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The Role of Human Resource Management in The Succession Planning Process

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Abstract

Organizations experience leadership deficits without succession planning, which can potentially lead to operational disruption and strategic failure. This study aims to uncover the contribution of Human Resource Management in Succession Planning, as well as identify the tactics and strategies implemented to support Leader Development. This study applies the Systematic Literature Review method to review articles on Human Resource Management and succession planning published between 2001 and 2024. The research process consists of identification, selection, evaluation, and integration, resulting in 11 related articles that provide a solid foundation for analysis and discussion. Based on the literature analysis conducted on 11 selected journals, which were further analyzed using thematic analysis method. The research findings indicate that active participation of HRM in Succession Planning not only strengthens Leader Development but also supports increased employee engagement and organizational culture. The implications of this study emphasize the need to incorporate HRM strategies in Succession Planning as a step to ensure leadership sustainability and improve overall organizational performance.

Keywords

Employee Engagement, Human Resources Management, Leader Development, Organizational Performance, Succession Planning.

1. Introduction

The process of recruiting, training, evaluating, and paying employees is known as human resource management, or HRM (Dessler, 2013). The hiring, training, evaluating, and paying staff members while keeping in mind labour relations, occupational health and safety, and remuneration. A key component of human resource management, succession planning ensures the long-term viability of the business by cultivating the next generation of leaders. In an ever-changing global context, organisations face challenges in retaining the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve strategic goals. According to Bano et al. (2022b), effective succession planning can improve employee retention and facilitate the development of top management within the organisation.

Human resource management's involvement in succession planning has grown in importance for businesses looking to ensure sustainability and long-term growth in the rapidly changing globalisation era. Effective succession planning, according to Damer (2020), can assist businesses in identifying and nurturing future leaders for important roles, guaranteeing the availability of qualified managerial talent. The technical and strategic components of succession planning have been the subject of several studies, but little is known about how HRM can systematically support and optimise this process.

The background of this research is based on the fact that organisations that neglect succession planning are at risk of facing vacancies in key positions that can disrupt their operations and business strategies. According to Moore (2020) and Mukhama (2023), only few of organisations have a formal succession plan, while the rest tend to rely on unstructured and reactive approaches, which can lead to uncertainty in leadership. This research will also identify various issues that arise in HRM practices related to succession planning, such as challenges in talent development, effectiveness measurement, and employee engagement. Through this analysis, it is hoped that clearer insights can be gained regarding the gaps in the existing literature, as well as providing new significant contributions to the understanding of how HRM can function as a key driver in successful succession planning.

Thus, this research will not only highlight the importance of HRM in the context of succession planning but also explore innovations and best practices that can be adopted by organisations. Gap analysis will be directed to identify areas where further research is needed, as well as exploring the unique contributions that HRM can make in supporting the succession planning process.

By utilising current literature, this research aims to build a more comprehensive and relevant framework for the strategic role of HRM in succession planning, offering academics and practitioners helpful direction for creating more successful plans. With an emphasis on the techniques and strategies employed, the study's goal is to perform a thorough literature assessment on the function of HR management in the succession planning process. This research aims to identify the key issues faced by organisations in succession planning, as well as analyse how HR management can contribute to overcoming these challenges. Some of the issues that often arise in the literature include the lack of top management involvement, the lack of clarity in candidate selection criteria, and the lack of a structured leadership development program (Crow & Whiteman, 2016). By understanding these issues, this study is expected to provide clearer insights into how HR management can play an active role in creating a more effective succession planning process.

Even though succession planning has been the subject of several studies, there is still a dearth of information in the literature about methods and approaches that HR management may use to increase the process' efficacy. This research will fill this gap by presenting a comprehensive analysis of best practices in succession planning, as

well as integrating findings from recent studies to provide new insights. Thus, this research will not only enrich the existing literature but also provide practical recommendations for organisations in optimising their succession planning, so as to create leaders who are ready to face future challenges. The purpose of this study is to perform a thorough literature analysis on the function of HRM in succession planning, with an emphasis on the methods and approaches that business employ to increase the efficacy of succession planning.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Human Resource Management

Human Resource Management (HRM) is a critical function within organisations, responsible for managing the most valuable asset: human capital. According to Dessler (2013), HRM encompasses the processes of attracting, training, appraising, and compensating employees, all of which are essential for organisational success. Within this context, strategic HRM theory positions succession planning as a deliberate mechanism to align talent with long-term goals. When it comes to succession planning, HRM is essential to spotting, nurturing, and keeping future leaders. Planning for succession involves more than just filling leadership positions; it also involves making sure the company has a pool of competent executives who can advance strategic objectives and preserve competitive advantage. Bano et al. (2022b) emphasize that effective succession planning, supported by robust HRM practices, can significantly enhance employee retention and leadership development. However, many organisations still struggle with implementing formal succession plans, with only about 30% having a structured approach (Jackson & Allen, 2022). This gap highlights the need for a deeper understanding of how HRM can systematically support and optimise the succession planning process.

