he demonstrated gains in Self-Regard (+20), Optimism (+11), and Assertiveness (+8), his overall profile was mixed, with significant declines in Interpersonal Relationships (−9), Empathy (−5), and Social Responsibility (−8). These interpersonal and prosocial declines contrasted with his otherwise steady external performance and strong personal discipline. D-B's reflections offer insight into this developmental asymmetry. While he frequently celebrated momentum and output, his reflections often lacked internal emotional processing. In one entry, he described *"a handful of client appointments… that dragged out to multiple weeks,"* noting that they *"added more stress on what I thought was going to be easy."* In another reflection, he acknowledged how *"my low energy and inefficiency [were] connected to the rainy weather,"* suggesting external variables had an outsized influence on his regulation strategies.

His interpersonal scores also declined across the engagement, which is reflected in his limited references to relational depth. While he showed consistent motivation and goal-orientation, his reflections centered more on personal efficiency than on emotional engagement

with others. In Month 3, for instance, he shared that *"I provided constructive feedback to the new team member… encouraged him and gave him some words to push through that initial pushback,"* but his reflections often lacked insight into emotional impact or relational dynamics.

In total, the EQ-i 2.0 profiles and reflection data illustrate divergent developmental patterns. Leader D-A's growth was characterized by increased emotional awareness, communicative clarity, and social integration, with reflections that became increasingly introspective and values-centered. Leader D-B showed strong performance, drive, and resilience, but his emotional development appeared more limited and externally anchored. While both leaders remained engaged in their roles, only D-A exhibited consistent gains across intrapersonal, interpersonal, and decision-making domains, suggesting a broader evolution in emotional intelligence during the engagement.

**Theme 3: Coaching as Reflective Space for Leadership Identity**

This theme examined how Leader D-A and Leader D-B engaged with leadership identity development, as evidenced through their weekly and monthly reflections collected throughout the engagement. Reflections provided insight into how each leader processed their leadership role, navigated role ambiguity, and articulated their sense of self as a leader over time. The differences between the two leaders' reflections suggest varying opportunities for identity exploration and integration during their leadership transition.

Leader D-A's weekly reflections revealed an ongoing search for clarity in identity and purpose. Early in the engagement, he asked, *"Who am I supposed to be? What am I called to do?"*, a clear signal of identity-level questioning and role ambiguity. As the weeks progressed, his reflections began to center on the internal dynamics that shaped his leadership behaviors,

including his motivation, values, and approach to decision-making. In one insight, he wrote: *"I gained insight into my guiding values, principles, and what internal desires have guided previous decisions."* This statement suggests a deliberate shift toward self-awareness and values-based processing. He also began using his reflections to articulate how his leadership was tied to her sense of challenge and growth. In one week, he noted, *"I need to be challenged to keep me motivated and engaged,"* while another emphasized his desire for clarity: *"I didn't operate with clarity, but that's something I chose not to do which means I can choose to do differently."* This growing awareness of agency and the link between her internal state and external performance indicates identity exploration through coaching. In another week, he reflected: *"Curiosity is a powerful state for me… Judgement is more energy draining than I thought."* This demonstrated an emerging capacity to reflect not just on leadership tasks, but on the self he was becoming through leadership.

Later reflections showed his transitioning from exploration into integration. In Month 1's final insight, he wrote: *"I haven't been clear on my goals or what my definition of success is. Gaining clarity in this will enable me to have clearer vision and a better understanding of where energy needs to be directed. Additionally, it will change the energy that I'm leading from."* By Month 2, he noted: *"It's important for me to have a clearly defined vision for success… when I don't feel I'm moving towards something, I get bored and boredom leads to using my time ineffectively."* These reflections reveal a leader who, through the coaching process, was gradually forming a more coherent leadership identity based on self-awareness, values alignment, and intentional goal setting.

In contrast, Leader D-B's reflections showed limited attention to leadership identity formation and were primarily focused on productivity, execution, and personal routines. His reflections emphasized immediate tasks, external pressures, and personal development interests rather than internal role processing. For instance, he described his experience as one of ongoing activity and momentum: *"Very good week overall… had a successful week at work… loved the rest and relaxation at the end of the week to be ready for next week."* While energetic and future-focused, his statements largely lacked commentary on how he was making meaning of leadership or exploring his role identity. In a later reflection, he acknowledged a challenge in defining his trajectory: *"All of my life, I've known the next right move, but finally feel as if I am in a place where I don't know what's next."* However, even this moment of deeper questioning quickly returned to action orientation: *"I am handling it by striving to be present in this current moment, be excellent where my feet are, and grow at every given opportunity."* Rather than exploring the implications of this uncertainty for his leadership identity, he continued to frame growth in terms of output and perseverance. This pattern was consistent across his reflections. While he shared meaningful learnings from podcasts and coaching from others, such as, *"The importance of authenticity and standing out rather than fitting in resonated with me,"* he did not appear to internalize these ideas in a way that connected them to his self-definition as a leader. Leadership remained a set of tasks and outcomes to manage, not a role to inhabit or a self to integrate.

In summary, the reflection data indicate that Leaders D-A and D-B experienced differing levels of leadership identity development during the engagement. Leader D-A's weekly reflections showed a clear progression from uncertainty and questioning to a more grounded and integrated leadership self-concept. His language increasingly reflected agency, values alignment, and vision clarity, suggesting that coaching supported identity exploration and coherence. By

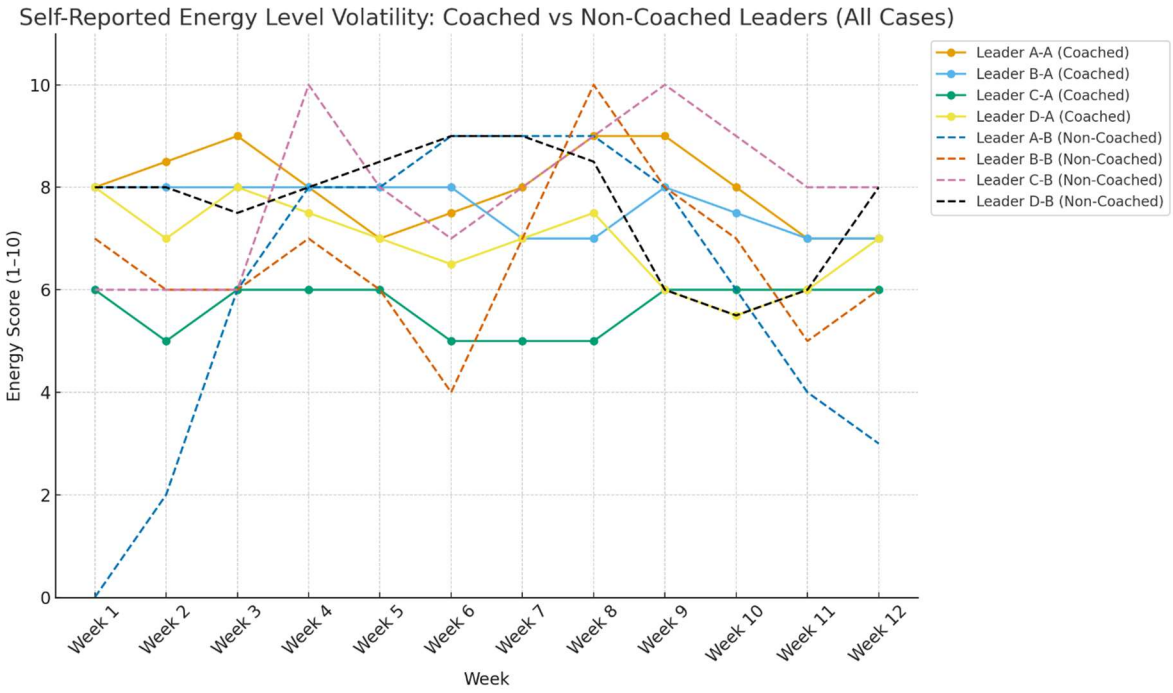
contrast, Leader D-B's reflections remained centered on tasks, performance metrics, and external routines, with minimal evidence of leadership identity formation. He expressed moments of uncertainty but did not use those moments as entry points for reflective identity work. These contrasting reflection patterns suggest differing opportunities for identity construction, with coaching serving as a structured space for Leader D-A to explore and clarify his leadership identity in ways not reflected in Leader D-B's experience.

## Cross-Case Analysis

The cross-case analysis examines patterns in three central themes: Energy Stability, Emotional Intelligence Development, and Leadership Identity Development, across the four pairings of novice leaders. By comparing coached and non-coached leaders side by side, this section highlights how their developmental trajectories diverged and where common patterns emerged. The following visuals and tables consolidate data across all participants, providing an integrated view of differences in energy regulation, emotional growth, and identity formation.

### Cross-Case Theme 1: Energy Stability

*Figure 5—Self-Reported Energy Volatility Chart—All Cases*




Demonstrated in Figure-5, energy data across all four cases revealed consistent and interconnected patterns of difference between coached and non-coached leaders. Coached leaders generally reported steady or progressively regulated patterns, with scores stabilizing in the moderate to high range. Importantly, their energy stability was not isolated to individual cases; across the dataset, dips were consistently followed by recovery, suggesting a shared capacity for pacing and regulation. Reflections reinforced this interconnectedness, as leaders frequently linked energy regulation to intentional practices such as reframing stressors, setting boundaries, and aligning with personal values. These strategies not only stabilized their week-to-week ratings but also supported sustainability over the entire engagement.

Contrastingly, non-coached leaders, displayed sharper spikes and declines across cases, indicating a common vulnerability to volatility. Regardless of organizational context, their trajectories showed difficulty sustaining energy across consecutive weeks, and in several instances, late-stage declines mirrored similar patterns of depletion elsewhere in the dataset.

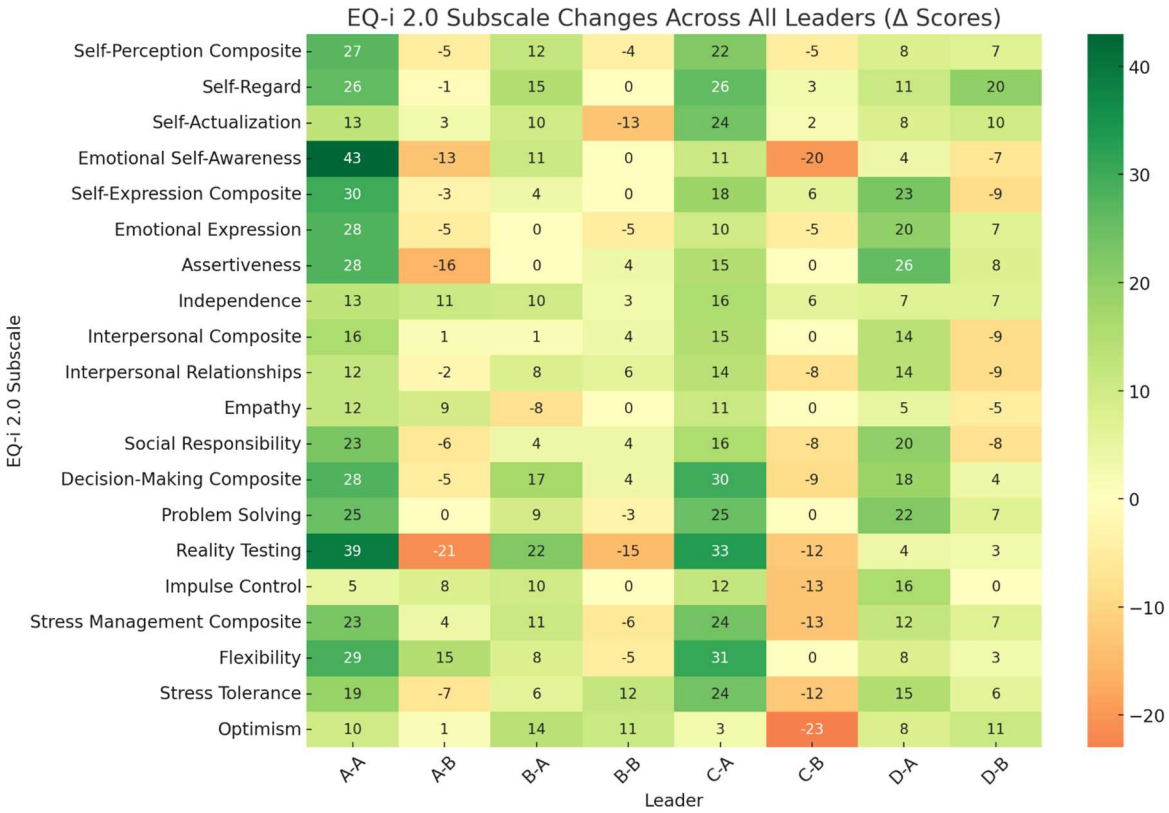
Reflections emphasized fatigue, reactivity, and strain, illustrating how lapses in recovery translated into prolonged downturns. Even when short bursts of high energy occurred, they were typically followed by steep drops, suggesting that volatility in one area often cascaded into broader disruption.

A notable exception was Leader D-B, whose relative stability set him apart from the non-coached pattern. However, his reflections suggested that this steadiness was rooted in external routines, such as physical training and productivity habits, rather than internal recalibration strategies. This distinction further underscores the interrelated nature of the findings: while coached leaders demonstrated stability through reflective practices, non-coached leaders either struggled to sustain energy or relied on external anchors without the same internal regulation.

Taken together, the cross-case findings bring to light an interconnected trend: coached leaders exhibited stability that was multidimensional and reinforced by reflective recovery practices, whereas non-coached leaders showed volatility that repeated across cases and was often amplified by emotional strain and lack of recalibration.

**Cross-Case Theme 2: Emotional Intelligence Development**

*Table 6—EQ-i 2.0 Pre/Post Assessment Results for All Leaders*




As illustrated in Table-6, pre- and post-assessment data revealed consistent cross-case patterns in the development of emotional intelligence. Coached leaders across all four organizations demonstrated broad gains, as represented by green shading, clustering around related domains of intrapersonal regulation and interpersonal functioning. Improvements in Emotional Self-Awareness were frequently accompanied by upward movement in Reality Testing and Stress Tolerance**,** suggesting that enhanced clarity of emotion supported more grounded decision-making and resilience under stress. Parallel growth in Emotional Expression, Empathy, and Social Responsibility reinforced this trend, indicating that internal regulation was interlinked with stronger relational engagement. Weekly reflections confirmed this interplay, as leaders often described increased ability to regulate their own states while simultaneously connecting more effectively with others.

