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An integrative literature review on the impact of life coaching on the quality of life and well-being.

Joanna Jarosz has an MA degree in economics from the University of Minnesota, holds an ACC credential with the International Coach Federation and is working toward completing her PhD. Joanna's primary research focuses on the theoretically grounded models of life coaching and their application in behavioral change.

Abstract

There is a continuous need for empirical evidence regarding the impact and experience. The demand on techniques, approaches and processes that increase quality of life and well-being is very high in general population. Enhancement of the quality of life, well-being, life experiences, and personal growth are inherent to life coaching, which explains rapid growth of the profession since it fully emerged in the 1990s. The evidence that life coaching can positively impact quality of life and well-being is continuously growing, although still limited. This integrative literature review synthesizes findings of previous studies and articles about the impact of life coaching on quality of life and well-being.

Key words:

Happiness
Life Coaching
Life Satisfaction
Quality of Life
Well-Being

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Introduction

Since life coaching emerged as a profession 20 years ago, it has been helping individuals, businesses and organizations achieve more, both on a personal and professional level (Nixon-Witt, 2008). According to a Global Coaching Study (International Coach Federation [ICF], 2012), there are currently nearly 50,000 life coaches worldwide and the industry generates an annual revenue of \$1.979 billion globally. Grant and O'Hara (2006) describe life coaching as a cross-disciplinary profession with emphasis on personal functioning, well-being and goal attainment. Spence and Grant (2007) claim that due to its goal-oriented approach, life coaching is capable of enhancing well-being. It is therefore not surprising that life coaching has been used by people who want to efficiently reach their goals (Grant & Greene, 2001) and improve their well-being (Fortgang, 1998; Naughton, 2002).

Life coaching process can provide numerous benefits in many different areas of the client's life. There is growing - although still limited - evidence that life coaching can increase well-being (Leach et al., 2011) and quality of life (Frisch, 2013). Quality of life and well-being are important individual, social and economic variables, which is reflected in social research (Prescott, 2010). However, an accepted uniform definition of either quality of life or well-being does not currently exist. Both concepts are vague, difficult to define and used with very little consistency. Presently, there are multiple definitions and interpretations of quality of life (Haas 1999). There is a lot of confusion about what exactly quality of life is, what contributes to quality of life, what are the attributes of the quality of life and what are the outcomes of quality of life (Hagerty et al., 2001).

The World Health Organisation (1995) defines quality of life as 'individuals' perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns'. Meeberg (1993) recognizes the following attributes of quality of life: a general feeling of satisfaction; the ability to rate one's life as satisfactory; accepting one's state of physical, emotional, mental, and social health; and positive objective assessment of one's living conditions. Naess (1999) on the other hand, suggests a more subjective approach and defines quality of life as more of an individual's perception of how well she or he lives. Bonomi et al. (2000) also claims that the nature of quality of life is subjective and the concept itself is multidimensional emphasizing current self-perceptions of an individual. Theofilou (2013) suggests that the concept of quality of life is related to how an individual evaluates multiple aspects of their life - emotional reactions to life occurrences, sense of fulfillment, satisfaction with life, work environment and personal relationships.

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The World Health Organization defines well-being as the presence of 'a state in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community' (WHO, 2004). Ryan & Deci (2001) relate well-being to 'optimal psychological functioning and experience'. Various categories of well-being exist in the scientific literature: subjective well-being, emotional well-being, psychological well-being, and social well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Ryan & Deci, 2001). None of them have a clearly stated definition and they may all include different sub-categories or concepts. Subjective well-being, for example, has been related to happiness, life satisfaction, presence of positive mood and absence of negative mood (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Psychological well-being, on the other hand, may encompass six aspects: personal growth, autonomy, self-acceptance, life purpose, positive relatedness and mastery (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

Smith (1973) proposed a clear distinction between quality of life and well-being. He related well-being to objective life conditions of a general population, and limited quality of life to individuals' subjective assessments of their own lives. Today, however, this distinction is no longer to be found. Various concepts like 'quality of life', 'well-being', 'happiness', and 'life satisfaction' are used interchangeably in the literature (Meeberg, 1993). Moreover, Meeberg claims that well-being may contribute to as well as result from quality of life. Because of this confusion and lack of clear distinction between quality of life and well-being, it seems paramount to understand how those concepts are described and utilized in the literature on life coaching.