The integration of frameworks such as the Talent Management Lifecycle and Leadership Pipeline Model underscores HRM's role in creating structured pathways for developing leadership potential (Charan et al., 2001). It involves creating a structured framework for leadership development, ensuring employees are engaged and motivated, and aligning succession planning with organisational goals. Recent studies suggest that organisations that integrate HRM strategies into succession planning experience improved employee engagement and organization culture. However, challenges such as the lack of top management involvement, unclear candidate selection criteria, and insufficient leadership development programs often hinder effectiveness (Siambi, 2022). By identifying and cultivating future leaders, succession planning ensures organisational sustainability (Bano et al., 2022b). Yet, as Akinde (2021) notes, only 30% adopt a structured approach revealing the need for theoretical and strategic reinforcement in practice.

2.2. Succession Planning

The success of succession planning depends heavily on the active role of Human Resource Management (HRM). As Dessler (2013) states, HRM encompasses key responsibilities in succession planning such as establishing clear selection criteria, implementing structured leadership development programs, and aligning these efforts with long-term organizational strategies. From the lens of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM), succession planning is not merely operational but a strategic process of future-proofing leadership capability (Wright & McMahan, 2011). The Leadership Pipeline Model by Charan et al. (2001) offers a framework for developing leaders through successive stages of responsibility, emphasizing the importance of targeted training and developmental milestones. Moreover, the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory by Barney (1991) underscores human capital

particularly leadership talent as a critical, inimitable asset that contributes to sustained competitive advantage.

Empirical studies reinforce these theoretical foundations. Bano et al. (2022b) highlight that organizations with formal succession plans report higher employee retention and stronger organizational cultures. Nonetheless, succession planning continues to face common challenges such as vague candidate selection criteria, lack of senior management engagement, and insufficient investment in leadership development (Siambi, 2022). Akinde (2021) finds that only 30% of organizations implement structured succession systems, leaving the majority vulnerable to leadership voids. These issues signal an urgent need for HRM to adopt a proactive and theory-informed approach integrating frameworks like talent segmentation and succession metrics to ensure leadership continuity and organizational resilience.

2.3. Tactics and Strategies

Tactics and strategies in the context of Human Resource Management (HRM) and succession planning are essential for ensuring that organizations can effectively identify, develop, and retain future leaders. According to Dessler (2013) HRM strategies in succession planning involve a combination of structured processes, such as talent identification, leadership development programs, and performance appraisal systems. These strategies are designed to align succession planning with organisational goals, ensuring that the right individuals are prepared to take on leadership roles when needed. Bano et al. (2022b) emphasise that organizations that integrate HRM strategies into their succession planning processes experience higher employee engagement and improved organisational culture. However, the effectiveness of these strategies often depends on the tactics employed, such as clear communication, transparent selection criteria, and ongoing leadership training. Without these tactical elements, even well-designed strategies may fail to achieve their intended outcomes.

The absence of senior management participation and ambiguous selection criteria are two major obstacles to putting succession planning techniques into practice (Bano et al., 2022a). To address these challenges, HRM must adopt tactical approaches that ensure buy-in from senior leadership and create transparent processes for identifying and developing potential leaders. For example, involving top management in the design and implementation of succession plans can help align leadership development with organisational priorities. Additionally, clear and objective selection criteria can reduce biases and ensure that the most qualified candidates are chosen for leadership roles. Structured leadership development programs, another critical tactic, give high-potential workers the knowledge and expertise they need to be successful in leadership roles in the future. These initiatives frequently involve targeted training, employment rotations, and mentorship, which have been shown to enhance leadership capabilities and improve organisational performance (Bano et al., 2022b).