Non-coached leaders, by contrast, displayed trajectories that were not only uneven but also interrelated in ways that reflected strain, represented by yellow and orange shade. Declines in Emotional Self-Awareness often coincided with decreases in Reality Testing and interpersonal connection**,** creating reinforcing cycles of reduced clarity and diminished relational focus. Even where growth occurred, such as isolated gains in Optimism, Independence, or Stress Tolerance, these shifts did not appear to translate into broader development across domains. Instead, reflections revealed a pattern of fatigue and task orientation that limited integration, with leaders describing themselves as reactive and externally driven rather than grounded and relationally present.

In collection, the cross-case findings suggest that coached leaders developed emotional intelligence in an interconnected, multidimensional way, where growth in one area supported growth in others. By contrast, non-coached leaders exhibited fragmented or declining development, with negative changes in self-awareness and clarity spilling into other domains and reinforcing volatility.

**Cross-Case Theme 3: Leadership Identity Development**

Across the four cases, leaders diverged in the ways they articulated and processed their emerging leadership identities. Coached leaders tended to frame identity as an evolving narrative, using reflection to tie their personal values and sense of purpose to the roles they were stepping into. Early uncertainty often gave way to the language of authorship, statements that emphasized choice, authenticity, and alignment. Rather than simply describing what they did, coached leaders increasingly reflected on who they were becoming. In several cases, this shift

was subtle, marked by small but meaningful changes in language, from questioning legitimacy to expressing conviction in their approach.

Non-coached leaders**,** on the other hand, described identity less as an internal journey and more as an external circumstance. Their reflections were rich in detail about tasks, pressures, and operational responsibilities, but they rarely lingered on questions of meaning or self-definition. Leadership was often portrayed as something to manage, survive, or "get through," rather than something to integrate into their sense of self. Even when moments of identity surfaced, such as pride in navigating conflict or commitment to fairness, they were not extended into broader narratives about what kind of leader they were becoming.

In aggregate, these patterns suggest that coaching provided leaders with a container for reflective identity work, allowing them to experiment with meaning, clarify values, and test emerging self-concepts. Without that space, identity remained largely implicit for non-coached leaders, overshadowed by immediate demands and short-term survival. While both groups demonstrated a commitment to their roles, the coached leaders were more likely to describe leadership as a process of becoming, whereas the non-coached leaders focused on leadership as a function of doing.

**Cross-Case Summary**

Across the four cases, the findings revealed two markedly different portraits of novice leadership development. For those who received coaching, energy, emotion, and identity often formed a reinforcing cycle. Leaders who learned to steady their energy also became more adept at naming and regulating emotions, and that clarity created space to consider who they were

becoming in their roles. Their reflections read less like snapshots of survival and more like unfolding stories of growth and alignment. For leaders without coaching, the picture was more fragmented. Fluctuations in energy were frequently echoed in uneven emotional intelligence outcomes, leaving less bandwidth for deeper reflection on identity. Their narratives tended to emphasize immediate demands, problem-solving, and endurance, which is evidence of commitment, but lacked the same sense of integration.

To conclude, the cross-case results demonstrate that coaching had a broad impact as it pertains to human development. It appeared to provide a framework for connecting stamina, self-understanding, and identity into a coherent developmental process, something less visible among peers navigating leadership without that support.

# CHAPTER VI—DISCUSSION

## Introduction

Guided by literature, the chapter advances three knowledge claims. First, coaching appeared to support the satisfaction of SDT's basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Coaching also appeared to activate development in the EQ capacities that support self-regulation and decision quality (Spence et al., 2011; Day et al., 2021). Second, reflective structure functioned as an affective "shock absorber," converting volatile stressors into learning episodes and strengthening reality testing, stress tolerance, and resilient mindsets that sustain performance under pressure (Bar-On, 2006). Third, coaching provided a relational space for identity work in which novices experimented with "provisional selves," integrated values with behavior, and moved from role performance to role ownership (DeRue & Ashford, 2010;.

This chapter begins with the discussion of these three central claims, which emerged from the cross-case analysis. The claims are organized around the core mechanisms that shaped novice leaders' developmental experiences: psychological need fulfillment, emotional regulation, and leadership identity construction. The intent is not to argue whether coaching "works" in a general sense, but rather to examine how and why particular processes unfolded differently for coached and non-coached leaders. By reasoning through participants' experiences, the discussion highlights how coached leaders' reflections and developmental shifts were often aligned with the fulfillment of core psychological needs and the regulation of energy and emotions, while non-coached leaders described more fragmented or externally constrained experiences. Each claim is

presented in turn and supported by participant evidence before moving to implications for practice, study limitations, and directions for future research.

### Claim One: Coaching Supported the Fulfillment of Core Psychological Needs

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) emphasizes that human motivation and well-being are underpinned by the satisfaction of three universal psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Deci et al., 2017). When these needs are supported, individuals are more likely to experience intrinsic motivation, persistence, and effective functioning. Conversely, when these needs are frustrated, leaders often encounter diminished energy, self-doubt, or strained relationships (Howard et al., 2020). The cross-case findings in this study demonstrated that coached leaders consistently described experiences aligned with need satisfaction, while non-coached leaders provided more fragmented or externally oriented accounts.

For coached leaders, autonomy emerged in their reflections on self-trust, boundary-setting, and volitional choice. Leader C-A captured this shift directly: *"There's this realization that I don't need to look outside for answers, but rather trust what I already have inside."* Similarly, Leader A-A described filtering stress through agency: *"I can control my daily happiness and what I choose to internalize."* These reflections exemplify the transition from external validation to self-endorsed action that Deci and Ryan (2000) argue is central to autonomous functioning.

Growth in competence was also evident across coached cases, particularly in the ways leaders reframed challenges as opportunities for mastery. Leader A-A declared: *"I AM a great*

*leader, and capable of finding success in unknown and difficult situations,"* signaling both self-efficacy and stress tolerance. Leader D-A reinforced this trajectory by identifying curiosity as a tool for resilience: *"Curiosity is a powerful state for me and it affects my creativity, problem solving, assertiveness, connection with others, and more."* Such reflections resonate with findings that leadership development is accelerated when individuals internalize confidence in their ability to influence outcomes (Aas, 2016; Kalbarczyk et al., 2022).

Finally, relatedness was reinforced through intentional connection-building. Leader C-A reflected: *"My leadership style is centered on connection and creating a safe, supportive environment where team members feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas."* Similarly, Leader D-A described stepping into team dynamics with care: *"After hearing their perspective and the personal difficulties that were motivating the behavior, I found a solution for them to feel more connected to the group and a sense of purpose."* These accounts mirror the importance of belongingness in SDT frameworks, where social support strengthens both motivation and identity development (Janson, 2023; Szekely et al., 2023).

In contrast, non-coached leaders reported more uneven patterns of need fulfillment. Autonomy was often expressed reactively rather than proactively, as in Leader D-B's admission: *"I lose a lot of energy when I feel out-of-control, which is something that I have to actively keep in check and trust the Lord for."* Competence was at times undermined by frustration, with Leader B-B acknowledging: *"These issues take over my day and stop me from doing other things. I do not manage this well and feel like I drop the ball."* Relatedness was present but more narrowly framed, such as Leader C-B noting: *"I try to let them know they always have someone*

*in their corner (me).”* While supportive, these reflections were less often tied to identity integration or long-term leadership development.

In all, the findings suggest that coaching enhanced novice leaders’ ability to satisfy their core psychological needs, thereby fostering intrinsic motivation and sustainable growth. The coached group consistently articulated their experiences in ways that reflected volition, confidence, and connectedness, aligning closely with SDT’s propositions (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Deci et al., 2017). By contrast, non-coached leaders often operated at the margins of these needs, with autonomy, competence, and relatedness described situationally rather than as enduring resources. These distinctions highlight coaching’s potential role in cultivating the motivational foundations of leadership identity formation.

**Claim Two: Coaching Supported Stronger Emotional Intelligence Growth**

Across cases, coached leaders demonstrated substantial and consistent growth in emotional intelligence, with gains concentrated in the areas most critical for leadership adaptability and sustainability. Decision-making, stress management, interpersonal functioning, and intrapersonal regulation all trended upward for coached leaders, while non-coached peers showed flatter or even negative trajectories. These findings align with the well-established link between coaching and emotional intelligence growth, where intentional reflection and structured feedback are known to accelerate both self-awareness and regulatory capacity (Ackley, 2016; Boyatzis, 2021; Theeboom et al., 2014).

The most striking changes were observed in the Decision-Making Composite and its subscales. Leaders A-A and C-A each posted gains of +28 to +30, with particularly large

increases in Reality Testing (+39 and +33, respectively) and Problem Solving (+25 for A-A). Leader A-A reflected on this shift by writing, *"I've learned the concept of not interpreting people—or situations—as good or bad, right or wrong… view others or myself not through a lens of judgment but through a lens of curiosity and understanding."* In contrast, non-coached leaders showed significant declines in Reality Testing, including a -21 drop for Leader A-B and -15 for Leader B-B, often accompanied by reflections of frustration or disengagement. Leader B-B acknowledged this struggle, *"These issues take over my day and stop me from doing other things. I do not manage this well and feel like I drop the ball."* The divergence suggests that while coached leaders grew more objective and adaptive in processing challenges, their peers became more susceptible to distortions in judgment under pressure.

Coached leaders also demonstrated meaningful improvement in Stress Management, with Leader A-A gaining +23 and Leader C-A +24, while non-coached peers often regressed (C-B: -12; A-B: -7). Leader C-A highlighted the importance of redefining pressure: *"Reminding myself that I define what success looks like in any situation is empowering—it helps me stay focused instead of giving in to stress."* Non-coached leaders, however, often described strain without sustainable strategies for recovery. Leader B-B admitted, *"I do not manage this well and feel like I drop the ball,"* underscoring the uneven capacity to regulate emotional strain without coaching intervention.

In the interpersonal domain, coached leaders again exhibited marked growth. Both A-A and C-A reported +26 in Interpersonal Relationships, reinforced by narrative accounts of stronger team connection and collaboration. Leader C-A explained, *"My leadership style is centered on connection and creating a safe, supportive environment where team members feel*

*comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas."* Non-coached leaders, by contrast, often reported modest or negative changes (D-B: -9; C-B: -8), framing relationships more in terms of task management than leadership development.

Conclusively, coached leaders showed gains in intrapersonal dimensions such as Self-Regard (+26 for both A-A and C-A), reflecting greater confidence and alignment between role expectations and self-perception. Leader A-A expressed this directly: *"I AM a great leader, and capable of finding success in unknown and difficult situations."* Non-coached leaders, meanwhile, frequently plateaued or declined in self-regard and optimism, with Leader C-B showing a dramatic -23 in Optimism and reflecting, *"This past week definitely felt like a loss… a weakness of distraction and pontificating kept me from executing."*

In sum, these results suggest that coaching provided leaders with both the tools and the reflective structure to integrate self-awareness, regulation, and relational growth into their emerging leadership identity. Without coaching, leaders often faced the same challenges but with fewer strategies to translate adversity into growth, leading to inconsistent or declining outcomes. This distinction reinforces prior research that coaching not only supports the development of emotional intelligence but also sustains it under stress, a factor especially critical for novice leaders navigating demanding transitions (Boyatzis, 2012; Janson, 2023; Szekely et al., 2023).

**Claim Three: Leadership Identity Development**

The cross-case findings suggest that executive coaching meaningfully accelerated the process of leadership identity development for novice leaders. Whereas non-coached participants often framed leadership in terms of tasks, survival, or external expectations, coached leaders

increasingly articulated leadership as an extension of personal values, internal agency, and self-authored identity. This aligns with research on leadership identity formation, which emphasizes that identity evolves not only through role assumption but also through reflection, meaning-making, and the integration of personal and professional selves (Ashford, 2010; Day et al., 2013; Komives et al., 2005).

Coached leaders frequently used reflective language to connect who they were becoming with how they were leading. Leader A-A captured this process directly: *"I AM a great leader, and capable of finding success in unknown and difficult situations."* Similarly, Leader C-A described a shift from doubt toward self-definition: *"I've realized, I am a leader. And that makes me emotional because I've been believing the lie that I'm not because I don't look a certain way."* These reflections illustrate how coaching provided space for leaders to explore self-concept and construct a coherent sense of identity. Such findings align with Szekely (2023), who argues that coaching fosters identity work by giving leaders tools to experiment with and reinforce new self-understandings.

Contrastingly, non-coached leaders were more likely to describe leadership in pragmatic or externally anchored terms. Leader C-B, for instance, noted: *"I shut down the team trying to find any way to make it happen and I said the revenue wasn't worth it."* While this demonstrates decisiveness, it was framed more as situational management than as an evolving identity. Similarly, Leader D-B reflected: *"I lose a lot of energy when I feel out-of-control, which is something that I have to actively keep in check and trust the Lord for."* These statements highlight resilience but lack the explicit self-authorship and integrative reflection found in the coached group.

The distinction reflects broader findings in the leadership development literature: while novice leaders often default to describing their roles in terms of responsibilities or external validation, identity-centered growth requires intentional reflection and feedback mechanisms (Aas, 2016; Miscenko & Day, 2017). Coaching appears to have provided the developmental scaffolding necessary for this shift. Leaders used coaching sessions as a reflective mirror, integrating both values and lived experiences into their evolving sense of self as leaders.

In total, the cross-case analysis suggests that coaching accelerated leadership identity development by fostering meaning-making, encouraging values alignment, and reinforcing agency. Non-coached leaders, while committed and resilient, tended to emphasize tasks and challenges without the same degree of identity integration. This difference supports the argument that identity development is not an automatic outcome of role assumption but is cultivated through guided reflection and feedback (Day et al., 2021; Komives et al., 2005).

## Implications for Practice

### *Supporting Autonomy and Motivation*

Findings from this study underscore the importance of intentionally cultivating autonomy among novice leaders. Coached participants consistently described themselves as more self-directed, confident, and capable of reframing stressors in ways that aligned with their values. For example, Leader A-A explained, *"I can control my daily happiness and what I choose to internalize,"* a reflection of motivational ownership that coaching helped bring into focus. In contrast, non-coached leaders often framed their choices as reactive or externally constrained. This suggests that executive coaching can serve as a developmental lever to reinforce volitional

agency, helping leaders approach their roles with greater psychological freedom (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Rigby, 2024).

Practically, organizations can support autonomy by embedding coaching into early leadership development pipelines. This might involve structured reflection prompts, coaching assignments that surface value–role alignment, and opportunities for leaders to experiment with new strategies while receiving feedback. Such practices address the motivational core identified in Self-Determination Theory, where autonomy satisfaction not only enhances performance but also buffers against burnout (Deci et al., 2017).

