

INTRODUCTION

Stagnating retention and persistence rates have long challenged higher education (Alzen et al., 2021; Capstick et al., 2019; Singhani et al., 2022), a trend reflected in the critical shortage of pre-service teachers due to declining enrollment and persistence in undergraduate teacher preparation programs. Research highlights the need for effective interventions, as factors such as student engagement and higher grades have been shown to positively influence the persistence of pre-service teachers (Kim & Corcoran, 2018).

One intervention gaining traction is academic coaching, specifically strengths-based coaching. This method focuses on identifying individuals' strengths and empowering them to achieve their personal and academic goals. My research seeks to understand how education students perceive strengths-based academic coaching and whether they think it will help them overcome challenges.

METHODS & ANALYSIS

This study was conducted at a mid-sized regional comprehensive university in the Southeastern United States. I created a Qualtrics Survey using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree with a neutral option. I used display logic to show a separate set of questions based on whether students have participated in strengths-based academic coaching. This survey was distributed to a list of 596 undergraduate education majors by university email, with one reminder sent one week after the initial invitation. The student response rate was 3.3% (n=20). I analyzed survey data using Qualtrics' data analysis tools to prepare a descriptive statistics report.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics showed that both students who did and did not participate in coaching had positive perceptions of strengths-based academic coaching, with the latter group having slightly lower positive perceptions in some areas.