2.4. Leader Development

Leader development is a critical component of succession planning and organisational sustainability. It entails the methodical process of locating, developing, and readying high-potential workers to assume leadership positions within a company. According to Bano et al. (2022a), for organizations to have a pool of competent leaders who can advance strategic objectives and preserve competitive advantage, effective leader development programs are crucial. In order to improve leadership skills, these programs frequently include structured instruction, job rotations, mentorship, and experiential learning opportunities. However, the success of leader development initiatives depends heavily on the active involvement of Human Resource Management (HRM). HRM plays a key role in designing and

implementing these programs, ensuring that they align with organisational goals and address the specific needs of future leaders (Dessler, 2013). Without structured leader development programs, organisations risk facing leadership gaps, which can disrupt operations and hinder long-term growth.

Despite the importance of leader development, many organisations struggle with implementing effective programs. Challenges such as the lack of top management involvement, unclear selection criteria, and insufficient resources often hinder the effectiveness of leader development initiatives (Singun, 2025). To address these challenges, HRM must adopt a proactive approach, integrating best practices and innovative strategies into leader development programs. For example, involving senior leaders in mentoring programs can provide high-potential employees with valuable insights and guidance, while clear selection criteria can ensure that the most qualified candidates are chosen for development opportunities. Additionally, structured leadership development programs that include ongoing feedback and performance evaluations can help employees continuously improve their skills and prepare for future leadership roles (Bano et al., 2022a). These tactics not only enhance leader development but also contribute to improved organisational performance and employee engagement.

3. Methods

The research method employed in this study is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). This approach involves a comprehensive analysis of relevant articles and journals published between 2001 and 2024. The SLR process includes identifying, evaluating, and synthesising existing literature to provide a clear understanding of the role of HRM in succession planning. The results from the chosen journals are categorised and interpreted using thematic analysis. This approach guarantees that the study is based on up-to-date and pertinent literature, offering a strong basis for the analysis and conversation.

The research stages included identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. Articles were screened based on their titles, abstracts, and keywords, and those that were not relevant were excluded. First, articles were identified through databases such as PubMed, Crossref, and Scopus. Second, articles were screened based on their relevance to human resource management and succession planning. Third, articles that met the inclusion criteria were selected for further analysis. Then, a total of 11 articles were included in the final review.

Figure 1 shows a simplified representation of the PRISMA flow diagram, which is commonly used to report the study selection stages in a systematic review or meta-analysis. In the identification stage, the researchers collected 135 articles from two sources: 22 from Dimensio.AI and 113 from Connected Paper. Next, in the screening stage, the first 113 articles were eliminated because the title, abstract, or keywords were not relevant, leaving 22 articles for further assessment. The eligibility stage then involved a full-text assessment of the 22 articles, from which the final 10 articles were found to meet the criteria and were eligible for analysis. Finally, in the inclusion stage, all 10 articles that passed were included in the final analysis. This type of diagram increases transparency and reproducibility, as it presents the number of articles in each stage as well as the reasons for exclusion according to the PRISMA guidelines consisting of four phases: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

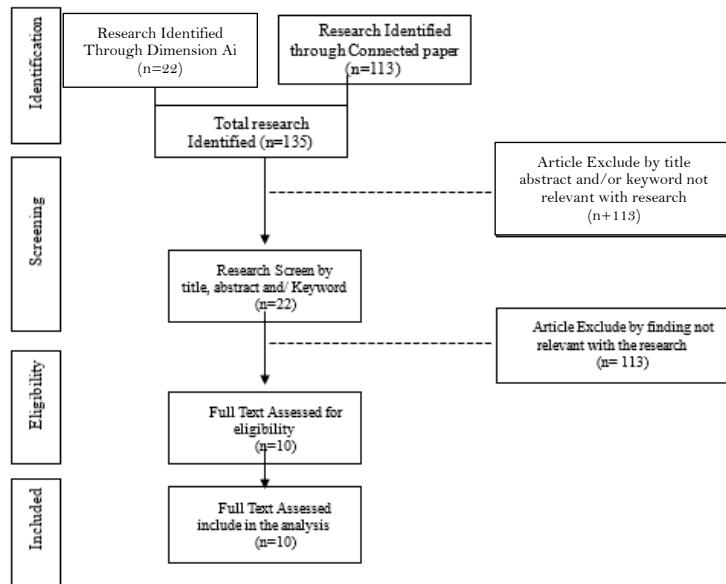


Figure 1. Research Flow Diagram

4. Results

The systematic literature review identified 11 relevant articles from PubMed, Crossref, and Scopus. These articles were analysed using thematic analysis to identify key themes related to HRM, succession planning, leadership development, and organisational performance. In addition, this article also highlights the extent to which internal candidate training and development can improve the effectiveness of succession planning, especially in the context of private organizations. This training is considered a key factor in preparing competent prospective leaders who are ready to take over important roles in the future (Samuel & Isa, 2024).