*Cultivating Emotional Intelligence in Leadership Pipelines*

The results highlight how coaching accelerates growth in emotional intelligence competencies that are critical for effective leadership. Coached participants demonstrated gains across composites such as Emotional Self-Awareness, Assertiveness, Reality Testing, and Stress Tolerance, with Leader C-A posting a +30 increase in Decision-Making Composite and Leader A-A a +27 gain in Self-Perception Composite. These improvements were echoed in reflective narratives where leaders described boundary-setting, intentional recovery strategies, and reframing conflict in constructive ways.

For practitioners, this suggests that EQ development cannot be left to chance. Early interventions, such as structured coaching engagements or targeted EQ training, can accelerate leaders' ability to regulate themselves and connect with others. These skills are not only predictive of individual effectiveness but also essential for building high-trust teams (Boyatzis,

2021; Ackley, 2016). In practice, pairing assessments like EQ-i 2.0 with ongoing coaching sessions provides leaders with both diagnostic insight and a pathway for skill development.

*Facilitating Leadership Identity Integration*

A distinguishing finding of this study was the divergence between how coached and non-coached leaders engaged in identity work. Coached leaders consistently linked their actions to a deeper sense of who they were becoming, with reflections like Leader C-A's: *"I've realized, I am a leader. And that makes me emotional because I've been believing the lie that I'm not because I don't look a certain way."* Non-coached leaders, by contrast, more often described leadership in terms of tasks, responsibilities, and external metrics. This echoes prior work showing that identity integration is a critical yet underdeveloped component of novice leadership (Ashford, 2010; Szekely et al., 2023).

For organizations, this finding reinforces the value of creating reflective spaces where novice leaders can process their emerging identity. Coaching, mentoring, and peer-learning groups are practical vehicles for such reflection. Beyond skills and competencies, leaders benefit from structured opportunities to narrate who they are becoming, experiment with provisional selves, and connect their personal values with professional responsibilities (Schwartz, 2012). These practices support long-term leader sustainability by reducing the disconnect between role execution and self-concept.

*Stabilizing Energy and Resilience*

Energy stability emerged as a meaningful differentiator between coached and non-coached leaders. Coached participants reported steadier pacing, intentional recovery practices,

and reduced volatility across the 12-week period. For instance, Leader B-A noted, *"I have stopped myself numerous times this week"* in reference to reining in unhelpful assumptions, while Leader D-A described adapting his team plan when resources were unavailable. These reflections suggest that coaching facilitated not only immediate energy management but also the resilience to sustain performance under pressure.

Organizations can leverage this insight by incorporating energy check-ins and resilience-building practices into leadership development programs. Tools that prompt weekly reflection on energy patterns, combined with coaching support, help leaders recognize fluctuations and adopt corrective strategies before depletion sets in. Importantly, such practices normalize recovery as a component of leadership rather than a sign of weakness, promoting long-term health and productivity.

*Extending to Broader Leadership Development Contexts*

While this study focused on novice leaders across four organizational settings, its implications extend to leadership development more broadly. The consistent contrasts between coached and non-coached leaders suggest that coaching is not merely additive but catalytic in shaping motivational, emotional, and identity-related capacities. These findings align with recent meta-analyses demonstrating coaching's impact on behavioral, attitudinal, and identity outcomes (Nicolau et al., 2023; Theeboom et al., 2014).

Organizations should therefore consider embedding coaching not as a remedial intervention but as a proactive strategy for leadership cultivation. By aligning coaching with early-role transitions, succession planning, and pipeline programs, organizations can accelerate

readiness, reduce turnover risk, and foster leaders who are not only competent but also self-aware, connected, and resilient.

## Limitations

While this study contributes to the growing understanding of novice leader development through theory-informed executive coaching, several limitations must be acknowledged. These boundaries provide important context for interpreting the findings and highlight areas for future inquiry.

### *Study Design and Sample Size*

The study employed a qualitative multiple-case design with a small, purposefully selected sample of eight leaders across four organizational contexts. This design allowed for in-depth exploration of developmental experiences, but it limits generalizability. Participants represented organizations that voluntarily engaged in an intensive process and may already have been supportive of leadership development. As a result, findings are best viewed as exploratory rather than representative of novice leaders broadly (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2018).

### *Coaching Duration and Sustainability*

The intervention spanned twelve weeks, capturing short-term developmental processes in autonomy, competence, relatedness, and emotional intelligence. While meaningful growth was documented, leadership development is long-term and iterative (Day et al., 2013). Without longitudinal follow-up, the durability of participants' identity shifts and emotional growth remains uncertain.

*Self-Report Data*

Much of the evidence was drawn on participant self-reports through reflections, journals, and EQ assessments. Self-report is central to understanding inner experience, but it is subject to bias, including social desirability and overestimation of progress (Ackley, 2016; Bar-On, 2006). Triangulation through coaching notes helped mitigate these risks, yet the potential for reflection bias remains.

*Contextual and Relational Variability*

Although leaders were paired within similar organizational environments, differences in culture, role scope, and support structures introduced contextual variability that cannot be fully disentangled from coaching effects. Additionally, the depth of rapport between coach and participant likely influenced outcomes. The coaching relationship is widely recognized as a driver of impact (Greiner, 2024; Silver et al., 2009), and variation in engagement may have shaped the degree of developmental change.

*Researcher–Coach Dual Role*

The researcher also served as the coach for half of the participants, ensuring consistency in approach but introducing potential bias in data collection and interpretation. Efforts such as reflexive journaling and member checking were used to minimize this risk, though full separation of roles was not possible (Charmaz, 2006).

*Developmental Stage Specificity*

In finality, the study zeroed in exclusively on novice leaders in their first formal roles. While this lens generated valuable insight into early-stage identity formation, findings may not extend to more experienced leaders navigating mid-career or executive transitions, and may not fully explain experiences of all novice leaders, given the variability of the possible novice roles being served.

Together, these limitations emphasize that the study's findings should be interpreted as contextually bound and exploratory. Rather than diminishing its contribution, acknowledging these boundaries underscores the complexity of leadership development and sets the stage for future studies that expand the sample, diversify contexts, and extend the time horizon of analysis.

## Future Research

### *Longitudinal Impact of Coaching*

This study demonstrated meaningful developmental shifts in novice leaders over the course of a three-month intervention, yet the sustainability of these changes remains an open question. Longitudinal research is needed to assess whether early gains in autonomy, competence, relatedness, and emotional intelligence are retained, evolve, or diminish over time. Such work could also explore how leaders continue to construct their identity once the coaching relationship concludes (Miscenko & Gardner, 2017). Multi-wave studies that extend six months to multiple years would provide critical insight into whether coaching outcomes stabilize, expand into higher-order competencies such as transformational influence, or recalibrate under new organizational pressures (Day et al., 2021).

### *Expanded Populations and Contexts*

While this study focused on novice leaders in their first formal roles, future work could investigate how coaching outcomes differ across leadership stages and organizational contexts. Mid-career managers, executives navigating vertical transitions, or leaders embedded in highly volatile environments likely experience distinct developmental trajectories (Leithwood et al., 2004; Aas, 2016). Comparative studies across sectors, such as education, healthcare, and entrepreneurial industries, would clarify both the universal and context-specific benefits of coaching (Kalbarczyk et al., 2022). Understanding these contextual influences may help determine how coaching interventions should be adapted to maximize effectiveness across diverse leadership settings.

*Integrating Multi-Source Data*

Because much of the current study relied on reflective self-report, future studies should incorporate additional sources of evidence. Supervisor evaluations, peer feedback, and objective performance metrics would provide richer validation of developmental change (Howard et al., 2020). 360-degree assessments and behavioral observation could reduce reflection bias while also clarifying how intrapersonal growth manifests in team dynamics and organizational performance (Passmore, 2007). Triangulating these perspectives would increase methodological rigor and expand the scope of claims about coaching's organizational impact.

*Coaching Alliance and Readiness*

The quality of the coaching alliance and participants' initial readiness for growth appeared to moderate outcomes in this study. Leaders who entered coaching with stronger openness and intrinsic motivation reported deeper developmental shifts, while others

demonstrated more modest gains. Future research should measure alliance quality and pre-intervention readiness to determine their predictive power (Greiner, 2024; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Such findings could refine best practices by tailoring coaching strategies to motivational states and clarifying the relational factors most likely to accelerate development.

### *Comparative and Experimental Designs*

Case study designs, while rich in narrative depth, limit causal inference. Future studies could employ randomized controlled trials or quasi-experimental designs to isolate the specific contributions of executive coaching (Theeboom et al., 2014). Comparative research across coaching modalities, for example, strengths-based, values-based, or energy leadership coaching, would illuminate which approaches are most effective for different psychological profiles and organizational conditions (Anthony, 2017; Janson, 2023). Such studies would help practitioners align coaching interventions with the unique needs of emerging leaders.

### *Emerging Theoretical Directions*

The findings of this study surfaced consistent patterns of resistance that shaped novice leader development, including cognitive doubt, emotional dysregulation, and motivational hesitation. To capture these dynamics, the author has proposed an early-stage framework, *Fight Theory*, which conceptualizes resistance as a series of psychological "fights" across cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and motivational domains. Future research could empirically test this model to examine how intensity and resistance interact to influence behavior change and identity development. In addition, the *Novice Leader Origin Categories (NLOC)* framework introduced in this study, Accidental, Aspired, Reactive, Inherited, and Mission-Driven, offers another

promising area for inquiry. Testing these categories empirically could clarify how entry points into leadership shape developmental trajectories across separation, liminality, and integration (Ashford, 2010; Ibarra, 1999).

### *Advancing Coaching Science*

In closure, future research should continue to investigate not only whether coaching "works," but also the deeper mechanisms explaining how and under what conditions it drives growth. Exploring the interplay of self-determination, emotional intelligence, leadership identity construction, and resistance offers an opportunity to advance coaching from a performance-oriented practice to a transformational modality (Szekely et al., 2023; Day et al., 2021). Especially during high-stakes transitions into leadership, unpacking these mechanisms will be critical to strengthening both the science and practice of coaching.

## Final Overview

To bring it all home, the findings from this study highlight the dynamic intersection of motivation, emotion, and identity in the developmental journeys of novice leaders. Across four organizational contexts, the coached leaders consistently reported steadier energy regulation, greater confidence in their capacity to navigate challenges, and a stronger sense of leadership identity formation. In contrast, non-coached leaders demonstrated resilience and commitment, but often described a more fragmented growth process, characterized by fluctuating energy, uneven emotional regulation, and limited reflection on how their leadership identities were evolving.

This study contributes to the growing body of research on leadership development by showing how theory-informed executive coaching can create conditions that accelerate growth during one of the most vulnerable stages of leadership. By framing results through Self-Determination Theory, Emotional Intelligence, and leadership identity research, the study not only affirms the relevance of these frameworks but also extends them by demonstrating their interplay within the lived experiences of novice leaders. In doing so, the study responds to persistent calls in the literature for more integrative approaches to leadership development that account for both internal psychological needs and external role transitions.

Ultimately, the findings underscore that leadership is not simply a matter of acquiring skills but of sustaining the energy, self-belief, and relational capacity required to lead with authenticity and resilience. Executive coaching, when intentionally grounded in theory, appears to provide a powerful container for this work. While future research will need to test the durability of these effects, this study affirms that the coaching relationship can act as a catalyst for transformation at precisely the point when novice leaders are defining who they are and how they will lead.

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# APPENDIX A:

## Participant Research Consent Form

**University of Oklahoma**

**Informed Consent to Participate in Research**

**Study Title:** The Impact of Executive Coaching on Leadership Development in Novice Leaders

**Researcher Information:** I am Justin Carlton, the Principal Investigator from the Organizational and Community Leadership program at the University of Oklahoma. I'll serve as the researcher and coach for this intervention. I hold the International Coaching Federation (ICF) designation, the most widely recognized coaching certification internationally. I invite you to participate in my research study to understand how executive coaching influences leadership development among novice leaders across various industries.

**Purpose of the Research**

This study aims to explore how executive coaching impacts key leadership competencies such as Emotional Intelligence, Self-Determination, and Transformational Leadership. Specifically, this research seeks to understand the unique challenges faced by novice leaders during their first formal leadership role and how executive coaching can support their development.

**Participant Eligibility**

You were selected to participate because you meet the eligibility criteria as a novice leader who has held a formal leadership role for less than two years. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate.

**Procedures**

If you agree to participate, you will:

- Complete three interviews (at the beginning, middle, and end of the study), which will be audio-recorded to capture your insights accurately.
- Participate in either a 6-month coaching program (coaching group) or serve as part of a non-coaching comparison group (non-coaching group). Both groups will complete reflective journals monthly and submit weekly reflection journals.
- Complete the EQi 2.0 before study commencement.
- Complete the EQi 2.0 360 following the conclusion of the study.
- Review and reflect on assigned activities that align with the study's focus areas (e.g., Emotional Intelligence and leadership adaptability).

**Duration**

Your participation in this study will span approximately six months. You will participate in three 45-minute interviews, one at the start, another in the middle, and the final interview at the end of the study. Monthly activities, including reflections, are estimated to take 30-45 minutes each.

**Coaching Procedures**

There will be 4 sessions weekly, followed by a transition to bi-weekly sessions until the 14 coaching sessions have been completed. The scheduling of sessions will be mutually agreed upon between the participant and the researcher, who will serve as the coach. Coaching sessions will be conducted using the Coaching.com platform. Coaching goals and activities associated with the outcomes of coaching sessions will be assigned via the Coaching.com platform.

**Compensation**

As a token of appreciation for your time, you will receive a **$50 gift card** at the beginning of the study.

**Confidentiality and Data Security**

All personal data will remain confidential and accessible only to the Principal Investigator. Data collected during interviews and reflective journals will be de-identified using unique codes, with identifying information stored separately on password-protected, encrypted devices. Only the Principal Investigator can access the raw data and identify information.

**Audio or Video Recorded Data Collection**

If we collect your data using audio and video recordings, there is a risk of accidental data release. If this occurred, your identity and statements would become known to people not on the research team. To minimize this risk, the researchers will transfer data to and store your data on a secure platform approved by the University's Information Technology Office.

**Audio Recording of Research Activities**

To assist with accurate recording of your responses, interviews may be recorded on an audio recording device. You have the right to refuse to allow such recording without penalty.

**Audio Transcription Activity**

Audio recordings will be transcribed by an external online organization, Otter Ai. The organization hosting the data collection platform has its own privacy and security policies for keeping your information confidential. There is a risk that the external organization, which is not part of the research team, may gain access to or retain your data or your IP address which could be used to re-identify you. No assurance can be made about their use of the data you provide for purposes other than this research.

**Data Future Use**

We might share your de-identified data with other researchers or use it in future research without obtaining additional consent from you.

