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Development of a Life Coaching Program for University Students' Self-Exploration and Self-Understanding

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Abstract

Purpose: This study developed a GROW model-based life coaching program to promote self-exploration and self-understanding among university students and examined its applicability. **Research design, data and methodology:** A needs assessment was conducted with 30 university students, and an expert panel survey was administered to six coaches holding Korea Professional Coach qualifications or higher. Quantitative responses were analyzed using frequencies and percentages, and open-ended responses were examined through content analysis. **Results:** Students showed low awareness of life coaching but positively perceived its necessity. Career-related issues were the most preferred topic, while individual coaching conducted once a week for 30–60 minutes through face-to-face or blended formats was favored. Experts recommended clarifying the goals of each GROW stage, using nondirective questions, adding an orientation session, and ensuring operational flexibility. **Conclusions:** Based on the needs assessment and expert feedback, a five-session program entitled *I Have a Question for You* was developed, including an orientation session. This study presents a foundational life coaching model for university students and highlights the need for future research to examine its feasibility and effectiveness.

Keywords: University students, Life coaching, GROW model, Self-exploration, Self-understanding

JEL Classification Code: I21, I23, J24

1. Introduction

The university years represent a transitional period from late adolescence to early adulthood and constitute an important developmental stage in which psychological, social, and cultural maturation occurs in earnest following biological maturity (Lee, 2014; Arnett, 2000). During this period, university students gradually become psychologically and financially independent from their parents while simultaneously confronting the developmental task of formulating and preparing for their future careers and occupations (Kim & Kim, 2018). Moreover, as they experience diverse interpersonal relationships and social roles within the new social environment of the university, they come to understand themselves more deeply and redefine the direction of the

lives they wish to pursue (Seo & Lim, 2019). Erikson (1968) regarded this period as a critical stage in which individuals must integrate their ego identity and establish a coherent self-concept. In practice, university students develop a clearer sense of identity through the process of exploring their personal values and goals (Lee, 2014).

These developmental characteristics also have important implications for career development. Super (1973) argued that university students are at a stage in which they identify their abilities, aptitudes, and interests through self-exploration and self-understanding, expand their understanding of the world of work, and formulate and implement concrete plans for their preferred occupations (Lee, 2024). Similarly, Marcia (1966, 1980) described the university years as a period in which individuals develop ego identity through the exploration of

their values, goals, and interests (Jeon, 2020). Taken together, the university period is not merely a time devoted to academic study. Rather, it is a period in which students build diverse relationships for self-exploration and self-understanding, gain various experiences within those relationships, and construct the direction of their own lives through self-reflection and deeper self-understanding.

James (1980) explained the self as an extended construct that includes not only an individual's body and mind but also elements regarded as belonging to the individual, such as family, personal identity, and possessions (Shin, 2019). This perspective demonstrates that self-exploration extends beyond the simple identification of interests and is connected to the individual's life as a whole. Indeed, self-exploration strengthens awareness of one's authentic self and provides a foundation for the development of a holistic personality (Choi, 2022). However, contemporary university students encounter multiple practical challenges simultaneously, including pressure related to employment preparation and academic work, as well as interpersonal conflicts arising from diverse relationships. Consequently, they may experience anxiety and burden, accompanied by psychological confusion and identity crises (Maeng & Kim, 2025).

The multifaceted social problems currently confronting young people have renewed attention to the importance of self-understanding and career exploration during the university years. In particular, reduced activity resulting from difficulties in finding employment may contribute to an increase in the number of young people classified as economically inactive or "resting." Furthermore, even among those who enter the labor market after considerable effort, difficulties in adapting to their jobs have led to repeated and increasing patterns of early resignation and frequent job changes (Choi & Choi, 2023; Hankook Ilbo, 2026; Maeil Ilbo, 2019). These patterns suggest that employment problems are not merely a quantitative imbalance in labor supply and demand, such as difficulties in securing employment, but also involve broader issues related to career adaptation and occupational adjustment.

2. Research Method

2.1. Research Participants

The participants in this study consisted of two groups: university students who participated in a needs assessment and a panel of life coaching experts. These groups were selected to explore the development and applicability of a life coaching program for university students.