Karthik (2023) discusses how organizations identify and evaluate potential successors to critical leadership positions. This process involves the strategic role of the human resources division in developing a comprehensive assessment system to assess the potential, competency, and readiness of individuals to fill critical positions in the future. In addition, this article highlights the impact of effective succession planning on organizational sustainability and employee engagement. Structured planning not only ensures a smooth leadership transition but also increases employee motivation and loyalty as they see career development opportunities within the organization.

Internal and external factors that influence the succession planning and management process, particularly in the context of nursing education. This review identifies key components of effective succession planning, such as identification of potential leaders, ongoing training, management involvement, and long-term planning. In addition, organizational culture is also seen to play an important role in the implementation of succession planning. A culture that supports collaboration, learning, and professional development will strengthen the institution's commitment to leadership regeneration, while a rigid or hierarchical culture can be a barrier to the implementation of a sustainable succession program in the nursing education environment (Mahusain et al., 2023).

Salehi et al. (2024) highlighted the important issue of succession avoidance as a hidden behavior that often occurs in organizations, especially in the healthcare sector. This highlights the importance of concrete strategies to integrate succession planning into the organization's strategic plan, such as establishing a formal

succession policy, involving leaders in talent identification and development, and aligning training programs with the long-term needs of the organization. In addition, proactive succession planning has been shown to reduce the turnover rate of nursing managers and reduce the cost of replacing positions. By preparing potential leaders who are ready to work, organizations can avoid critical vacancies, minimize operational disruptions, and save resources that are usually required for last-minute recruitment and training.

Lynn (2001) discusses the challenges faced by public sector organizations in implementing effective succession management strategies. Some of the key barriers identified include complex bureaucracy, lack of structural flexibility, resistance to change, and budget and human resource constraints. These barriers often hinder internal talent development and leadership continuity. To address these challenges, she suggests a structured and measurable approach to evaluating the effectiveness of succession strategies. Public sector organizations can measure success in succession management through indicators such as increased internal leadership readiness, internal promotion rates, retention of key employees, and the time and cost required to fill strategic vacancies. This data-driven evaluation helps ensure that succession strategies are truly supporting the development of long-term leadership capital.

Pynes (2004) highlights the key benefits of effective workforce and succession planning in public sector organizations. Some of these benefits include improved operational continuity, internal leadership development, efficiency in filling key positions, and increased organizational capacity to respond to changing public service needs. This planning also helps ensure that the organization has the right talent at the right time to support the achievement of long-term goals. However, he also identifies several barriers to implementation, such as lack of leadership commitment, budget and resource constraints, and organizational cultures that are slow to adapt to change. In addition, the lack of integrated personnel data and information systems often acts as a barrier to designing evidence-based workforce and succession planning. Overcoming these barriers requires policy support, ongoing training, and integration between strategic planning, personnel, and organizational development.

Succession planning has a significant impact on organizational performance, especially in the context of business companies. Effective succession planning helps reduce the risk of losing key talents, maintain operational stability, and ensure leadership continuity that directly contributes to increased productivity, efficiency, and competitive advantage of the company. In addition, this process can improve employee morale and strengthen the organizational culture that supports career development. Staehr (2015) also outlined the main components of an effective succession planning program, namely: identification of key positions, assessment and mapping of internal talent, development of skills and leadership, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Successful programs are usually integrated with the company's business strategy, supported by top management, and involve the use of data for decision making regarding the development and placement of future leaders.

Research conducted by Huang (2001) aimed to determine the relationship between succession planning practices and organizational performance in various companies in Taiwan. The results of the study showed that companies that systematically implement succession practices tend to have better organizational performance, especially in terms of leadership stability, operational effectiveness, and achievement of strategic goals. Succession practices integrated with human resource management contribute to increased competitiveness and long-term business continuity. In addition, effective succession planning programs have been shown to have a positive effect on employee retention, especially for high-potential employees. By providing clear career paths, targeted training, and leadership development

opportunities, companies can increase employee engagement and loyalty. This directly reduces employee turnover rates, which are often a major challenge in retaining top talent.