The objective of this study is to analyze the available scientific literature to evaluate the evidence on the influence that life coaching has on individual's quality of life and well-being. Three questions have been addressed in this review: (1) How is quality of life and well-being defined in the theoretical and empirical literature on life coaching? (2) What is the mechanism explaining potential improvement (or lack thereof) of individual's quality of life and well-being? (3) What results/effects in terms of quality of life and well-being following life coaching have been documented or suggested in the literature? By answering those questions this study aims at describing in significant depth how the coaching relationship can affect quality of life and well-being of coachees. Another objective is to help coaching practitioners understand the concepts of quality of life and well-being and the mechanism through which life coaching affects coachees in related areas. Analyzed results and effects in terms of quality of life and well-being provide empirical evidence that a coaching relationship can support

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coachees in making the necessary changes leading to increase in the quality of life and well-being.

Integrative Review Methodology

Integrative literature review has been chosen as a form of research to evaluate, critique and synthesize available literature in order to generate new knowledge on the impact of life coaching on the quality of life and well-being and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the proposed research topic.

An integrative literature review is a form of research that analyzes and synthesizes available literature on a topic in an integrated way which allows to generate new frameworks, perspectives and knowledge about the topic reviewed (Torraco, 2005). High quality integrative reviews reflect the state of the science, help develop a specific theory and propose an immediate application in a practical setting (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). Russell (2005) suggested that the methodology of integrative review should include 5 stages: (1) problem formulation, finding questions and hypotheses for the review, (2) data collection or literature search, (3) evaluation of data, describing characteristics of the studies and their findings (4) data analysis, and (5) interpretation and presentation of results. The integrative review summarizes both empirical and theoretical literature on a given topic and can 'incorporate diverse methodologies in order to capture the context, processes and subjective elements of the topic' (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005).

The Study Approach

The integrative literature review allows for the inclusion of diverse methodologies, experimental and non-experimental research, peer-reviewed and non peer-reviewed studies, theoretical and empirical literature in order to assure the most thorough understanding of a given topic (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005).

Sampling frame

Search of the literature included: multiple health- and behavior-related, psychological, educational and medical databases; International Coach Federation (ICF) website; and the available resources of the Life University library. The databases included: ScienceDirect, EBSCO, PubMed, Galileo, PsychINFO and CINAHL. Methodological search within International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring was also used as a strategy to retrieve past research. All issues available online were examined to find pertinent content.

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Search terms for articles included: life coaching, coaching, life coach, quality of life, and well-being. The following phrases were used to conduct search within all databases: life coaching AND quality of life, life coaching AND well-being, coaching AND quality of life, coaching AND well-being, life coach AND quality of life, life coach AND well-being. Additionally, the content of all publications within selected journal (International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring) was searched for: quality of life and well-being.

Ancestry search (search of references in relevant articles) and cross-reference was additionally used in order to retrieve more articles through examination of the reference lists of the articles already found.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The following inclusion criteria were used for search parameters: the studies had to be published in English, and pertain to life coaching and its impact on quality of life or well-being. Peer-reviewed as well as non peer-reviewed articles were included. Empirical as well as theoretical studies were included. Studies displaying opposite views or results were included. Articles that did not contain any elements relevant to life coaching and its impact on any aspect related to quality of life, well-being or their dimensions were excluded. After excluding irrelevant articles, there were seventy eight studies satisfying inclusion criteria used for the purpose of current integrative review: academic textbooks, articles from the journals and periodicals as well as various educational pieces. Additionally three papers were used to describe the theoretical framework of the integrative review. There were total of eighty one sources used in this study.