First, the university student group was selected to examine how the primary target population of the life coaching program perceived self-exploration and self-understanding and to identify their needs and preferences regarding the program. Accordingly, a needs assessment was conducted with 30 currently enrolled university

students to investigate their awareness of life coaching, previous participation experience, perceived need, intention to participate, preferred topics, and preferred program delivery methods.

Second, the life coaching expert group was selected to review the proposed program structure and its applicability in practice. The expert panel consisted of six professionals who held the Korea Professional Coach (KPC) certification issued by the Korea Coach Association and had experience providing life coaching to university students. The panel provided opinions regarding the program content, session operation, applicability, and practical utility.

By including both university students, who are the intended users of the program, and life coaching experts with field-based expertise, this study sought to collect foundational data for program development that reflected both students' needs and experts' practical judgments.

2.2. Research Instruments

2.2.1. Needs Assessment Questionnaire for a Life Coaching Program for University Students

To identify university students' needs regarding a life coaching program, a needs assessment was conducted in February 2026. The questionnaire items related to self-exploration and self-understanding were developed with reference to Hwang Ju-yeon's (2011) Self-Reflection Scale. The questionnaire was designed to assess students' levels of self-exploration and self-understanding, awareness of life coaching, perceived need for the program, intention to participate, preferred topics, and preferred modes of program operation.

Additional items were included to examine students' practical needs in greater detail, including previous life coaching experience, preferred coaching topics, preferred number of sessions, participation format, appropriate cost, and the perceived need for university-level implementation. Through these items, the study identified students' perceptions of the necessity of life coaching and their requirements regarding program operation. The findings were used as foundational data for developing, revising, and refining the program.

2.2.2. Expert Panel Survey Questionnaire for Life Coaching Professionals

To examine the validity and applicability of the life coaching program for university students, an expert panel survey was conducted in February 2026. The expert panel consisted of professionals with practical experience in providing GROW-based coaching or life coaching to university students.

The expert panel questionnaire was designed to evaluate the program's content structure, operational direction, applicability, and practical utility. The experts were provided with the results of the university student interviews and needs assessment and were asked to evaluate the appropriateness of the program structure, the clarity of session objectives, the feasibility of the delivery

method, and its applicability in practice. Open-ended questions were also included to identify directions for revising and improving the program.

The results of the expert panel survey were used to refine the program structure, question design, delivery method, number of sessions, need for an orientation session, and participant-tailored operational strategies.

3. Research Procedure

This study was conducted according to the following procedure to develop a GROW-based life coaching program designed to support university students' self-exploration and self-understanding.

3.1. Development of a GROW Model-Based Life Coaching Program for University Students

This study developed a life coaching program for university students based on Whitmore's (2009) GROW coaching conversation model. The GROW model consists of four stages: Goal setting, Reality checking, Option exploration, and Will or commitment to action. It is a structured coaching model that helps participants recognize their current situations and independently explore alternatives for achieving their goals through question-centered dialogue.

For program development, materials from a GROW coaching extracurricular program operated at D University in Seoul since August 2022 were used as foundational resources. The program was delivered in one to five sessions, depending on the participants' preferred topics, including university life, interpersonal relationships, career development, and employment. The researcher participated in the program as a career coach from September 2024 to December 2025 and, beginning in March 2025, provided life coaching to university students based on the Korea Coach Association's KAC certification.

By integrating these practical experiences with the findings from the university student needs assessment and the expert panel survey, a GROW-based life coaching program was developed to reflect university students' developmental characteristics and the practical conditions of extracurricular program implementation.

3.2. Needs Assessment of University Students

To identify university students' awareness of and needs for life coaching, a needs assessment was conducted with 30 university students, the primary target group of the program. The questionnaire focused on awareness of life coaching, previous participation experience, perceived need, intention to participate, preferred topics, preferred delivery methods, number and duration of sessions, appropriate cost, and the need for university-level implementation. Through this assessment, the preferred topics and operational conditions for life coaching were identified, and foundational data were collected to inform the program structure and delivery method.

3.3. Expert Panel Survey

To examine the applicability and validity of the developed program, an expert panel survey was conducted with six professional coaches who had experience providing coaching or life coaching to university students. The survey presented the results of the university student needs assessment and the proposed program structure and collected opinions on the session structure, objectives, delivery methods, activity content, field applicability, and practical utility.