Figure 1
Perceptions of Students Who Have Participated in Coaching

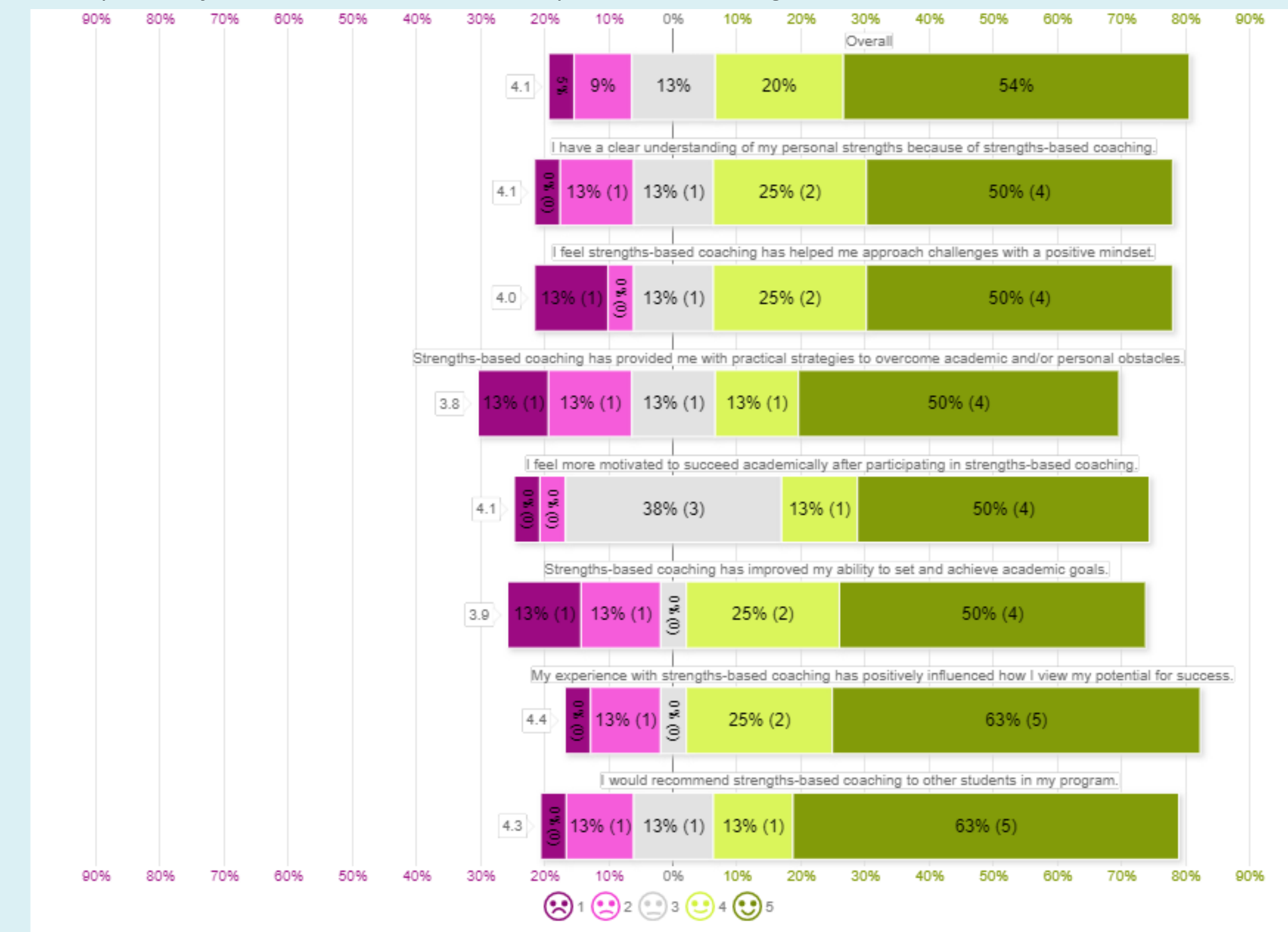
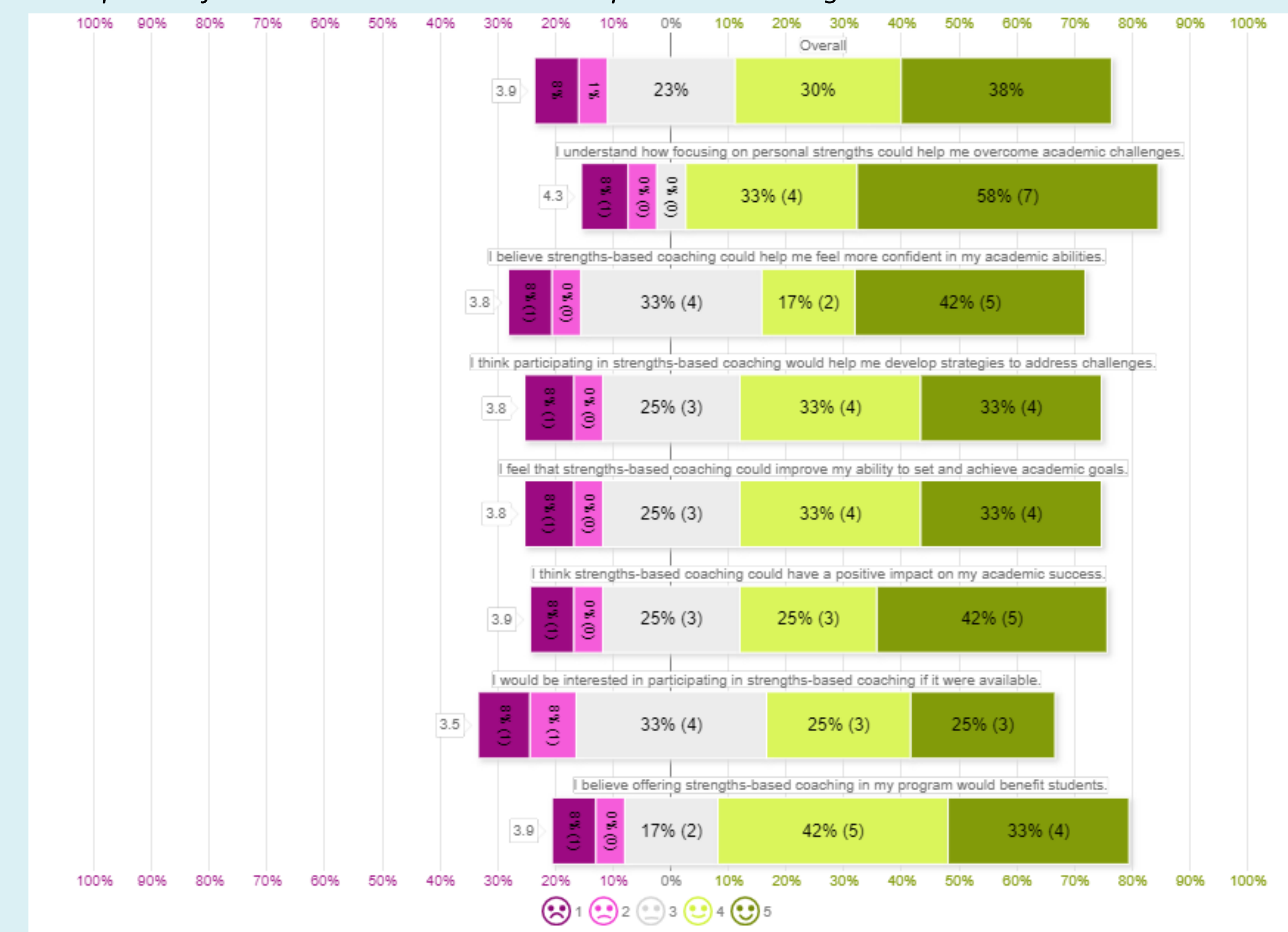


Figure 2
Perceptions of Students Who Have Not Participated in Coaching



IMPLICATIONS

The findings from this survey suggest that strengths-based academic coaching resonates positively with undergraduate education majors. It has the potential to be an effective intervention for addressing the challenges related to the retention and persistence of pre-service teachers. Non-participants' slightly lower positive perceptions indicate a need to communicate the purpose and benefits of strengths-based coaching to all students. Increasing awareness could encourage participation and maximize the impact of a coaching intervention.

The low survey response rate (3.3%) emphasizes the need for better recruitment strategies in future studies to gather more comprehensive data. Expanding research to include a larger and more diverse sample would provide deeper insights into how perceptions might vary between different demographic groups (major, gender, year in program, etc.).

Finally, this research supports piloting a formal strengths-based coaching program for education majors as a meaningful next step. If such a program proves successful, it could serve as a model for other programs struggling with retention and persistence.

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