Although time frame was not set as one of the parameters of conducted search, the majority of sources utilized in this review - seventy three - were published or updated between 1993 and 2015.

Data evaluation

The final sample obtained in the literature search included diverse studies and study designs. All studies represented different quality of evidence, which ranged from low to high. High level of evidence can be assigned to peer-reviewed case series, randomized control trials or literature reviews. Low level of evidence can be assigned to non peer-reviewed literature, commentaries, or expert opinions. The quality of the literature was not a criterion relevant to this literature review. All evidence was analyzed with equal significance and no study was excluded based on its low quality to assure that the review integrates all available evidence and presents the most accurate and objective conclusions.

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Data Analysis

Data obtained in the search stage was diverse, complex and incorporated potentially numerous categories. The following elements of data analysis were used in order to extract categories for the review: noting patterns and themes, clustering, noting dependence/co-dependence between variables, finding intervening factors and building a logical chain of evidence. As advised by Whitemore and Knafel (2005) critical analysis of data was utilized in order to identify 'important and accurate patterns and themes' for the review.

Data analysis allowed identifying three categories, which became research questions for this review: (1) How is quality of life and well-being defined in the theoretical and empirical literature on life coaching? (2) What is the mechanism explaining potential improvement (or lack thereof) of individual's quality of life and well-being? (3) What results/effects in terms of quality of life and well-being following life coaching have been documented or suggested in the literature? Selective coding was performed as the final stage of data analysis in order to further describe and analyze the nature of the categories, and relationships of the concepts and variables identified in the data.

Findings

The objective of this section is to present findings obtained in data analysis stage on the posted research questions: (1) How is quality of life and well-being defined in the theoretical and empirical literature on life coaching? (2) What is the mechanism explaining potential improvement (or lack thereof) of individual's quality of life and well-being? (3) What results/effects in terms of quality of life and well-being following life coaching have been documented or suggested in the literature?

1. How is quality of life and well-being defined in the theoretical and empirical literature on life coaching?

Unfortunately none of the analyzed studies provides a clear explanation of quality of life or well-being and there are also a lot of discrepancies between certain aspects that are considered important for defining both concepts. It is vital to establish a unified definition of both quality of life and well-being as life coaching takes the ability to heal and well-being of its clients as given (Williams, 2003) and enhancement of the clients' quality of life is its primary objective (Hamlin et al., 2009). According to Green et al (2007) life coaching is an integrative process which helps people discover their core values, how to act on them and experience a better quality of life.

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Frisch (2013) used an approach called Quality of Life Therapy and Coaching. Its premise is to enhance happiness, well-being, and quality of life through an intervention which aims at fulfilling needs and goals in 16 values areas that are believed to improve well-being and happiness. According to Frisch (2013), popular definitions of the quality of life focus on certain areas of life that make life happy, enjoyable, and worthwhile. Following Danna and Griffin (1999), Easton and van Laar (2013) state that quality of life is influenced by factors related to general well-being and life satisfaction. They recognized the importance of needs as discussed by Maslow (1954), which include individual's health and safety, social and esteem aspects, economic and family issues, as well as self-actualization and aesthetics. In a similar way, Pearson et al. (2012) link quality of life and subjectively perceived well-being in the following four areas: somatic sensation; physical function; emotional state; and social interaction. Francis and Milner (2006) emphasize only one of the above mentioned aspects - wellness, which allows keeping a comfortable quality of life. Frisch (2013) on the other hand, suggests sixteen areas of life that together create well-being, happiness, and life satisfaction. Those are: health, self-esteem, goals-and-values, money, work, play, learning, creativity, helping, love, friends, children, relatives, home, neighborhood, and community (called the 'Sweet 16').