**Access to Your Information**

Only the Principal Investigator will have access to your information, which will be securely stored and used exclusively for research purposes. Reporting or publication of findings will use aggregated data or anonymized quotes to protect your identity. The University of Oklahoma Institutional Review Board (IRB) may also access your information to ensure compliance with ethical standards.

**Confidentiality of Your Identity**

Your participation in this study will be confidential, meaning your identity will be known to the researcher but will not be disclosed in any reports or publications. All identifying information will be replaced with a unique participant code, and any specific details that could reveal your identity will be excluded or modified in study publications.

**Future Use of Your Data**

Your data will be retained for **five years** following the completion of this study, as per university guidelines. During this period, it may be reviewed for follow-up research or to verify findings. After five years, all personal identifiers will be permanently deleted, and the remaining data will be anonymized to ensure that it cannot be traced back to you.

**Data collected online or by a device and transmitted electronically**
You will be asked to enter information via the coaching platform hosted by Coaching.com as part of this research. The organization hosting the data collection platform has its own privacy and security policies for keeping your information confidential. There is a risk that the external organization, which is not part of the research team, may gain access to or retain your data or your IP address which could be used to re-identify you. No assurance can be made about their use of the data you provide for purposes other than this research.

**Access to Records**

The Principal Investigator will securely store your records and will not be accessed by others without your permission, except if required by law or if accessed by the University of Oklahoma's IRB for auditing purposes. Any records released under such circumstances will remain protected to the fullest extent possible.

**Voluntary Participation and Right to Withdraw**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without penalty or impact on your professional role. You may skip any questions or activities that you do not wish to complete.

**Contacts for Questions or Concerns**

If you have questions or concerns about this study, please contact me at 918-781-2185. You may also contact the University of Oklahoma-Norman Campus IRB at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu if you have questions about your rights as a participant.

**By signing below, you acknowledge that you have read and understand the above information and agree to participate in this research study.**

| Participant Signature | Print Name | Date |
|---|---|---|
| Signature of Researcher Obtaining Consent | Print Name | Date |

**APPENDIX B:**

**Self-Determination Theory Pre-Intervention Interview**

## Interview Questions for Coaching and Control Groups

1. **Question (Autonomy):** How would you describe your current level of autonomy in your leadership role?
    - *Probing Question 1:* Can you provide an example of a recent decision you made independently? (For the coaching group, you could ask: How has your autonomy changed since beginning the program?)
    - *Probing Question 2:* How do you define what it means to have a sense of autonomy in your role?
2. **Question (Competence):** How confident do you feel in your abilities as a leader at this stage in your role?
    - *Probing Question 1:* Can you describe a situation where you felt particularly competent or confident in your leadership abilities? (For the coaching group, you could ask: How do you think any guidance or support you've received has influenced this?)
    - *Probing Question 2:* What areas do you feel you still need to develop?
3. **Question (Relatedness):** How would you describe your relationships with your colleagues and team members?
    - *Probing Question 1:* Have these relationships changed in any way since you took on your current role? (For the coaching group, you could ask: Have there been any specific interactions or insights that have strengthened these relationships?)
    - *Probing Question 2:* How important do you feel these relationships are to your success as a leader?
4. **Question(Internalization):** What motivates you to pursue your leadership goals and responsibilities?
    - *Probing Question 1:* Can you identify any particular sources of motivation or inspiration in your work? (For the coaching group, you could ask: Have any new sources of motivation emerged as a result of the support you've received?)
    - *Probing Question 2:* How do you maintain this motivation over time, especially when faced with challenges?
5. **Question(Competence):** What challenges have you faced in implementing changes or pursuing goals in your leadership role?
    - *Probing Question 1:* How have you managed or overcome these challenges? (For the coaching group, you could ask: How has any external support helped you address these challenges?)
    - *Probing Question 2:* What strategies or resources do you find most effective in dealing with these obstacles?

## Structure and Considerations

- **For the Coaching Group:** Focus on how the coaching has influenced their responses, particularly in relation to the changes they've experienced as a result of the coaching.
- **For the Control Group:** Focus on their experiences without the coaching, probing into what other forms of support or development they might be utilizing or lacking.

# APPENDIX C:

## Self-Determination Theory Post-Intervention Follow Up (Coached and Non-Coached)

## Follow-Up Interview – Coached Group

*Purpose: Explore how participants' SDT constructs evolved over time and how coaching influenced their development.*

**Autonomy**

1. How would you describe your sense of autonomy now compared to when the study began?
    - What changes, if any, do you attribute to the coaching process?
    - Can you recall a coaching session or tool that helped you feel more empowered in your decision-making?

**Competence**

2. In what ways has your confidence or perceived competence evolved throughout the program?

- Were there any pivotal coaching moments that helped you feel more capable as a leader?
- What challenges do you feel better equipped to handle now?

**Relatedness** 3. How would you describe your current relationship with your team and colleagues?

- Did coaching impact how you build or maintain relationships?
- Have you noticed any shifts in how others perceive or interact with you?

**Internalization (Motivation)** 4. What drives you now as a leader compared to the beginning of this experience?

- How has coaching impacted your motivation or sense of purpose?
- Are there any new personal values or goals that emerged during this journey?

**Synthesis** 5. Thinking back over the past few months, what stands out most in terms of your leadership growth?

- How do you think coaching contributed to that growth?
- What would you say has been the most transformational insight or change for you?

## Follow-Up Interview – Non-Coached Group

*Purpose: Explore their leadership development journey without coaching and identify what influenced their growth around SDT constructs.*

**Autonomy**

1. How would you describe your current sense of autonomy compared to when the study started?
    - What, if anything, helped you develop more confidence in making decisions?

**Competence** 2. Have you noticed a shift in your confidence or abilities over the past few months?

- What helped you grow the most in your leadership role?
- What challenges remain?

**Relatedness** 3. How have your relationships with your team or peers evolved since the beginning of the year?

- What factors contributed to strengthening—or weakening—those relationships?

**Internalization (Motivation)** 4. What continues to motivate you to lead and grow in your role?

- Has anything new influenced your drive or sense of purpose since we last spoke?

**Synthesis** 5. Reflecting on your journey over the past few months, what stands out as the biggest area of growth?

- What has been most helpful in getting to this point?
- If you could've received any additional support, what would it have been?

# APPENDIX D:

## A-Prori Codes and Categories

### Process Coding (P) – Capturing Leadership Actions & Transitions

- Navigating Leadership Identity and Role Transition (SDT, EQ) (P)

  Novice leaders often experience role ambiguity and self-doubt as they transition into leadership. Coaching provides structured support that fosters confidence, internal motivation, and the development of a self-perception aligned with leadership responsibilities.

- Developing Emotional and Social Competencies (EQ) (P)

  Through coaching, novice leaders enhance emotional regulation, self-awareness, and communication, all of which are critical for effective leadership and interpersonal influence.

- Building Autonomy in Leadership (SDT) (P)

  Coaching supports autonomous decision-making by helping leaders develop a sense of ownership over their roles, align with intrinsic motivation, and operate with increasing independence from external validation.

- Evolving Coaching Focus Over Time (SDT, EQ) (P)

  Coaching engagements evolve from practical, operational guidance to more reflective and strategic dialogue. This shift helps novice leaders move from reactive problem-solving to proactive, values-aligned decision-making.

- Integrating Coaching Strategies into Daily Leadership Practices (EQ, SDT) (P)

  Leaders apply feedback, emotional intelligence techniques, and self-regulatory

frameworks developed in coaching to address day-to-day leadership challenges, reinforcing growth and effectiveness.

**Emotion Coding (E) – Capturing Leaders' Emotional Responses to Coaching**

- Confidence Building Through Coaching Support (EQ) (E)

  Leaders express growing confidence in decision-making and problem-solving as coaching provides a psychologically safe space for feedback, reflection, and guided development.
- Emotional Stress and Leadership Ambiguity (EQ, SDT) (E)

  Novice leaders report experiencing stress, self-doubt, and imposter syndrome, often tied to unclear expectations and a lack of leadership identity clarity during transition periods.
- Trust and Relational Security in Coaching (EQ, SDT) (E)

  Coaching is perceived as most effective when it fosters relational safety and trust, allowing leaders to explore vulnerabilities and confront internal barriers to growth.
- Frustration with Unstructured Leadership Development (SDT) (E)

  Leaders express concern over the lack of structured onboarding or development pathways, reinforcing coaching as a vital tool for adaptive learning and goal-setting.
- Relief from Coaching as a Supportive Mechanism (EQ) (E)

  Participants describe coaching as a stress-relieving intervention that enhances emotional regulation, resilience, and coping capacity amidst leadership demands.

**Values Coding (V) – Identifying Leadership Beliefs & Perceptions of Coaching**

- Perceived Value of Coaching for Leadership Growth (EQ, SDT) (V)

  Leaders view coaching as instrumental in aligning personal values with leadership actions, enhancing authenticity, and supporting consistent, principle-based decision-making.

- Ethical and Transparent Leadership Development (EQ) (V)

  Coaching is credited with reinforcing ethical awareness, self-reflection, and relational transparency, which leaders perceive as foundational to trust-building and team cohesion.

- Commitment to Self-Reflection and Growth (SDT, EQ) (V)

  Novice leaders express a strong desire for continuous development and view coaching as a long-term investment in personal and professional growth.

- Belief in the Long-Term Benefits of Coaching (SDT) (V)

  Participants emphasize that coaching should not be confined to onboarding, but should be viewed as an ongoing resource that supports leadership adaptation over time.

- Alignment of Personal Values with Leadership Responsibilities (SDT, EQ) (V)

  Leaders describe coaching as instrumental in reconciling personal values with organizational expectations, ultimately fostering congruence in decision-making and leadership style.

**Themes**

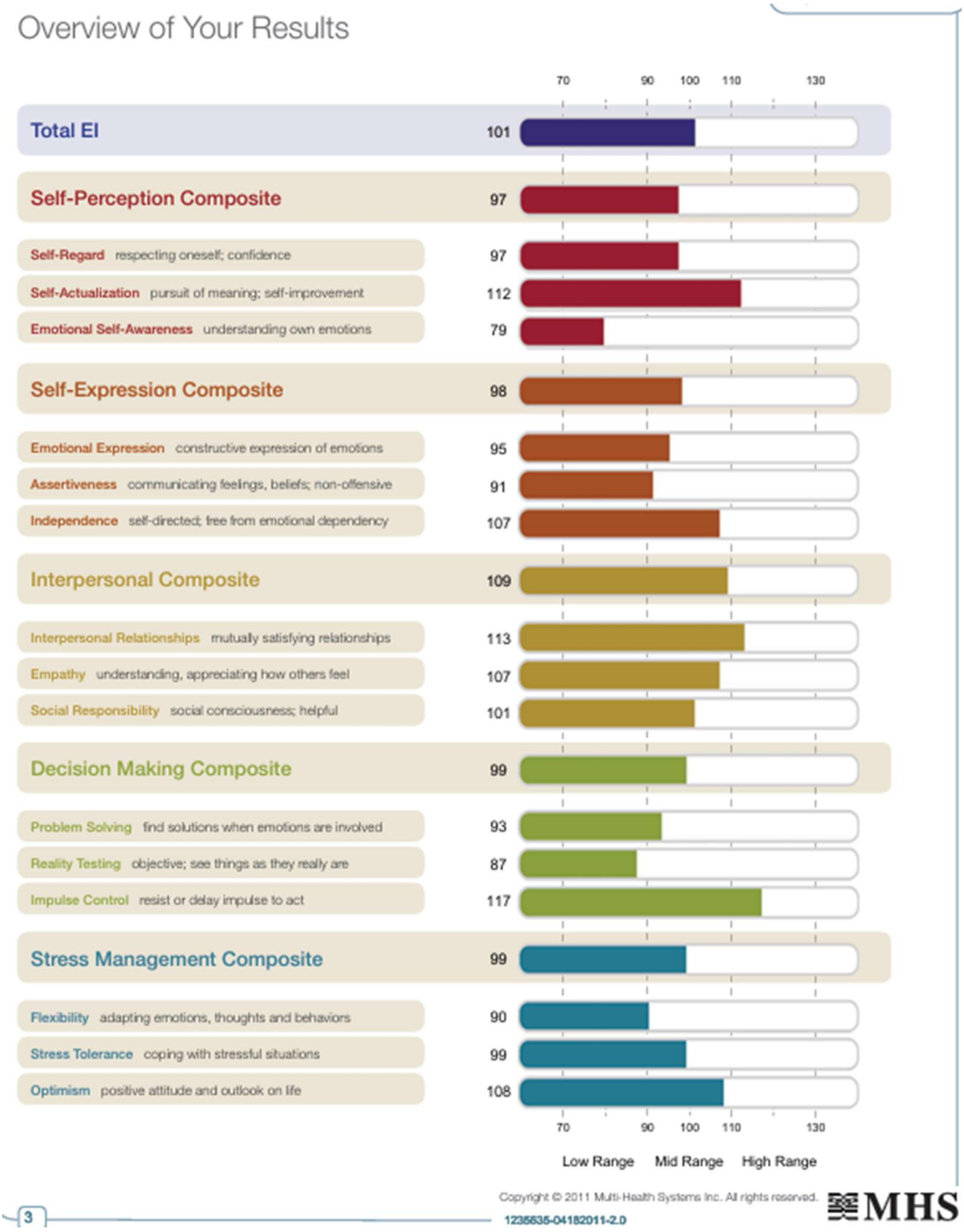
1. *Autonomy in Leadership* – Novice leaders experience different levels of decision-making freedom, shaping their leadership confidence and effectiveness.
2. *Building Competence* – Leaders struggle with trusting their abilities but grow through structured feedback, coaching, and self-reflection.

3. *The Power of Relationships* – Trust within teams and with supervisors impacts leadership success and the ability to influence others.
4. *Resilience in the Face of Resistance* – Leaders face challenges such as burnout, change resistance, and stress, requiring emotional regulation and adaptive strategies.
5. *Navigating Motivation and Purpose* – Leaders sustain their drive by reconnecting with core values, focusing on mission-driven leadership, and seeking professional growth.