The expert panel survey consisted of structured and open-ended questions. The program's practical applicability was examined by considering university students' developmental characteristics, their low awareness of life coaching, and the operational conditions of extracurricular programs. Based on the findings, the program was revised and supplemented by adding an orientation session, clarifying the objectives of each GROW stage, developing nondirective questions, and establishing participant-tailored operational strategies.

3.4. Review of Research Content and Cross-Validation

In this study, a cross-review was conducted to ensure the content appropriateness of the proposed program structure and the questionnaire items used in the university student needs assessment and expert panel survey. The review was conducted in collaboration with one researcher who had completed doctoral coursework in the social sciences and possessed professional research experience.

During the review process, the reviewers examined whether the program objectives and structure aligned with the research purpose, whether the objectives of each session were logically connected to the stages of the GROW model, and whether the session activities were appropriate for university students' developmental characteristics and the practical conditions of extracurricular program operation. The comprehensibility of the needs assessment items, appropriateness of the response categories, potential duplication among items, and suitability of the expert panel survey items for evaluating practical applicability were also reviewed.

Based on the feedback provided during the review, selected questionnaire items, terminology, program descriptions, and statements of session-specific objectives were revised and refined.

3.5. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods according to their characteristics. First, interview data from nine university students who participated in the GROW coaching program were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. After transcribing the recorded interviews, the data were reviewed repeatedly to extract meaningful statements. Similar units of meaning were then categorized to derive lower- and higher-order categories.

Data from the university student needs assessment and expert panel evaluation were analyzed using SPSS 28. Frequency analysis was conducted to identify response patterns, with particular attention to frequencies and percentages. In addition, the experts' open-ended responses were analyzed through content analysis, organized into major areas for improvement, and incorporated into the revision and refinement of the program.

By integrating the experiences of university students who participated in coaching, the findings of the needs assessment, and expert opinions, this study developed a GROW-based life coaching program for university students and examined its applicability.

4. Research Results

4.1. Design of a Life Coaching Program for University Students' Self-Exploration Based on the GROW Conversation Model

4.1.1. Rationale for the Program Structure

This study developed a program based on Whitmore's (2009) GROW coaching conversation model to support university students' self-exploration and self-understanding. The GROW model comprises four stages: Goal exploration, Reality exploration, Option exploration, and Will or commitment to action. Its structured process helps participants establish goals, examine their current circumstances, explore alternatives, and specify their commitment to action. This sequential process is closely aligned with the developmental tasks of university students, who must establish directions for their lives and formulate practical action plans.

Previous studies have employed the GROW model as a coaching framework for promoting self-reflection and behavioral change. Kim and Kim (2025) applied the GROW model when developing a program to strengthen adolescents' emotional regulation competencies. Ryu (2016) used the GROW model in a film-coaching program and identified positive effects, including enhanced self-esteem, improved self-regulated learning, and reduced stress. These findings indicate that the GROW model can function as a structured framework that connects participants' internal exploration with behavioral change, extending beyond its use as a simple conversational technique.

The role of a coach is not to provide participants with correct answers or predetermined directions. Rather, through active listening and questioning, coaches facilitate participants' reinterpretation of their experiences and discovery of their internal resources and potential. Accordingly, this program was structured around the sequential stages of the GROW model while emphasizing coaches' nondirective questions and participants' responses and reflections to facilitate self-exploration and self-understanding.

The session structure was designed based on the core elements of life coaching proposed by Williams and

Menendez (2024): discovering a fulfilling life, setting and achieving goals, identifying obstacles and exploring alternatives, and developing a vision and action plan. These elements were connected to the respective stages of the GROW model and organized into a four-session, short-term intensive program. The program was designed to be delivered once a week for 60 minutes per session through one-to-one coaching conversations. It also allowed for both face-to-face and online delivery formats according to participants' circumstances.

University students often participate simultaneously in various activities, including academic work, career preparation, extracurricular activities, and part-time employment. Consequently, they may perceive long-term program participation as burdensome or experience declining interest over time. Considering the practical conditions of university extracurricular program implementation, this program was therefore designed as a short-term, four-session intervention. This structure was intended to provide the essential experiences of life coaching—self-exploration, reality examination, alternative exploration, and action planning—within a relatively short period and to enable participants to reflect on their inner experiences and recognize their potential for change.