Following Ryan and Deci (2001), Green et al. (2006) describe well-being as 'optimal psychological functioning and experience' and distinguish two distinct types of well-being: subjective well-being (pertaining to happiness) and psychological well-being (pertaining to human potential). Leach et al. (2011) relate increased well-being to flourishing and suggest a range of characteristics to be included in the operational definition of these terms: positive emotions; positive relationships; optimism; engagement and interest; meaning and life purpose; self determination; self esteem; vitality; and resilience (Huppert & So, 2009; Leach et al., 2011). Leach et al. (2011) also recognize subjective well-being as a separate concept from psychological well-being. Subjective well-being is directly linked to life satisfaction: experiencing pleasure, having fun, how happy and satisfied an individual feels with his or her life and how good an individual feels about himself or herself (Diener et al., 1985; Leach et al., 2011). Psychological well-being, on the other hand, pertains to the meaning of life (Ryff, 1989).

The analyzed literature also mentions several concepts which seem to be very closely related to well-being or quality of life and have either a positive or a negative impact. Self esteem, for example, has been indicated by Pearson et al. (2012) as a vital component enhancing 'psychological well-being associated with quality of life'. Joseph and Linley (2005) indicate that individual's character strengths, life purpose, and

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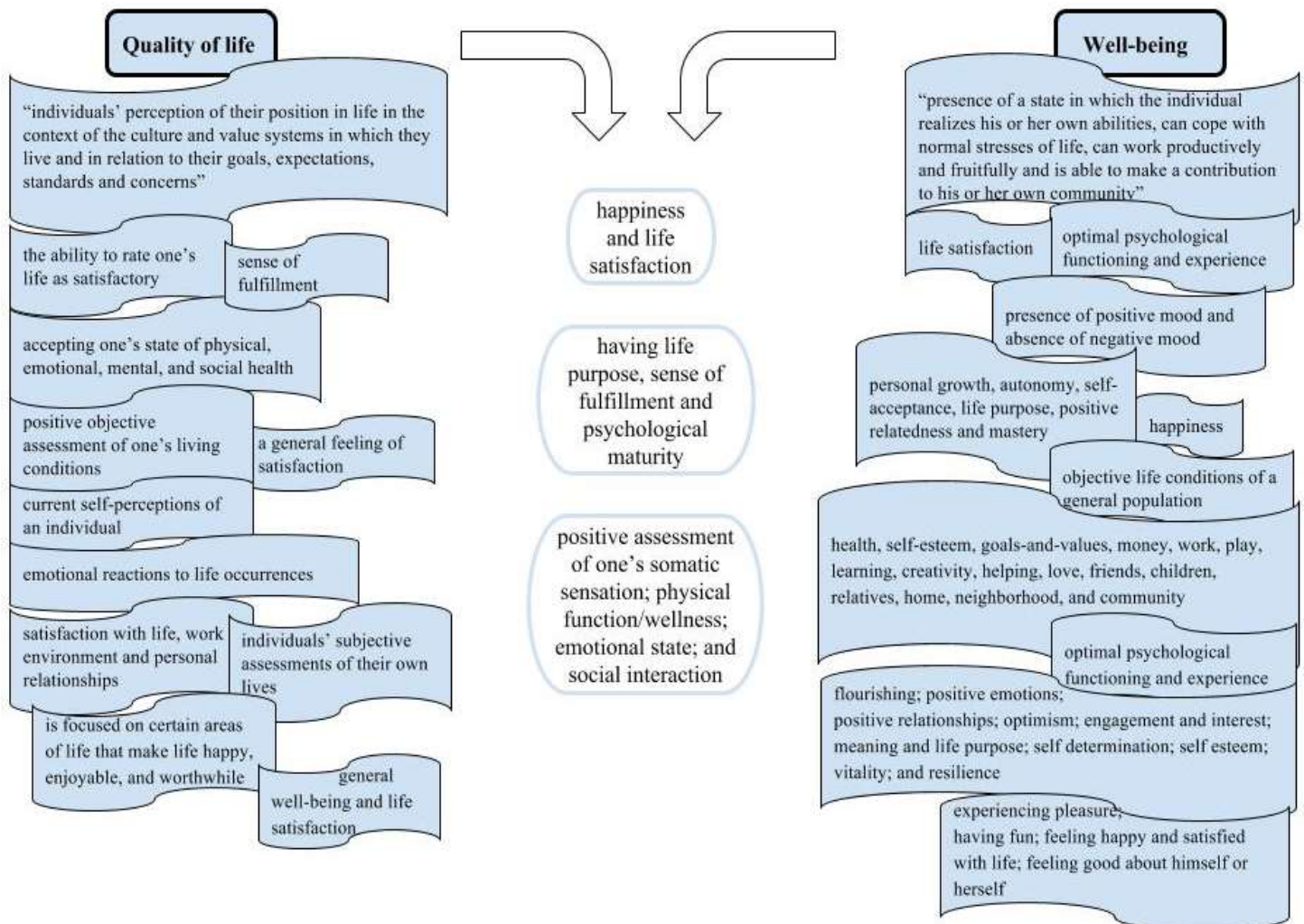
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psychological maturity are also related to psychological well-being. Other factors that can positively affect subjective well-being are related to goal attainment and subjective reasons behind pursuing certain goals (Spence & Grant, 2007; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). Progression towards important life goals has been associated with increased well-being (Sheldon et al., 2002; Green et al., 2006). According to Sheldon and Elliot (1999) well-being is higher when individuals pursue their goals out of autonomous reasons (interest, enjoyment, inspiration, etc), rather than controlled reasons (external rewards or obligation). Boniwell et al. (2014) point out that regret can negatively affect well-being since it has been associated with depression and anxiety (Roese et al., 2009).