# APPENDIX E:

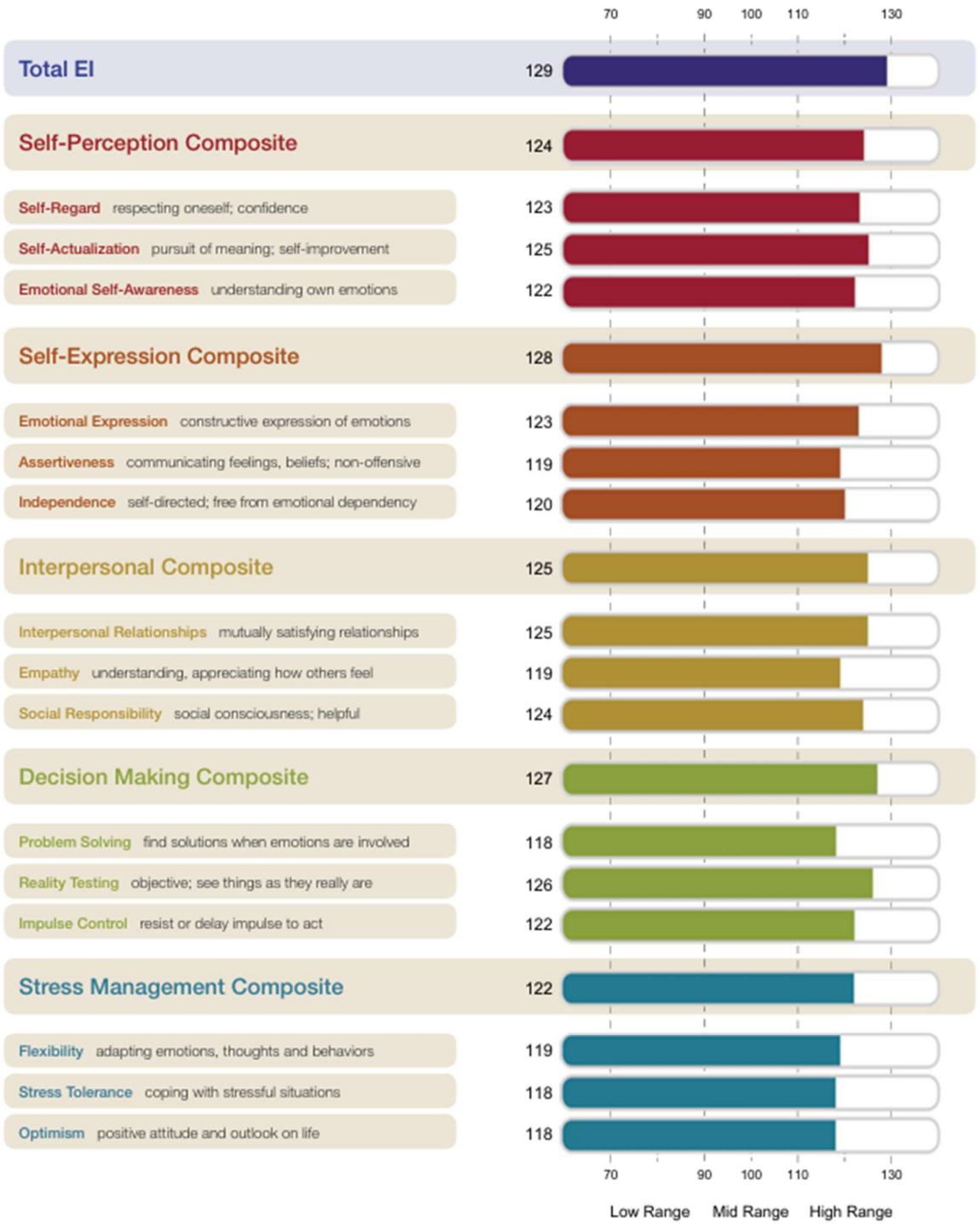
## Leaders EQi 2.0 Pre-Post Scores

### Leader A-A Pre



**Leader A-A Post**

## Overview of Your Results



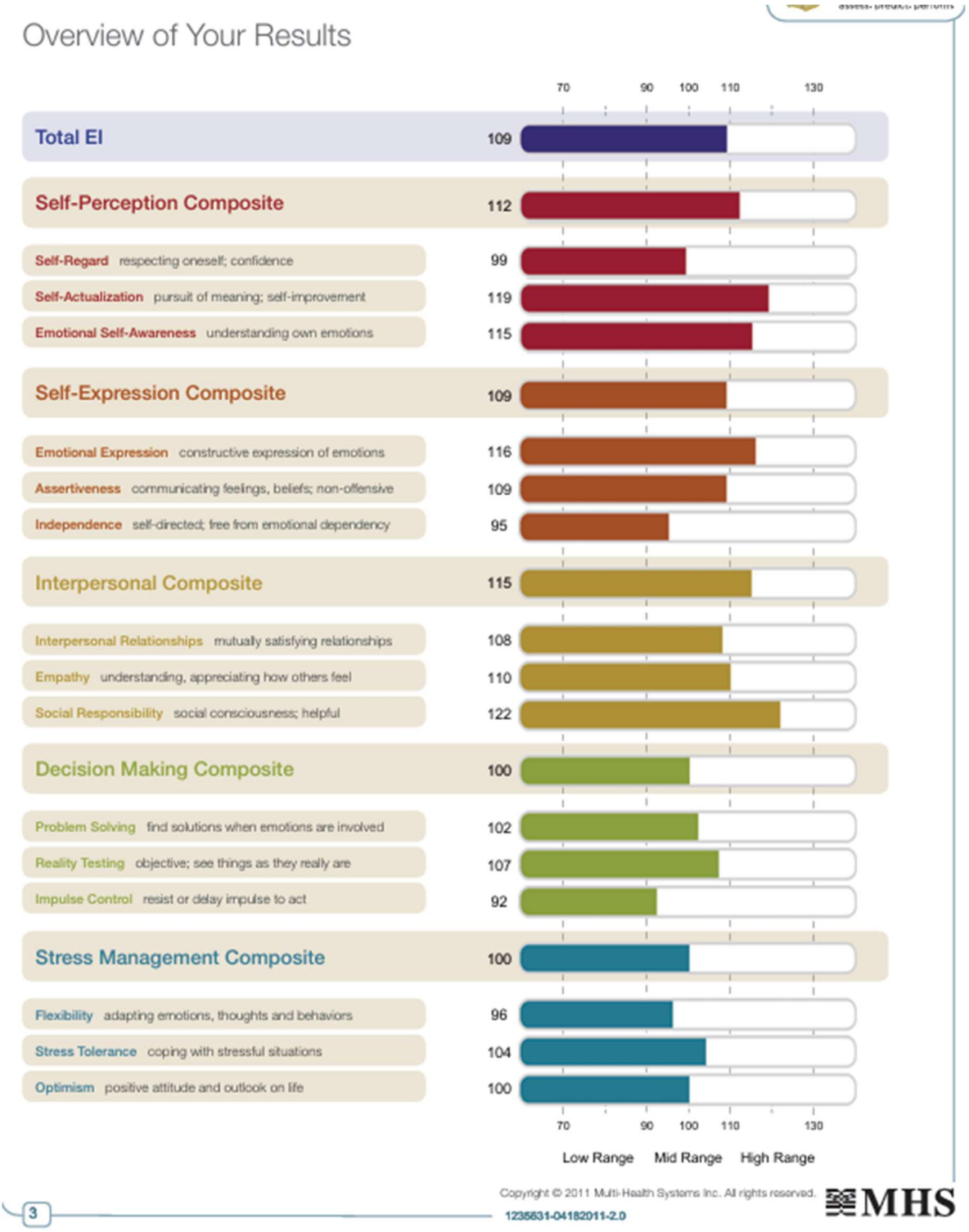

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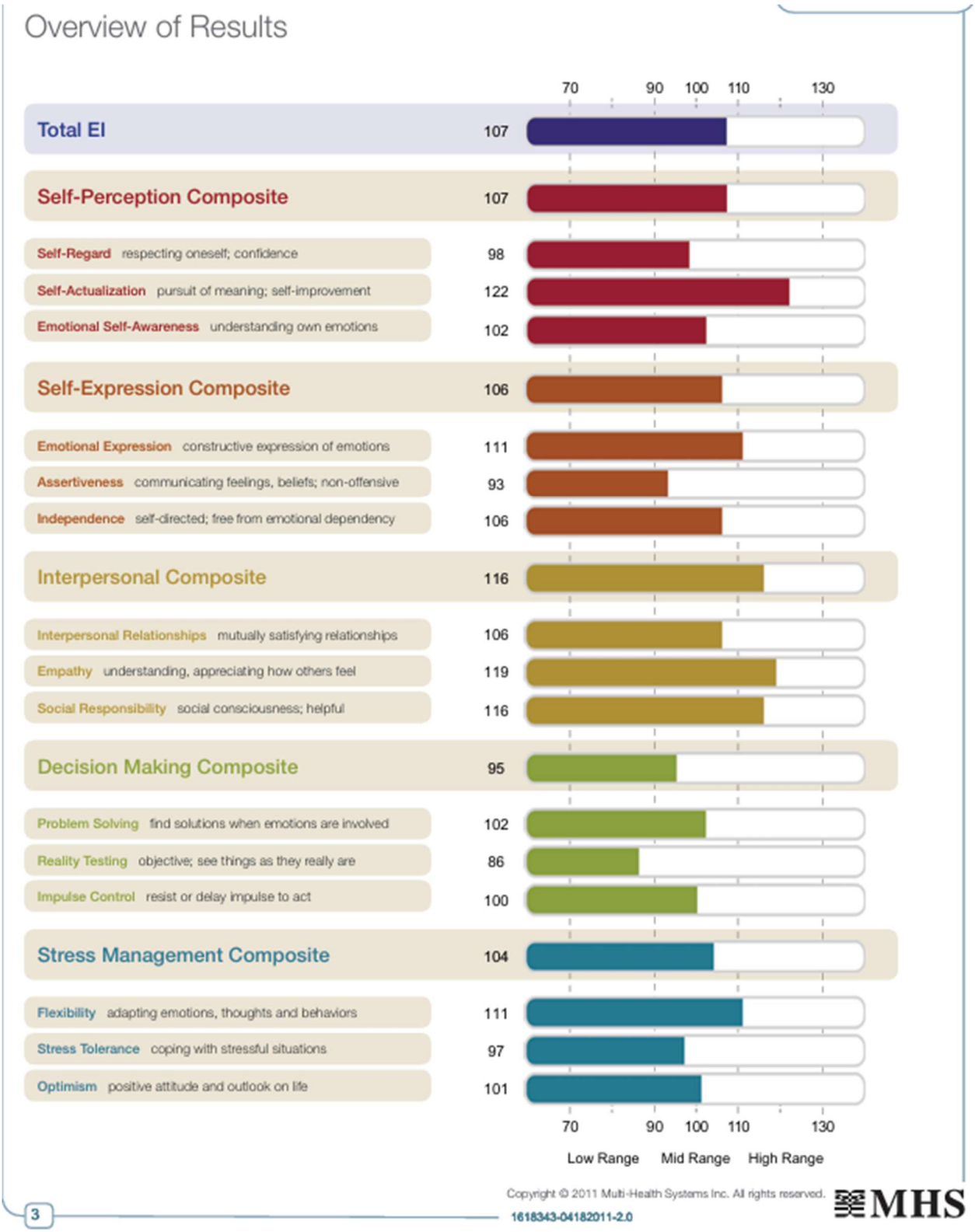
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**Leader A-B Pre**