4.1.2. Program Structure

The program was structured as a life coaching program based on the GROW coaching model. It consisted of four sessions corresponding to G (Goal Setting), R (Reality Exploration), O (Option Exploration), and W (Will and Action). The program was delivered through one-to-one coaching, with each session lasting 60 minutes, and each session was organized according to its specific objectives within the G-R-O-W framework.

(1) G Session: What Is My Life About?

The G session corresponds to the Goal exploration stage of the GROW model. Its purpose is to help participants establish goals for self-exploration by examining broad aspects of their lives, including the values, interests, and needs they consider important. This session uses Life Share Cards, which present major life-related keywords such as work, love, relationships, emotions, and the meaning of life. Participants select question cards containing activities they enjoy or frequently engage in, or words to which they feel drawn, and then engage in a coaching conversation focused on the reasons for their selections.

This activity helps participants articulate internal emotions, values, strengths, interests, and resources that they may not have previously recognized clearly. Using the cards as a medium enables participants to identify important keywords across various areas of their lives and specify the focus of their goal exploration. In responding to the coach's questions, participants transform abstract self-exploration into a more concrete process and broaden their exploration of themselves and their lives.

Accordingly, the G session is not merely a session for identifying goals. Rather, it is a stage that expands and facilitates self-awareness and value exploration, which provide the foundation for establishing overall life goals and direction. Reflecting these characteristics, the theme of the G session was established as "What Is My Life About?"

(2) R Session: Past, Present, and Future

The R session corresponds to the Reality exploration stage of the GROW model. Its purpose is to help participants examine, assess, and become aware of their current lives in relation to the direction they identified in the previous session. Based on the life values and directions explored during the G session, participants reflect on their current circumstances across major areas of life, including daily living, career, academic work, and relationships, and recognize the gap between their goals and present reality.

In this session, the Life Balance Wheel activity is used to visually assess various areas of life. Participants reflect on their lives within the temporal flow of the past, present, and future and specifically identify differences between the lives they expect and their actual circumstances. This process transforms vague dissatisfaction or anxiety into a clearer awareness of reality and enables participants to adjust their goals to a more realistic and specific level.

Accordingly, the R session extends the self-exploration conducted during the G session into a stage of realistic self-assessment. Reflecting this purpose, the theme of the R session was established as "Past, Present, and Future."

(3) O Session: Beyond

The O session corresponds to the Option exploration stage of the GROW model. Its purpose is to help participants identify obstacles encountered while pursuing their goals and explore alternative ways to overcome them. Building on the goals established during the first two sessions, participants examine internal and external barriers and identify personal strengths, available resources, and possible strategies for addressing those barriers.

A central activity in this session is Crumpling and Unfolding the Paper. Participants write perceived obstacles on separate sheets of paper and crumple them to visually represent the difficulties they face. They then reflect on previous experiences in which they overcame similar challenges and explore the strengths, supportive relationships, environmental resources, and practical strategies available to them. As participants identify possible alternatives, they unfold the crumpled papers. This activity is not merely a symbolic act of removing barriers; it enables participants to view their difficulties more objectively, recognize their capacity to generate solutions, and strengthen self-efficacy and positive perceptions of themselves.

For online delivery, the same process can be implemented using digital materials, images, or music. The central purpose of the activity is not its physical format but the process through which participants independently

identify barriers and discover internal and external resources that may help them overcome those barriers.

Accordingly, the O session extends beyond the exploration of problem-solving alternatives. It helps participants recognize that they possess the capacity and resources to move beyond their perceived limitations. Reflecting this purpose, the theme of the O session was established as "Beyond."

(4) W Session: Another Self

The W session corresponds to the Will stage of the GROW model. Its purpose is to transform the self-exploration and option exploration developed in previous sessions into concrete action. Participants compare their present self-image with their desired future self, identify feasible actions, and formulate a sustainable action plan.

Through a future-self visualization activity, participants transform abstract goals into a more specific image and clarify the changes required to move toward that future. By independently selecting practical actions, they strengthen internal motivation, commitment, and self-monitoring skills that can continue after the program ends.

The future-self image may also be used as a personal self-coaching tool after program completion, supporting continued reflection and action. Accordingly, the W session serves as the concluding stage that connects self-exploration with implementation. Reflecting the discovery of new possibilities for growth and change, the theme of the session was established as "Another Self."