The results of the above discussion on the quality of life and well-being as well as concepts introduced in the Introduction section of this study have been summarized in the flow chart below. The chart presents themes and interpretations of quality of life and well-being, definitions and various characteristics of the quality of life and well-being as well as the common aspects representing both. As indicated by the literature, common themes for both quality of life and well-being are: happiness and life satisfaction; having life purpose, sense of fulfillment and psychological maturity; positive assessment of one's somatic sensation, physical function/wellness; emotional state and social interaction.

Chart 1. Quality of life and well-being: interpretations and common themes.



2. What is the mechanism explaining potential improvement (or lack thereof) of individual’s quality of life and well-being?

One of the fundamental assumptions about life coaching is that the clients can identify and prioritize issues most important to them and therefore the agenda, choice of actions and desirable results all come from the clients (Whitworth et al., 2007; Williams & Davis, 2007). Life coaching is also designed to focus on the person’s whole life and to emphasize wellness rather than pathology (Williams & Davis, 2007). As stated by Bowen (2013), life coaches identify the clients’ strengths and weaknesses, and push their clients when needed in order to maximize their performance and increase their quality of life. Additionally, life coaches help their clients discover and choose more

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effective lifestyle, 'bridge the gap between thought and action' and make choices that enhance their quality of life and create well-being (Francis & Milner, 2006).

Another approach associates well-being and quality of life with *goal attainment*. Grant (2003) claims that life coaching can help individuals make successful and purposeful changes in their lives and reach their desired goals, which directly impacts their quality of life. According to Schneider et al. (2011), aspects of life-coaching that the clients appreciate the most are: SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timed) goal setting and efficient problem solving. Because life coaching examines the client's whole life and is focused on wellness, the benefits of life coaching affect the client's entire life and broaden life experience, which results in enhancement of well-being (Grant, 2003). It has been suggested that working towards achieving important life goals can be associated with enhanced well-being (Frisch, 2013; Green et al. 2006; Sheldon et al., 2002).