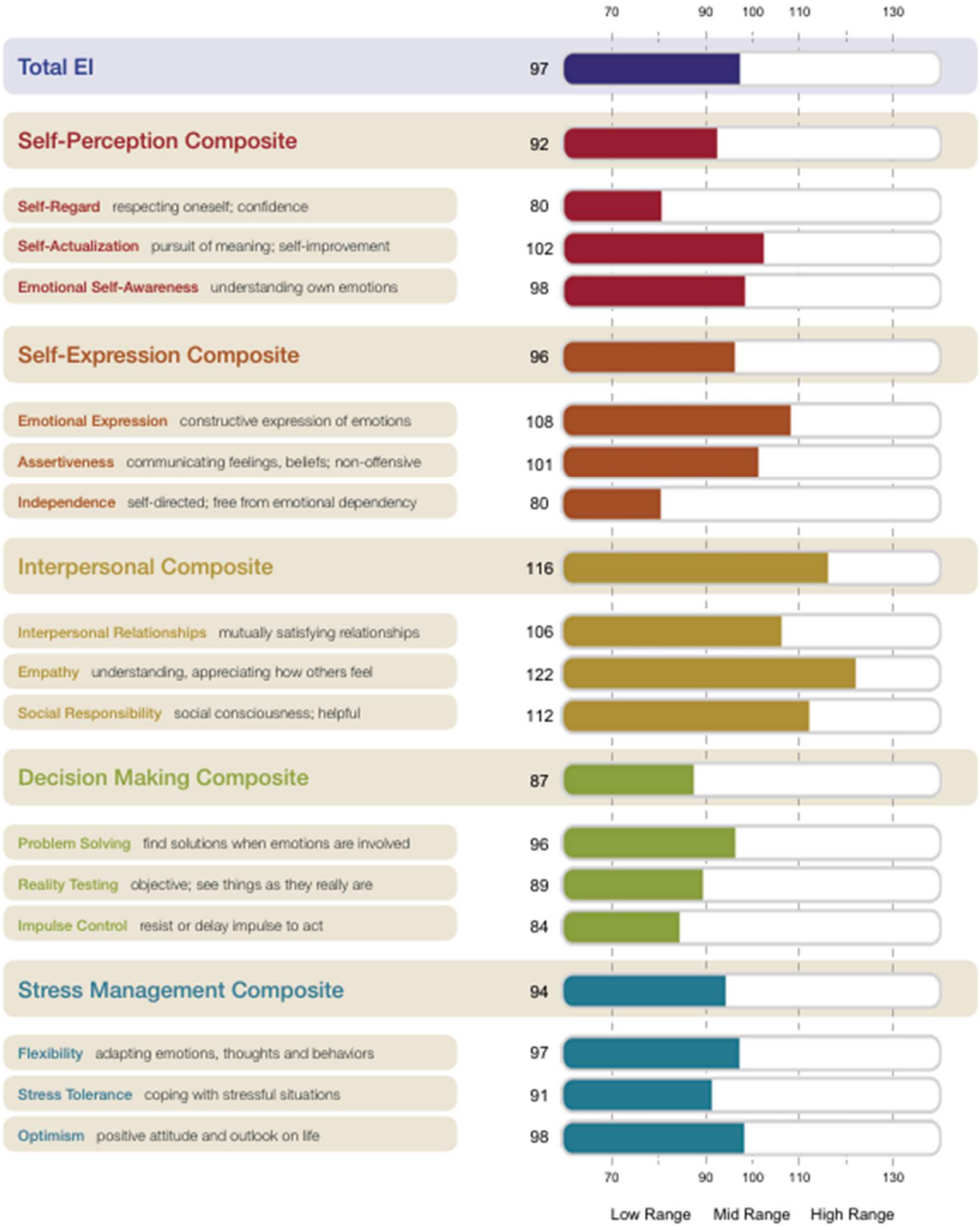


**Leader A-B Post**



**Leader B-A Pre**

## Overview of Your Results



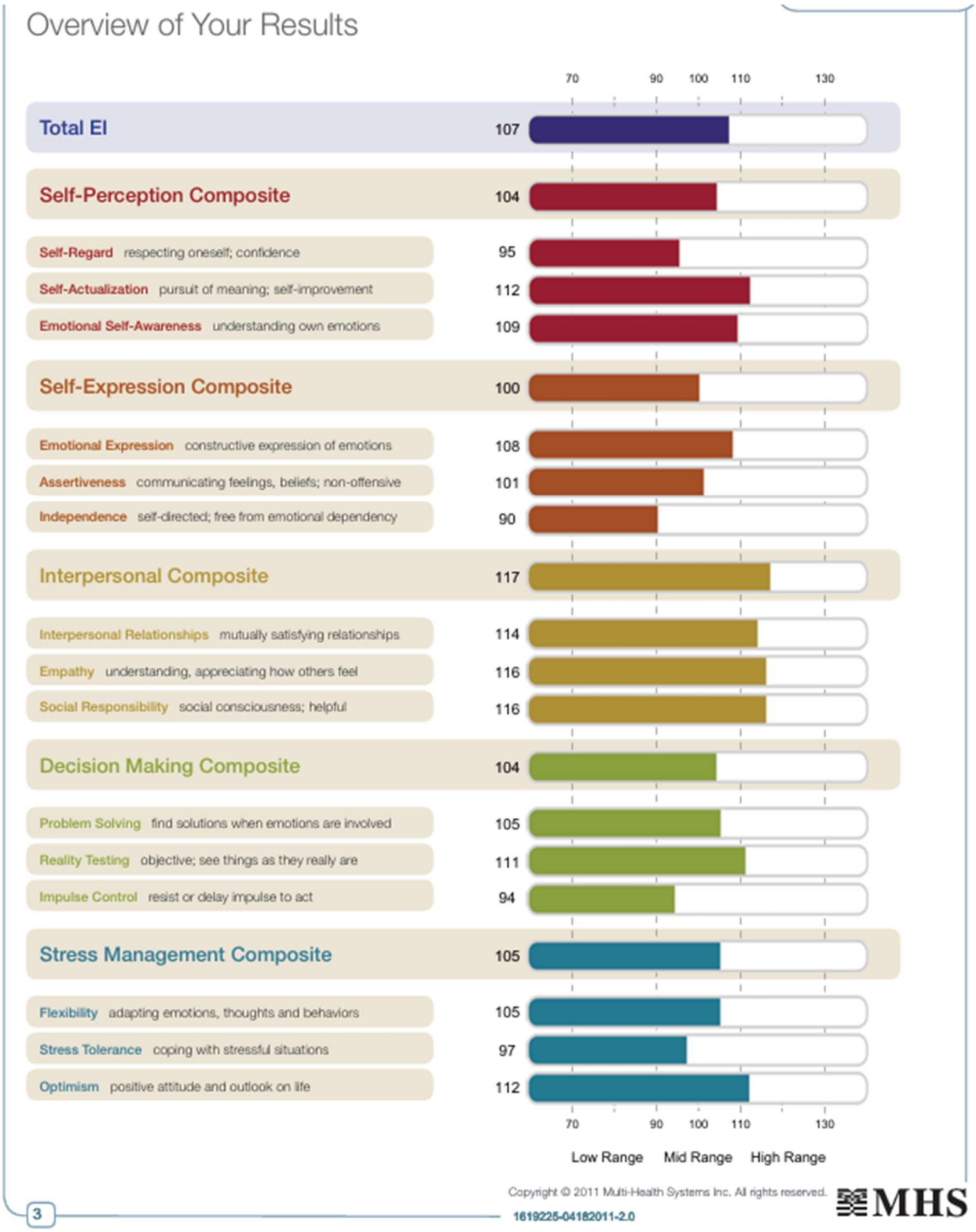

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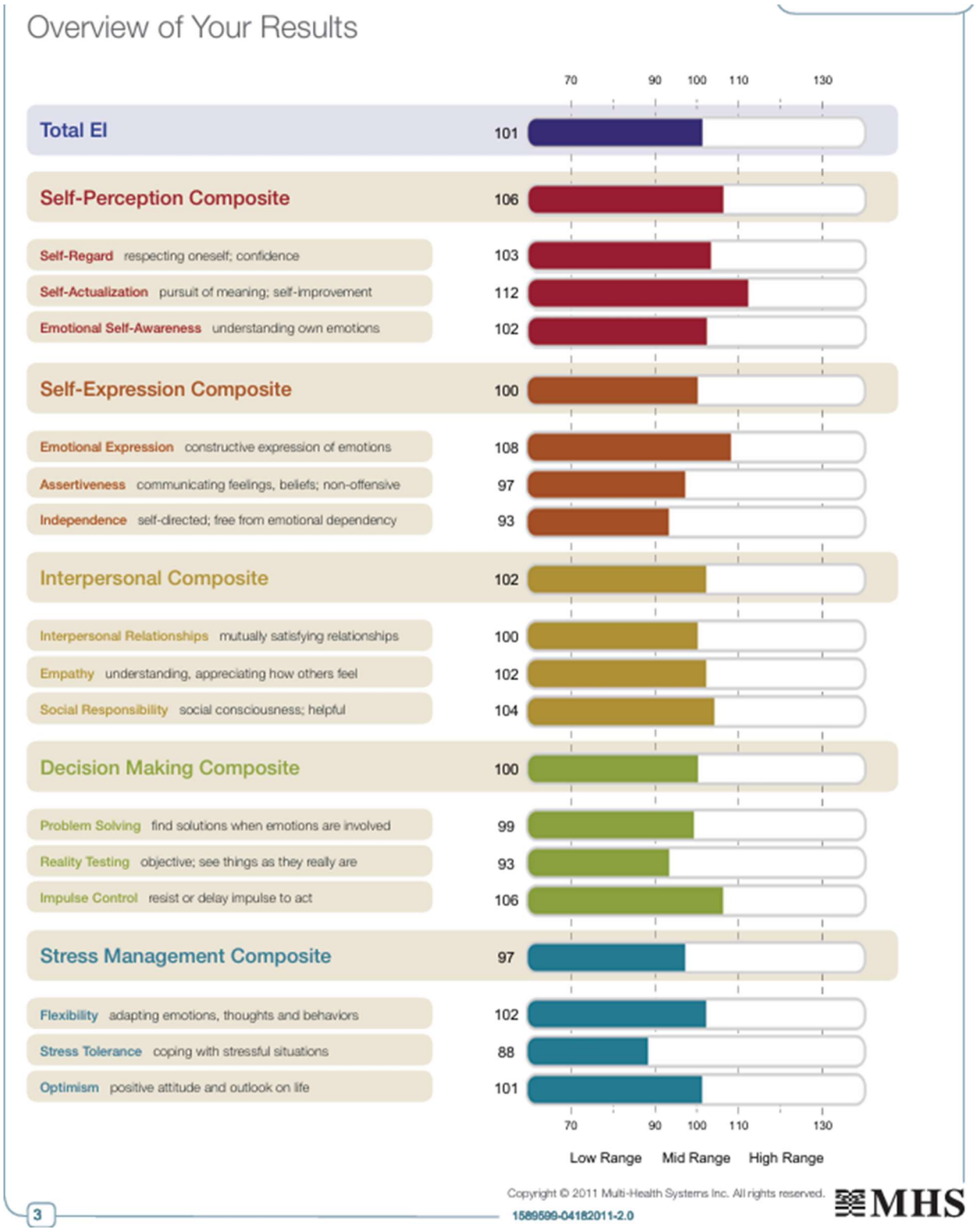
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**Leader B-A Post**

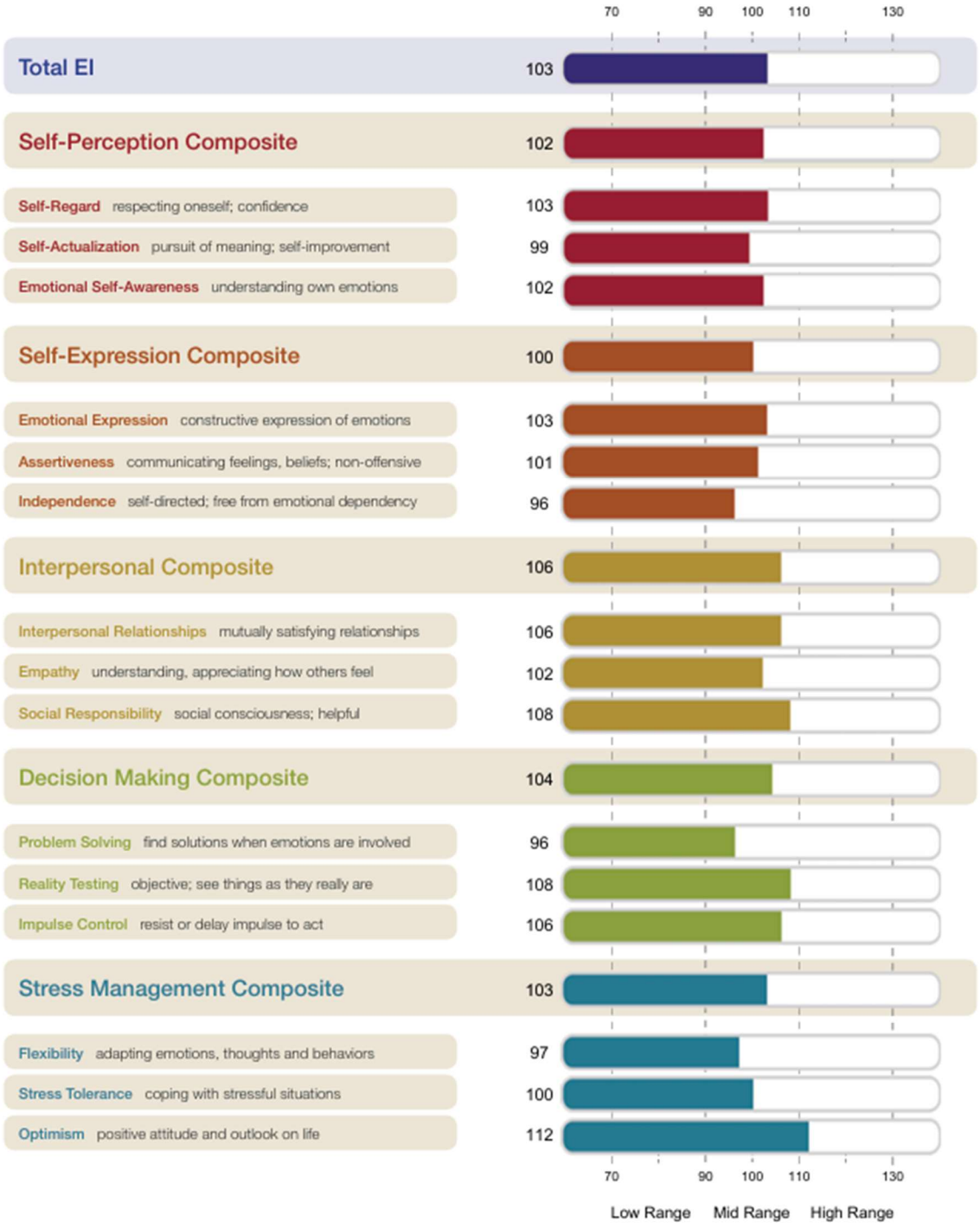


**Leader B-B Pre**



**Leader B-B Post**

## Overview of Your Results




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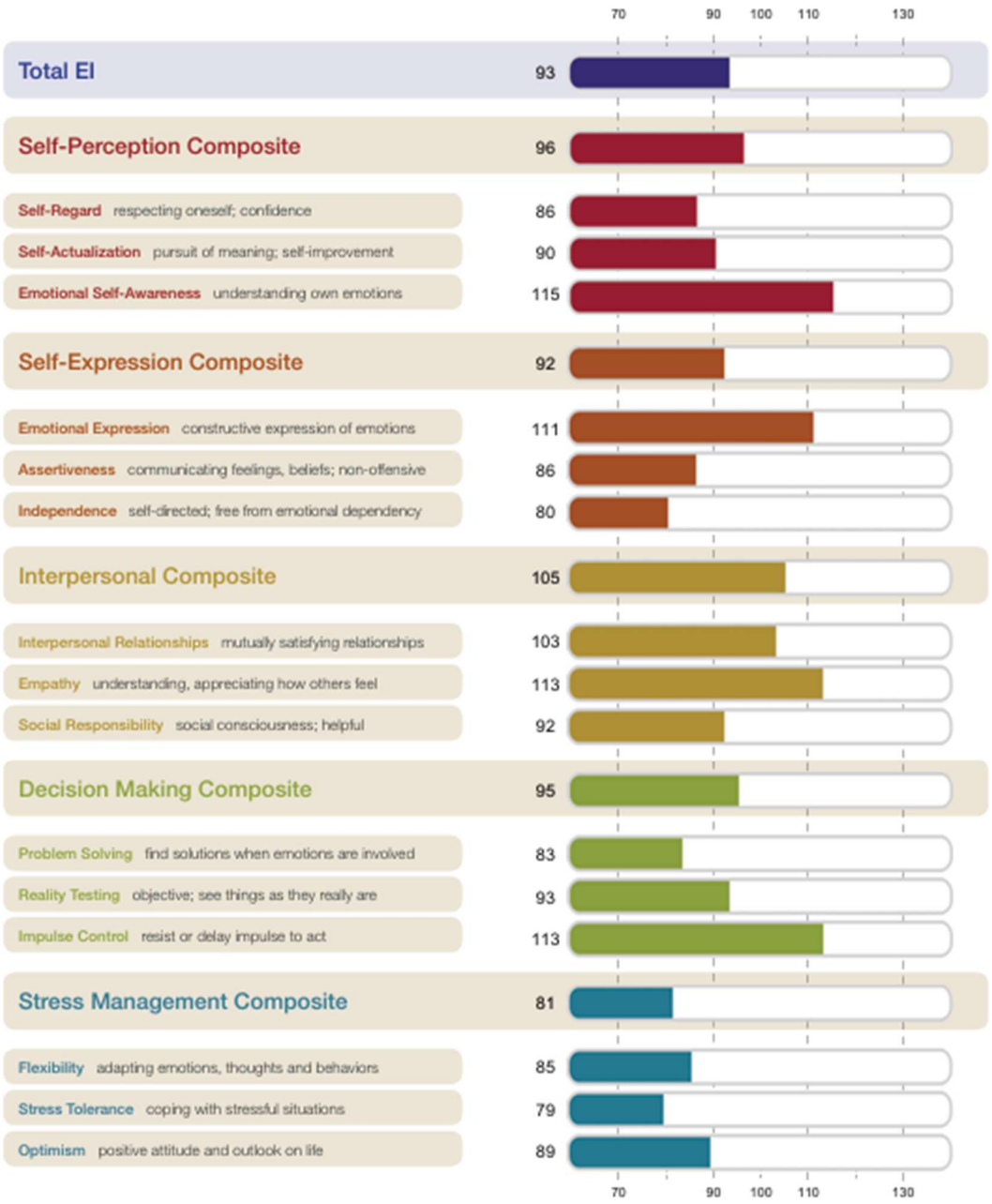