4.2. Results of the Survey on University Students' Awareness of Life Coaching

The findings regarding university students' awareness of life coaching indicated that overall awareness was relatively low. Among the participants, 24 students (80.0%) responded that they did not know about life coaching, and all 30 students (100.0%) reported having no previous experience with life coaching. Nevertheless, 22 students (73.3%) responded that life coaching was "necessary," and three students (10.0%) considered it "highly necessary," indicating that participants positively perceived its necessity despite their limited awareness and experience.

Regarding their intention to use life coaching services, 15 students (50.0%) responded "moderate," while 11 students (36.7%) expressed a willingness to participate, demonstrating a relatively positive attitude toward future use. Career-related issues were the most preferred coaching topic, selected by 22 students (73.3%), followed by dating and marriage issues, selected by seven students (23.3%), and academic concerns, selected by six students (20.0%). These findings suggest that although university students primarily seek coaching for career-related concerns, they also have coaching needs related to broader life issues, including academic work and interpersonal relationships.

Regarding program operation, 13 students (43.3%) preferred sessions once a week, 15 students (50.0%) preferred fewer than four sessions, and 21 students (70.0%) preferred sessions lasting between 30 and 60 minutes.

These findings indicate a preference for short-term coaching programs that impose relatively little burden on participants. Face-to-face delivery was preferred by 15 students (50.0%), while 17 students (56.7%) preferred an on-campus location. Participants also showed a strong preference for afternoon and evening sessions.

Individual coaching was the most preferred coaching format, selected by 20 students (66.7%), confirming the demand for personalized one-to-one coaching. Among the core coaching competencies, 11 students (36.7%) identified coaching skills that facilitate goal setting and action as the most important, while most participants also regarded coaches' professional expertise as important.

Regarding cost, 23 students (76.7%) expressed a willingness to participate in free coaching, whereas only five students (16.7%) indicated a willingness to participate in paid coaching. Fourteen students (46.7%) considered a fee of less than KRW 10,000 appropriate, while another 14 students (46.7%) selected a fee between KRW 10,000 and KRW 30,000. Participants also demonstrated a strong consensus regarding the need to implement life coaching programs at the university level. These findings suggest that increasing public awareness, strengthening promotion, expanding the pool of professional coaches, and establishing systematic program delivery are necessary to promote life coaching among university students.

4.3. Results of the Expert Panel Survey on the Life Coaching Program for University Students

4.3.1. Results of the Expert Panel Survey on Perceptions of Life Coaching for University Students

The expert panel's perceptions of the need for life coaching among university students were highly positive. Five experts (83.4%) responded that it was "highly necessary," while one expert (16.6%) responded that it was "necessary." Regarding program operation, KRW 50,000 was most frequently identified as an appropriate fee (50.0%), and one to three sessions were most commonly preferred (50.0%), suggesting that a relatively short-term format was considered appropriate.

Career-related topics ranked highest among the preferred life coaching topics (83.4%), while academic concerns were most frequently selected as the second- and third-priority topics (50.0%). These findings indicate that career exploration and academic support are perceived as core areas of life coaching for university students.

All experts preferred a blended format combining face-to-face and online coaching (100.0%), and most favored individual coaching (83.4%). A session duration of 30 to 90 minutes was considered appropriate. Counseling and coaching centers (50.0%) and university campuses (33.3%) were the most preferred locations.

Empathic listening and relationship-building skills were identified as the most important competencies for life coaches (50.0%). An understanding of university students' characteristics and professional ethics were also regarded as essential competencies. No-shows were reported as the

most significant operational challenge (66.7%), highlighting the importance of maintaining participants' continued engagement.

The most frequently anticipated benefit was the rediscovery of one's inner self (66.7%), and 83.4% of the experts expressed willingness to use the developed program. In addition, increasing awareness and understanding of life coaching was most frequently identified as an essential condition for program implementation (66.7%), suggesting that greater public awareness is required for the program's stable and sustained adoption.

4.3.2. Results of the Thematic Analysis of Expert Panel Opinions on the Operation and Improvement of Life Coaching for University Students

The thematic analysis identified five higher-order categories related to the operation and improvement of the life coaching program for university students.