The results obtained by Leach et al. (2011) support the above proposition. The objective of life coaching approach described in their study is to enhance goal striving. It can be achieved by: (1) developing a positive future vision, (2) identifying desired results, (3) establishing specific goals, (4) enhancing motivation, (5) formulating action plans, (6) monitoring progress, and (7) modifying the action plans if needed. The approach implemented by Leach et al. (2011) also refers to the 'cycle' of self-regulated behaviors described by Grant (2003), which leads to successful behavior change and better goal attainment. As a consequence the clients experience 'enhanced sense of positive effect, purpose, meaning, control and connectedness', which results in increased subjective and psychological well-being (Leach et al., 2011).

Gordon-Bar (2014) emphasizes the importance of setting *intrinsic, meaningful goals*. She suggested that when an individual becomes more connected to his or her intrinsic meaningful goals, the self-efficacy and well-being increases. Life coaching provides the clients with a very unique framework in which: personal strengths and autonomous intrinsic motivations are continuously emphasized; clear, specific goals are formulated; actions towards outcome are discussed, encouraged and managed via self-regulation and cycles of feedback (Gordon-Bar, 2014). The process of life coaching with emphasis on an individual's goals has been in a similar way described by Rice (2007) with an addition of a *belief system*. According to Rice, an individual sets a goal ensuring that that goal is aligned with his or her values and then follows a positive 'belief system' necessary to achieve that goal.

According to Deci and Ryan (1985) attaining goals is the most efficient if the process uses strengths based on intrinsic needs and values. Use of one's strengths has been

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linked to increased well-being, quality of life, happiness, fulfillment, higher achievements and resilience (Curtis & Kelly, 2013; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Govindji & Linley, 2007; Linley et al., 2010). Clifford (2011) suggested that individuals who focus on their strengths are more likely to have a high quality of life in general. People who use their strengths tend to achieve their goals more effectively (Linley et al., 2010). As suggested by Williams (2003), when clients feel empowered and discover what they can do (as opposed to what they can't do), their quality of life increases.

In their study on coaching with self-determination, Spence and Oades (2011) suggested that *Self-Determination Theory* may provide an explanation of how coaching might increase well-being. The objective of life coaching approach that uses Self-Determination Theory is to strengthen psychological courage and support the meeting of basic needs: competence, autonomy and psychological relatedness, which may result in achieving optimal well-being (Curtis & Kelly, 2013). Self-Determination Theory also emphasizes the difference between the goals adopted from intrinsic reasons (or motivators) and external reasons. Unlike externally motivated (controlled) goals, autonomous goals that are aligned with the individual's values tend to be maintained over time, individuals tend to direct more energy towards attainment of those goals and satisfaction gained when those goals are reached is much higher (Spence & Oades, 2011), which is consistent with what has been discussed above about goal attainment and well-being. Moreover, pursuing autonomous goals can result in feeling of congruence (Sheldon & Elliot, 1998).

Newham-Kanas et al. (2011) also suggested that *Self-Determination Theory* (Ryan & Deci, 2000) may contribute to potential explanation of increase in the quality of life. Co-active life coaching approach used in the study by Newham-Kanas et al. (2011) was able to facilitate intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being by using elements of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Similar conclusions were obtained in the study by Curtis and Kelly (2013) on quality of life coaching.

Newham-Kanas et al. (2011) in their study worked with a specific population - people struggling with obesity - and they concluded that one of the largest benefits of life coaching in that population was its impact on self-regulation. They suggest that *Self-Regulation Theory* (Kanfer, 1970) may provide another potential explanation of increase in quality of life as self-regulation in one life domain often increases self-regulation in other, even unrelated life domains. The participants noted increased self-esteem, increased belief and ability to conquer obstacles, and increased self-acceptance, which are the key psychological components of the quality of life (WHOQOL Group, 1995).