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**Leader C-A Pre**

## Overview of Your Results



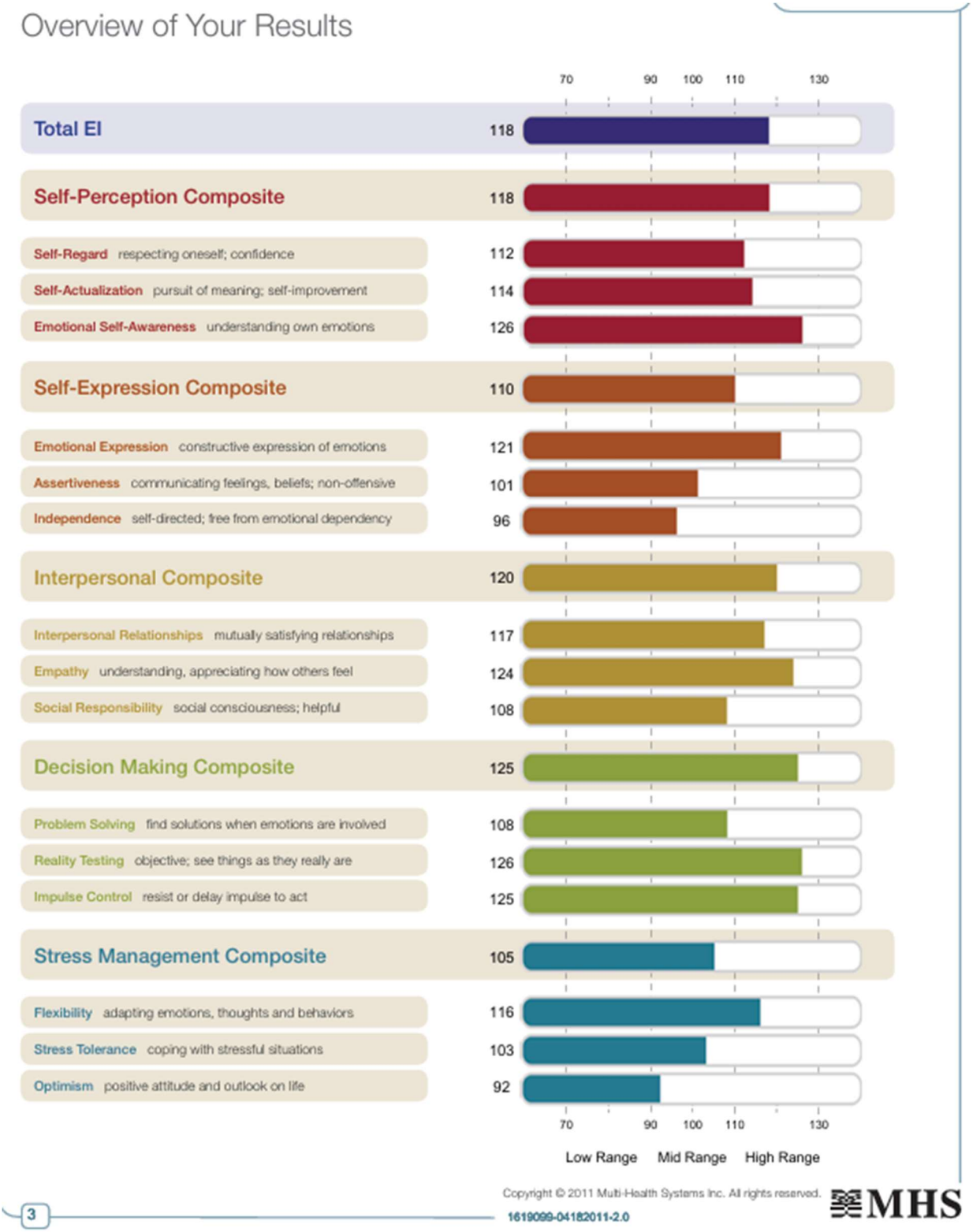

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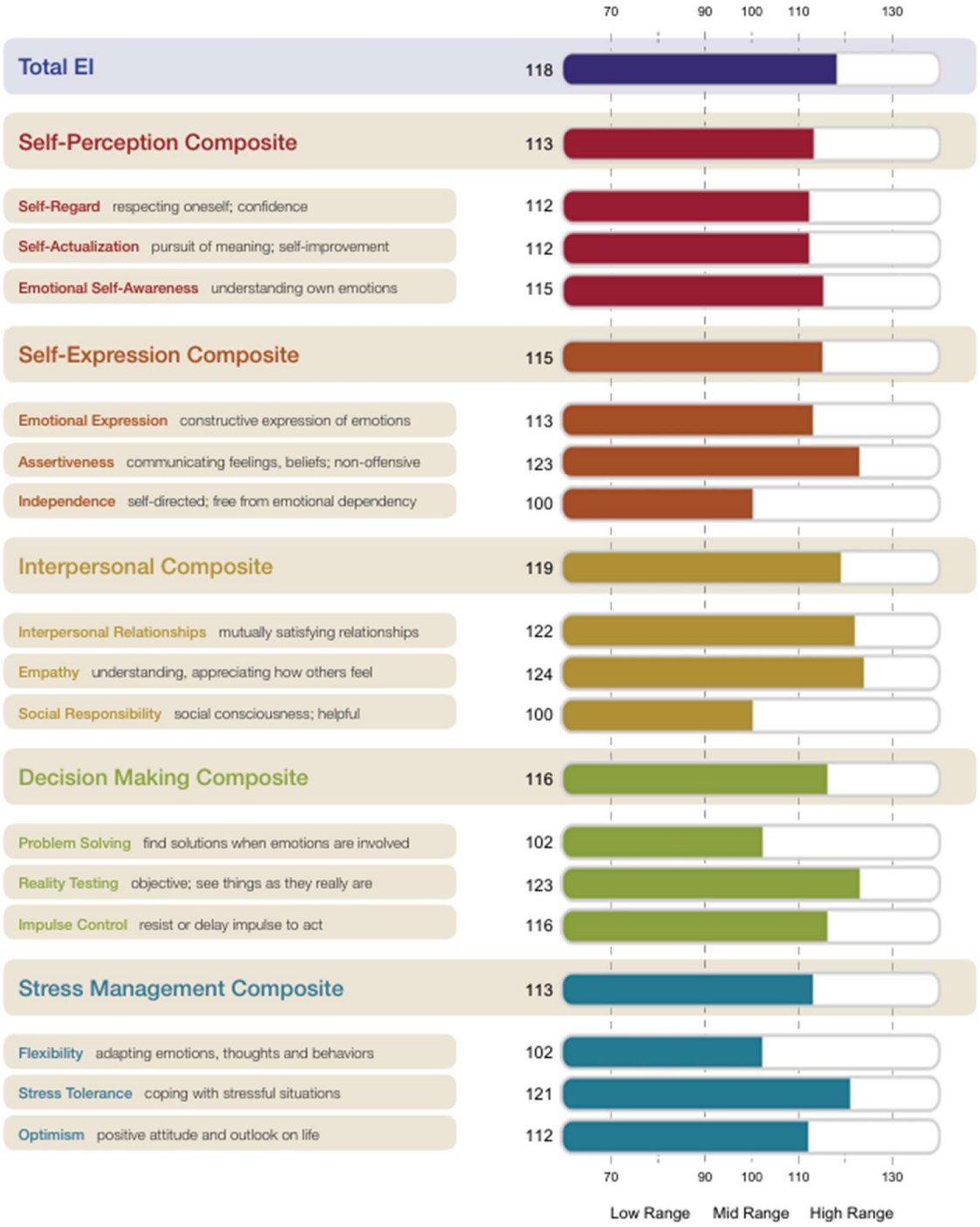
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**Leader C-A Post**