First, regarding clarification of the program structure, the experts emphasized the need to define the boundaries between the GROW stages and to specify the focus of each session more clearly. In particular, the objectives of Option exploration and Will strengthening in Sessions 3 and 4 needed to be differentiated, while maintaining a coherent flow across the entire program.

Second, regarding the appropriateness of questioning and intervention methods, the contextual connection between questions and the importance of a nondirective approach were emphasized. Some emotional questions were considered meaningful but weakly connected to preceding questions. Expressions such as "overcoming" and "difficulties" were also viewed as potentially suggestive, indicating the need to refine the language into more exploratory and coaching-oriented forms.

Third, regarding initial implementation and participant understanding, the experts stressed the need for an orientation session and an initial agreement on goals. Because university students generally have limited understanding of life coaching, an orientation session should explain the concept and process of coaching and clarify the participant's role. Establishing shared expectations and goals at the beginning of the program was also identified as an important operational element.

Fourth, regarding individualized and flexible implementation, the program needed to be adapted according to participants' characteristics, developmental levels, and readiness. The experts also recommended ensuring scalability by allowing additional sessions to be offered after the basic program when necessary.

Fifth, regarding the needs assessment and operational infrastructure, the experts emphasized reflecting the needs assessment findings, improving promotion and awareness, and establishing a systematic delivery structure. To expand the program within universities, institutional support should include qualified professional coaches, sufficient funding, and both face-to-face and online delivery environments.

Overall, the findings indicated that the university student life coaching program should be improved by clarifying its GROW-based structure, strengthening nondirective questioning, adding an orientation session, providing individualized and flexible implementation, and establishing an institutional foundation for sustainable operation.

4.4. Development of a Life Coaching Program for University Students' Self-Exploration Based on the GROW Conversation Model

Based on the university student needs assessment and expert panel findings, the final life coaching program was revised and structured as follows.

First, the objectives and functions of the GROW stages were clarified. Each session was designed to reflect the core progression of Goal–Reality–Option–Will, with a clear distinction between exploring alternatives in the Option stage and strengthening commitment to action in the Will stage. At the same time, continuity across sessions was reinforced so that the program would function as an integrated process of self-exploration and self-understanding rather than as a series of disconnected activities.

Second, the final program consisted of five sessions, including an orientation session. **Session 1** introduces the concept and process of life coaching, establishes a one-to-one coach–participant relationship, and develops rapport and shared expectations through initial consultation and discussion.

Session 2 integrates the Goal and Reality stages. Using *Life Share Cards* and coaching questions, participants identify important life themes, clarify their values and priorities, and examine their current roles and circumstances. This process supports greater self-awareness, encourages shifts in perspective, and helps participants establish clearer life goals.

Session 3 corresponds to the Option stage. Participants explore practical alternatives for achieving the goals identified in the previous session. Through the coach's active listening and supportive questioning, they identify personal strengths, available resources, and feasible strategies that may help them move toward their desired goals.

Session 4 corresponds to the Will stage. Participants select appropriate alternatives, apply them in their daily lives, and review the outcomes. They then develop concrete action plans and strengthen their commitment to continued implementation. This process is intended to enhance self-efficacy and promote a more positive perception of future challenges.

Session 5 integrates the experiences of the preceding sessions. Participants review changes and achievements made through self-exploration, reality examination, option exploration, and action. They consolidate their self-understanding and establish subsequent self-directed goals for continued growth after completing the program.

Overall, the final program was developed as a five-session, GROW-based life coaching intervention that sequentially connects self-exploration, realistic self-assessment, alternative generation, action, and reflective integration. The program is designed to help university students clarify their life direction, strengthen self-understanding, and develop the capacity to pursue future goals independently.

5. Conclusions and Discussion

This study aimed to develop a GROW model-based life coaching program designed to promote self-exploration and self-understanding among university students. University students experience a transitional developmental period in which they must simultaneously manage academic responsibilities, career decisions, interpersonal relationships, emotional independence, and the establishment of a broader life direction. Although various university programs have been developed in response to youth unemployment, career anxiety, and difficulties in labor-market entry, many existing programs primarily emphasize employment competencies, career planning, and job preparation. Such interventions may be helpful for students with clearly defined career goals; however, they may offer limited support to students who have not yet sufficiently explored their values, interests, strengths, and desired directions in life.