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Green et al. (2006) and Worgan (2013) use *Hope Theory* to explain potential increase in well-being. According to Hope Theory, if one is able to pursue his or her attainable goals, that individual experiences positive emotions and increased well-being (Snyder et al., 2002). Greater hope has been directly linked to greater psychological well-being (Rand & Cheavens, 2009; Kauffman et al., 2010). Goal-oriented thinking is fundamental in Hope Theory. Since life coaching is a solution-focused, goal-oriented approach, it can be considered a hope-enhancing intervention (Green et al., 2006), which may have broad benefits to clients and their relationships and therefore lead to increase in well-being (Worgan, 2013).

Another well-being enhancing mechanism has been proposed by Ozer and Benet Martinez (2006) and involves desirable personality change. The authors discovered that even small changes in any of the following traits: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism, can affect all life domains and lead to increase in well-being (subjective and existential). Positive correlation between personality and well-being seem to be confirmed in studies by Diener and Lucas (1999), Wood et al. (2008) and Boyce et al. (2013). According to Boyce et al. (2013) 'personality is the strongest and most consistent predictor of high subjective well-being'. Martin et al. (2012) suggested that if life coaching could lead to desirable personality change (by increase in any of the above mentioned personality traits), then well-being will increase in result.

Michaels (2010) suggests a combination of behavioral and cognitive strategies supported by life coaching sessions in order to increase an individual's quality of life. Along with specific behavioral techniques, Michaels (2010) also recommends change in thinking, which can be accomplished by cognitive mapping. The right use of cognitive mapping can help the clients manage emotions, control impulsivity, and build willpower, which lead to better goal attainment (Michaels, 2010). Creative visualization, increasing self-esteem and positive affirmation have also been recommended as adjacent strategies to achieve wellness goals and enhance quality of life (Michaels, 2010).

Boniwell (2005) claims that the highest level of well-being can be achieved with a balanced time perspective. Focus on the future (future time perspective) has been found fundamental to well-being, meaningful life, social self-efficacy, positive functioning and realism (Zaleski et al., 2001). As suggested by Boniwell (2005), life coaching can teach clients how to use all three time perspectives accordingly: past, present and future, while staying focused on one of them at a time, when needed. Such temporal dimension flexibility results in a balanced time perspective, which, amongst other benefits, leads to a higher level of well-being (Boniwell, 2005; Boniwell et al.,

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2014). People, whose time perspective is balanced, are more likely to experience positive emotional states (happiness, life satisfaction), psychological well-being, hope and optimism (Boniwell et al., 2010; Boniwell et al., 2014).

3. What results/effects in terms of quality of life and well-being following life coaching have been documented or suggested in the literature?

The analyzed literature reports on broad range of benefits and improvements that were experienced by the coachees or participants of empirical studies. In the majority of studies, increase in quality of life, well-being and related aspects was noted. Only in one study described life coaching intervention did not significantly affect quality of life of the participants and the scores for all domains of the quality of life (physical, social, emotional, and functional well-being) remained unchanged (Thomas et al., 2012).

The review of the randomized controlled trials by Frisch (2013) shows that quality of life therapy and coaching is an empirically validated and evidence-based well-being and happiness intervention. Bowen (2013) and Francis and Milner (2006) state, that life coaching can significantly increase the quality of life. Hoff (2011) described improving quality of life as 'people falling in love with themselves (...) almost like appreciating for the first time who they really are and what special qualities they have'. According to Rice (2007), life coaching helps create a life that is fulfilling and joyful. Easton van Laar (2013), Leach et al. (2011) and Nixon-Witt (2008) indicate that life coaching can enhance well-being. Easton and van Laar (2013) suggest in addition that coaching also improves goal attainment.