**Leader C-B Pre**

## Overview of Your Results



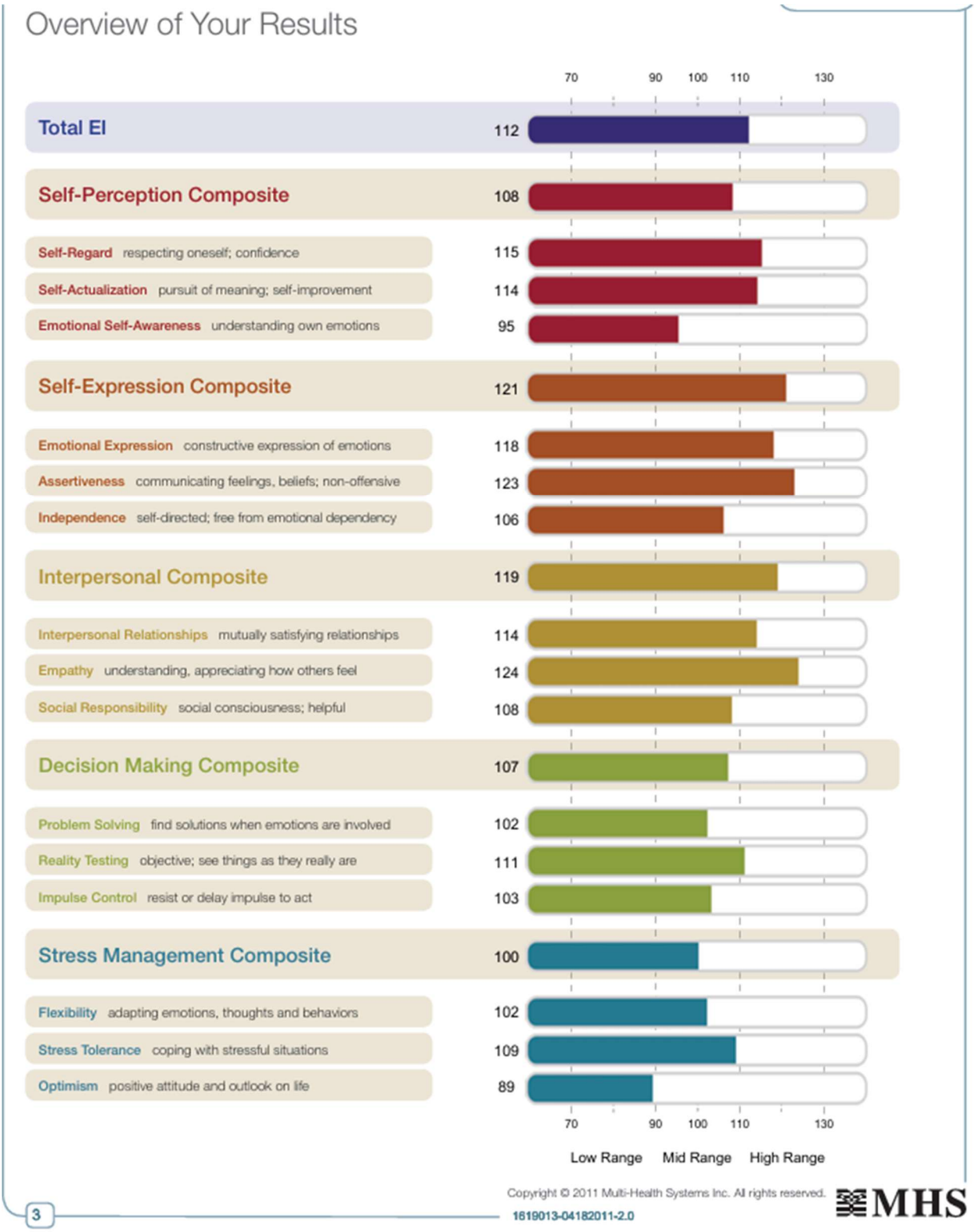

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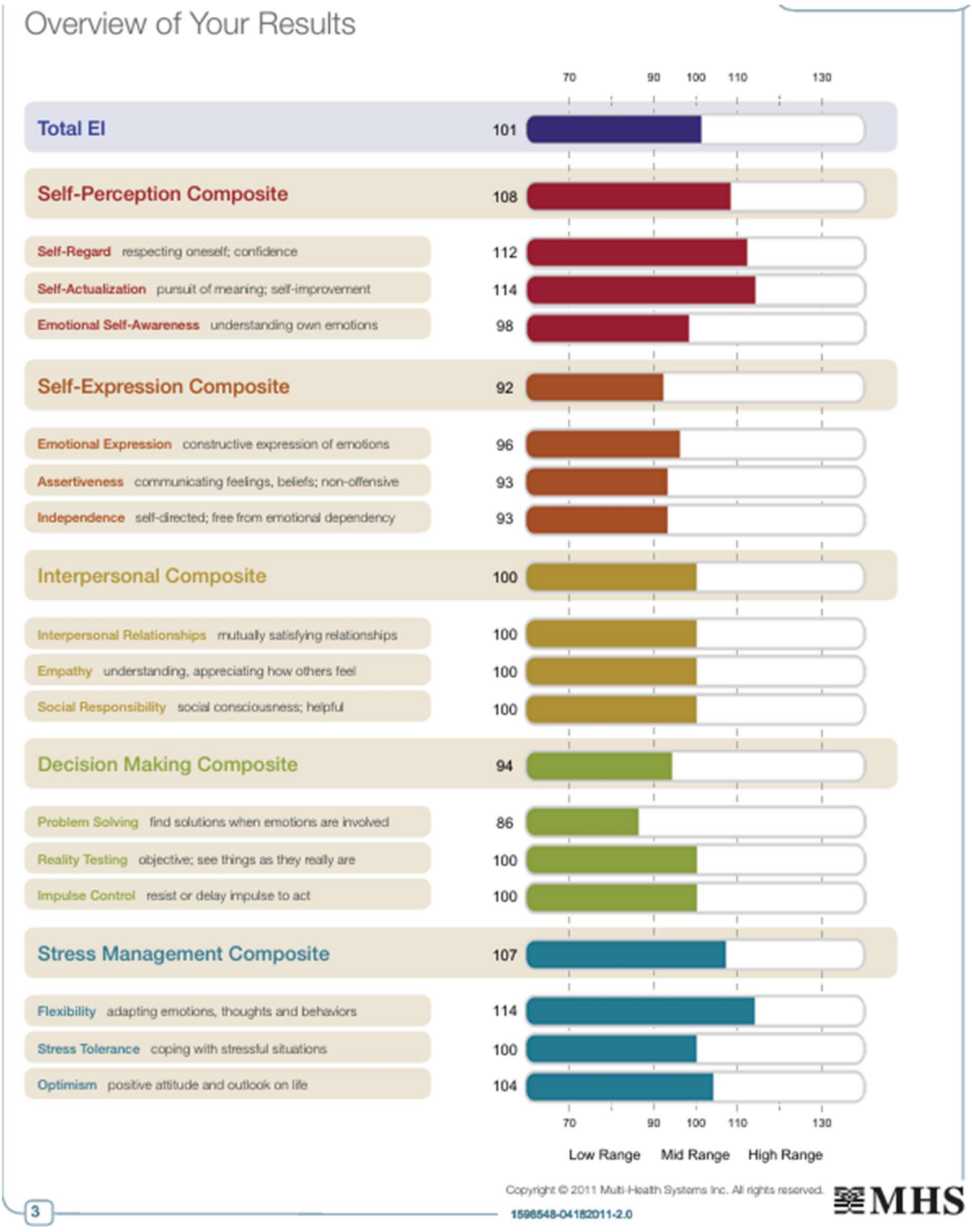
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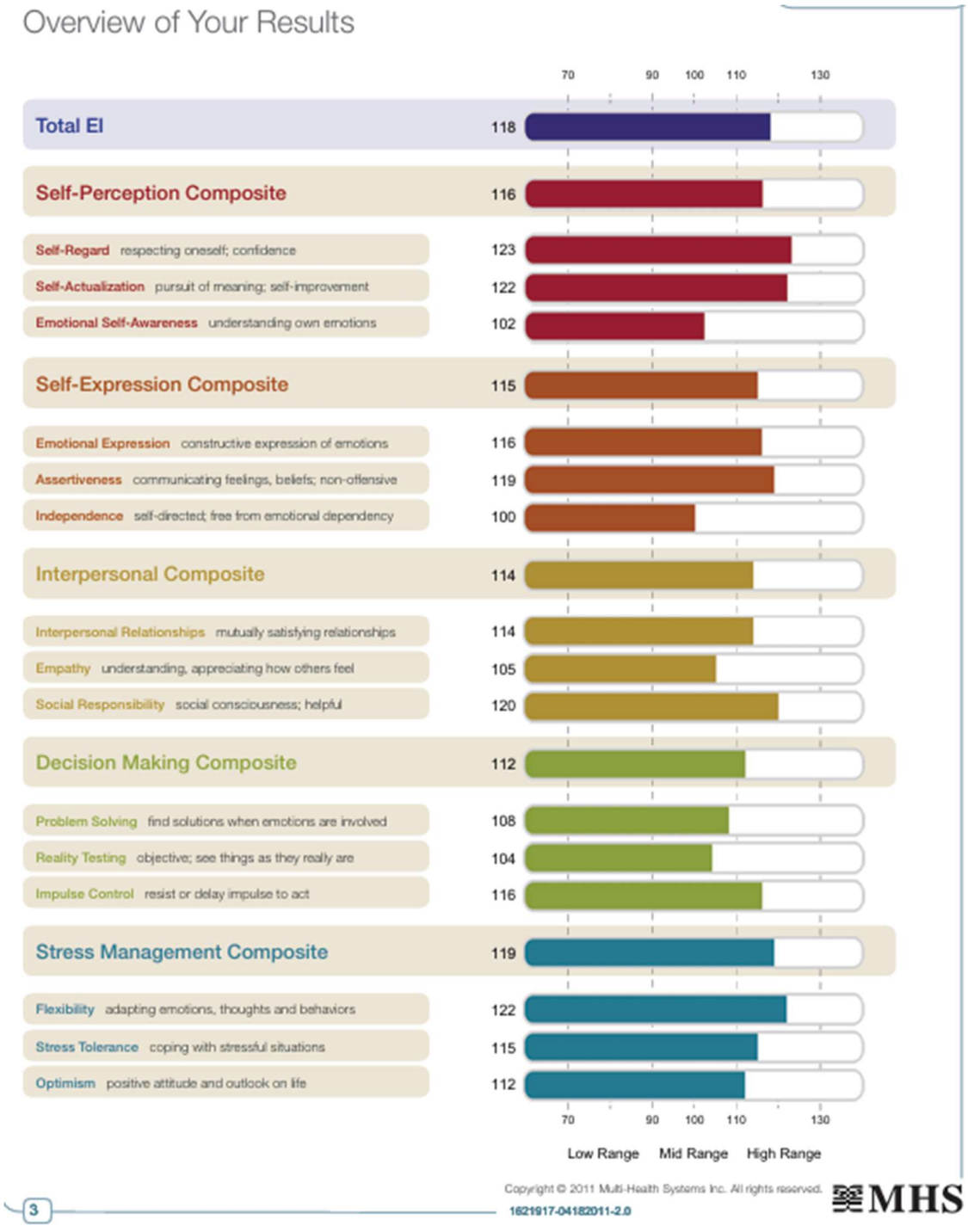
**Leader C-B Post**



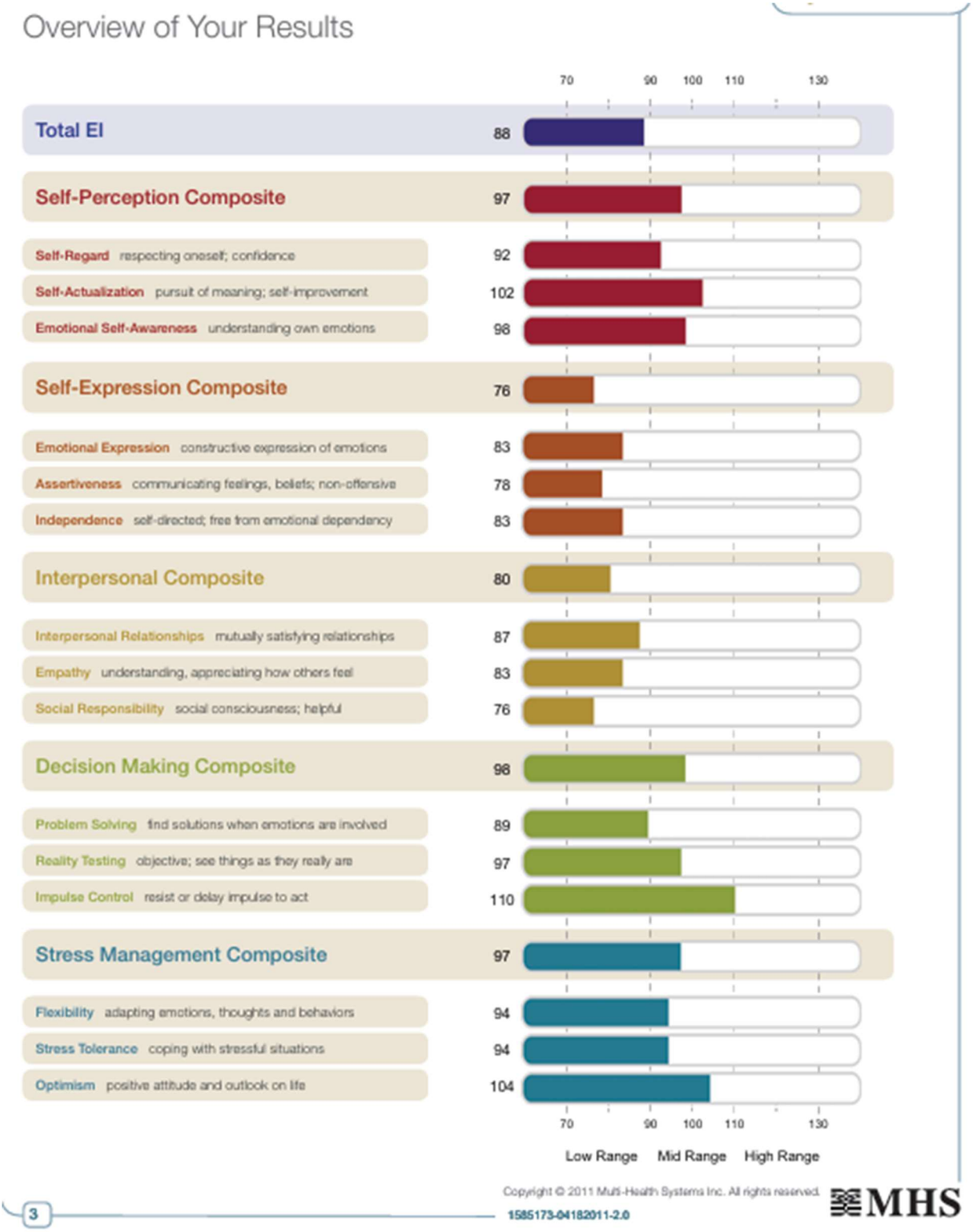
**Leader D-A Pre**



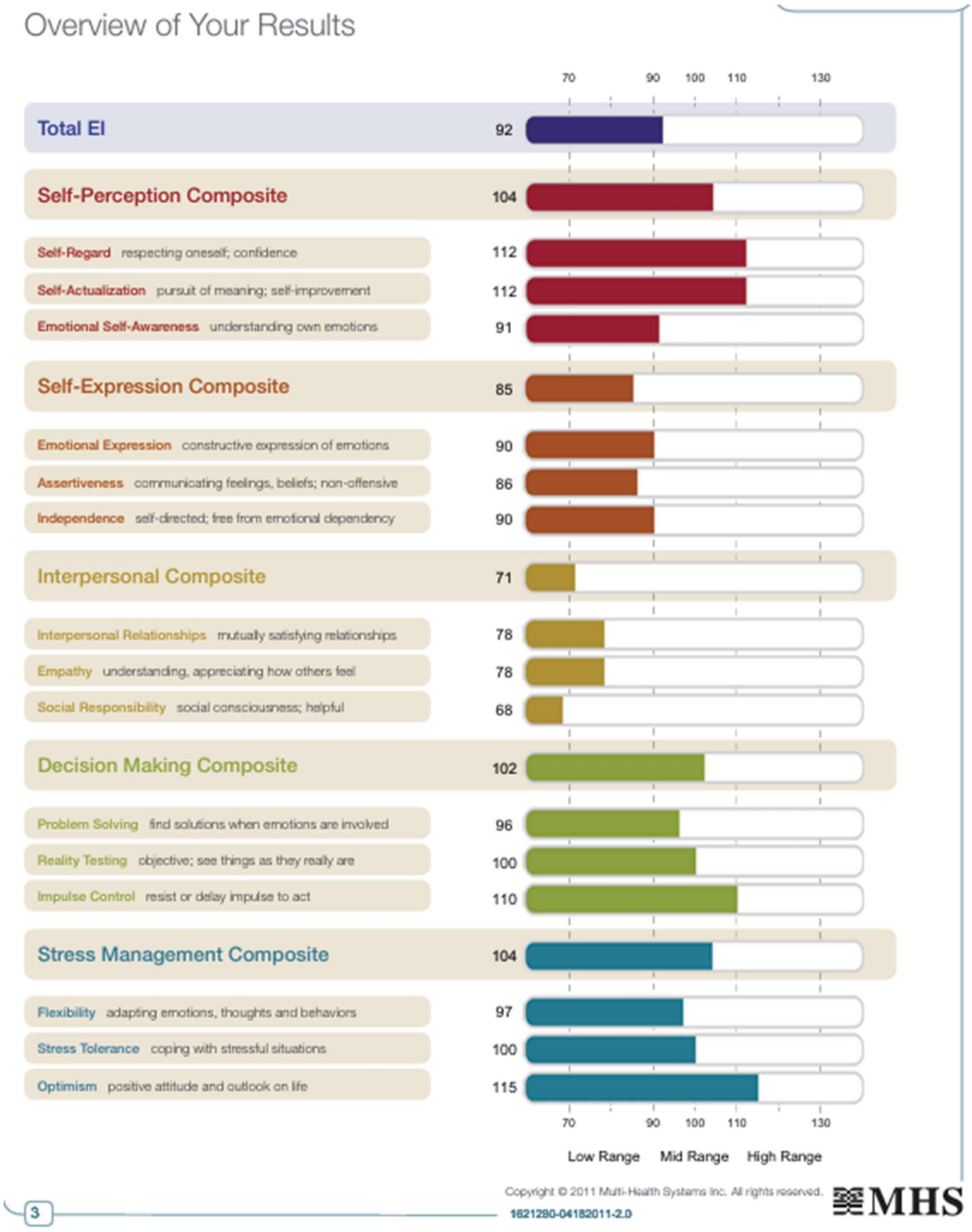
**Leader D-A Post**



**Leader D-B Pre**



**D-B Post**


Overview of Your Results
70
90
100
110
130
Total EI
92
Self-Perception Composite
104
Self-Regard respecting oneself; confidence
112
Self-Actualization pursuit of meaning; self-improvement
112
Emotional Self-Awareness understanding own emotions
91
Self-Expression Composite
85
Emotional Expression constructive expression of emotions
90
Assertiveness communicating feelings, beliefs; non-offensive
86
Independence self-directed; free from emotional dependency
90
Interpersonal Composite
71
Interpersonal Relationships mutually satisfying relationships
78
Empathy understanding, appreciating how others feel
78
Social Responsibility social consciousness; helpful
68
Decision Making Composite
102
Problem Solving find solutions when emotions are involved
96
Reality Testing objective; see things as they really are
100
Impulse Control resist or delay impulse to act
110
Stress Management Composite
104
Flexibility adapting emotions, thoughts and behaviors
97
Stress Tolerance coping with stressful situations
100
Optimism positive attitude and outlook on life
115
70
90
100
110
130
Low Range
Mid Range
High Range
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3

# APPENDIX F: IRB Closure Letter

The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

**Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects**

**Final Report – Inactivation**

**Date:** November 06, 2025

**To:** Justin Carlton

**IRB#:** 17978

**Study Title:** Examining how executive leadership coaching influences novice leaders' leadership development across various industries, considering the interplay of Self-Determination Theory, Emotional Intelligence, and Transformational Leadership.

**Inactivation Date:** 11/06/2025

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed the Final Report for the above-referenced research study. You have indicated that this study has been completed and should be inactivated. This letter is to confirm that the IRB has inactivated this research study as of the date indicated above.

Note that this action completely terminates all aspects and arms of this research study. Should you wish to reactivate this study, you will need to submit a new IRB application.

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the IRB at (405) 325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,



Lara Mayeux, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board