From this perspective, university support should extend beyond assisting students in selecting careers or obtaining employment. Students also require opportunities to examine themselves more deeply, clarify personally meaningful goals, and translate their self-understanding into practical actions. Accordingly, this study applied Whitmore's GROW model to the development of a life coaching program that sequentially guides participants through goal exploration, reality examination, option exploration, and commitment to action.

The findings of the university student needs assessment indicated that students generally had limited awareness of life coaching and no previous experience with it. Nevertheless, most participants positively perceived its necessity and demonstrated an openness to future participation. Career-related concerns were identified as the most preferred coaching topic; however, students also expressed needs related to academic work, interpersonal relationships, and broader life concerns. These findings suggest that university students' coaching needs are not restricted to employment preparation but encompass multiple areas connected to their overall development and adjustment.

Students preferred individualized, short-term coaching delivered once a week for approximately 30 to 60 minutes, with face-to-face or blended formats receiving relatively strong support. This preference appears to reflect the practical circumstances of university students, who often balance academic work, extracurricular activities, employment preparation, and part-time work. Therefore, a

brief and flexible format may reduce participation burdens while providing focused opportunities for reflection and action planning. At the same time, the strong preference for individual coaching indicates that participants value a personalized process in which their unique experiences and concerns can be explored in depth.

The expert panel findings further supported the need for a university student life coaching program while identifying several requirements for its practical implementation. The experts emphasized that the objectives and boundaries of each GROW stage should be clearly defined, particularly the distinction between exploring alternatives in the Option stage and strengthening commitment in the Will stage. They also highlighted the importance of nondirective and contextually connected questions, as overly suggestive language may restrict participants' autonomous exploration. These findings reinforce the principle that life coaching should not provide predetermined answers but should enable participants to reinterpret their experiences, identify internal and external resources, and independently determine appropriate actions.

The experts additionally recommended including an orientation session because university students' awareness and understanding of life coaching remain limited. An orientation session can clarify the purpose and process of coaching, establish the roles of the coach and participant, and facilitate agreement on expectations and goals. The experts also stressed the importance of flexible and individualized implementation according to participants' developmental levels, readiness, and specific concerns. Institutional conditions—including qualified coaches, financial support, promotional strategies, and both face-to-face and online delivery environments—were identified as necessary for the sustainable operation of life coaching programs within universities.

Based on these findings, the initially designed four-session program was revised into a five-session program that includes an orientation session. The final program begins by establishing an understanding of life coaching and a collaborative coaching relationship. It then guides participants through the clarification of values and goals, examination of present circumstances, exploration of feasible alternatives and personal resources, implementation of selected actions, and final reflection on changes and future directions. By connecting the stages as a continuous developmental process, the program was designed to help participants move from abstract self-reflection toward concrete and self-directed action.

The primary contribution of this study lies in presenting a foundational life coaching program that integrates university students' expressed needs with the practical judgments of professional coaches. The program also broadens the scope of university career and student-support interventions by positioning self-exploration and self-understanding as foundations for sustainable goal setting and action, rather than treating employment preparation as an isolated outcome. Furthermore, the study demonstrates

the potential applicability of the GROW model as a structured framework for supporting university students' reflection, decision-making, and action planning.

Nevertheless, several limitations should be considered. First, the needs assessment involved only 30 university students, and the expert panel consisted of six coaches. Therefore, the findings may not fully represent the diverse characteristics and needs of the broader university student population. Second, the study focused on program development and the examination of perceived applicability; it did not empirically evaluate program effectiveness through implementation, pre- and post-assessments, or comparison groups. Third, the findings were primarily based on self-reported responses and expert opinions, which may be influenced by participants' subjective perceptions.

Future studies should implement the developed program with larger and more diverse student samples and examine its effectiveness using appropriate quantitative and qualitative measures. In particular, research should evaluate changes in self-understanding, career clarity, goal-setting capacity, self-efficacy, and behavioral implementation. Comparative studies examining individual and group coaching formats, face-to-face and online delivery, and different program durations would also provide useful evidence for refining the program. Through such research, the proposed program may be further developed into a systematic and evidence-based life coaching intervention that supports university students in independently constructing and pursuing meaningful directions in their lives.

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