After reviewing randomized control trials conducted to date, Gardiner and Kearns (2012) noted that there is a wide variety of results following life coaching interventions including: well-being, goal attainment, mental health and hardiness. Similar result was obtained in the study by Gordon-Bar (2014), where findings showed higher self-efficacy, increased goal attainment and well-being of the participants. Better quality of life, psychological well-being, subjective well-being, decreased depression and anxiety, lower stress level, better perceived health status, higher goal attainment and higher resilience have also been reported in the literature (Ammentorp et al., 2013; Grant, 2003; Green et al., 2006; Green et al., 2007). The findings of the study by Worgan (2013) demonstrated increase in hope and well-being. Spence and Grant (2007) noted significant increases in several dimensions of subjective and psychological well-being, however, the only significant improvement was observed for environmental mastery (dimension of psychological well-being).

Martin et al. (2012) suggested that changing problematic personality traits could increase life satisfaction, subjective well-being, existential well-being and numerous

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aspects associated with well-being like: gratitude, longevity, inspiration, resilience, coping, peer acceptance and friendship, attractiveness, social and enterprising interests, commitment and involvement. According to Curtis and Kelly (2013), life coaching promotes self-discovery and improves self-awareness, emotional regulation, and action planning. The results obtained in their study demonstrate 'how each participant's perception of his or her quality of life shifted throughout the intervention'. Improvements were noted in psychological courage, open-mindedness, bravery, love of learning, zest, integrity/honesty, self-regulation and hope.

Empirical studies reporting on health-related outcomes in populations struggling with physical health challenges also document improvements in the quality of life and well-being (Newnham-Kanas et al., 2008; Newnham-Kanas et al. (2011). Significant increase in all dimensions of the quality of life have also been reported in other studies (Pearson et al., 2012; Schneider et al., 2011; Whitley, 2013; Zandvoort et al., 2009; Shearsmith, 2011). Shearsmith (2011) reported that participants described life coaching as a 'positive, empowering and hopeful' and 'life changing' experience.

Conclusion

This study aims at evaluating the available evidence on the influence of life coaching on quality of life and well-being. This review attempted to answer the following three questions: (1) How is quality of life and well-being defined in the theoretical and empirical literature on life coaching? (2) What is the mechanism explaining potential improvement (or lack thereof) of individual's quality of life and well-being? (3) What results/effects in terms of quality of life and well-being following life coaching have been documented or suggested in the literature?

This paper recognizes the importance of a unified definition of both quality of life and well-being as the clients' quality of life and well-being is one of the primary objectives of life coaching. None of the analyzed studies provide a clear explanation of 'quality of life' or 'well-being', however, common themes have been found such as: happiness and life satisfaction; having life purpose, sense of fulfillment and psychological maturity; positive assessment of one's somatic sensation, physical function/wellness; emotional state and social interaction. Numerous explanations of the mechanism behind improvement in the quality of life and well-being are provided in the literature. Aspects of life-coaching that the participants of empirical studies appreciated the most were: SMART goal setting and efficient problem solving. Self-determination theory, self-regulation theory, hope theory and a combination of behavioral and cognitive strategies were also discussed as possible explanations of how coaching might increase well-

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being and quality of life. With an exception of one study, all studies reported significant increases in quality of life, well-being, related aspects, domains and other variables.

This study presents how the concepts of quality of life and well-being are described and utilized in the literature on life coaching. This paper also provides evidence that life coaching may be a reliable approach for increasing individual's quality of life and well-being. Coaching relationship may provide a strong enough support for the coachee to make the necessary changes leading to increase in the quality of life and well-being. Focus on 'what's right' – which is the premise of life coaching – inspires choices resulting in enhanced quality of life and well-being. This contribution may have direct relevance for coaches across all fields who are interested in how the coaching relationship can affect quality of life and well-being of coachees. This study helps practitioners not only understand the concepts of quality of life and well-being but also the mechanism through which life coaching may support coachees in related areas.

More research is needed to further analyze the impact of life coaching on quality of life and well-being and the sustainability of the results in the long run. High quality studies should be conducted in order to clarify the mechanism of improvement and to establish the most efficient element of life coaching approach. Research should also be directed at unifying existing definitions of quality of life and well-being.

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