The main components of an effective succession planning process in an organization as expressed by Keller (2018), These components include identifying critical positions, assessing employee competencies and potential, developing structured career paths, leadership training, and ongoing evaluation and monitoring. This process also requires top management involvement, integration with organizational strategy, and adequate information system support to manage talent data accurately. Furthermore, Keller explains that succession planning has a significant impact on employee engagement and retention. When employees see opportunities for growth and recognition of their potential, their motivation and commitment to the organization increase. This creates a positive work environment, reduces the desire to leave work, and strengthens an organizational culture that supports sustainable human resource development.

Effective strategies that can be applied to implement succession planning in various organizational contexts. The results of the review indicate that the success of implementation is greatly influenced by top management support, integration with the organization's strategic planning, transparency in the selection process for potential successors, and the use of technology and data to map employee potential and performance. In addition, the importance of adjusting the strategy to the organizational culture and industry characteristics is also a determining factor for success (Jahwari & Alwi, 2023).

The various barriers faced by women and minority groups in the succession planning process include systemic bias, underrepresentation in leadership roles, stereotypes that limit perceptions of their leadership abilities, and limited access to training and promotion opportunities. In addition, informal networks and homogenous organizational cultures often inhibit the active participation of these groups in the succession path. To address these challenges, Greer and Virick (2008) recommend steps such as creating an inclusive work culture, setting diversity targets for talent development, providing structured mentoring programs, and training managers to recognize and reduce bias in the assessment and promotion process. To measure the effectiveness of diversity-focused succession planning initiatives, organizations can use metrics that include increases in the number of women and minorities promoted to leadership positions, their participation in leadership development programs, and retention and job satisfaction rates. In addition, historical trend analysis, organizational climate surveys, and diversity audits can provide insight into whether the strategies implemented are making sustainable progress toward building more inclusive leadership.

5. Discussion

The results of the systematic literature review reveal that Human Resource Management (HRM) active involvement in succession planning significantly strengthens leader development. Organisations that integrate HRM strategies into their succession planning processes experience higher employee engagement and improved organisational culture. The analysis also highlights the importance of clear candidate selection criteria and structured leadership development programs in enhancing the effectiveness of succession planning. These findings support the hypotheses proposed in this study, indicating that HRM plays a crucial role in ensuring leadership continuity and organisational sustainability.

Human Resource Management (HRM) and succession planning are closely related and interdependent. HRM plays a crucial role in identifying, developing, and utilising the succession planning process to keep the talent required to occupy important roles in the future (Elugbaju et al., 2024). In other words, succession

planning is one of the strategic functions of HRM that ensures leadership continuity and organizational stability (Coffie et al., 2022).

However, the research also identifies several challenges that organisations face in implementing effective succession planning. These include the lack of top management involvement, unclear selection criteria, and insufficient leadership development programs. Addressing these challenges requires a proactive approach from HRM, including the development of comprehensive strategies and the integration of best practices (Sulistio & Darmastuti, 2024). The discussion emphasises the need for further research to explore innovative approaches and solutions to these challenges, ensuring that organisations can effectively navigate the complexities of succession planning.

The findings underscore the critical role of HRM in succession planning. Effective HRM practices not only ensure leadership continuity but also contribute to employee satisfaction and organisational performance. However, challenges such as talent shortages and resistance to change require proactive HRM strategies. Organisations must adopt a holistic approach to succession planning, integrating it with broader HRM and business strategies.

The implementation of green performance management systems, as described by Alkaf et al. (2024), encourages environmental sustainability by establishing quantifiable sustainability goals for Indonesian oil and gas businesses and incorporating environmental goals into performance evaluations. Employees are encouraged to meet these goals by regular assessments and feedback, and exceptional contributions to sustainability may be recognised with incentives or awards (Malik et al., 2020). Additionally, the company's environmental impact is reduced by implementing green workplace practices, such as resource efficiency measures, the usage of sustainable office equipment, and energy-efficient technology (Akma et al., 2024). Commuting-related carbon emissions can be decreased by promoting telecommuting and flexible work schedules. When combined, these actions help the company develop a culture of environmental responsibility and long-term environmental sustainability (Joshi et al., 2023).

Succession planning is a strategic process that ensures organizations have the right talent to fill key positions in the future (Jackson & Allen, 2022), guaranteeing operational and leadership continuity. Its main tactics include identifying critical positions, comprehensively assessing the potential of internal employees, and developing individuals through job rotation, mentoring programs, and specialized training to fill skill gaps. The entire process is often mapped visually to provide a clear picture of potential successors and their readiness levels (Smith, 2022).

To guarantee that there is talent available that is in line with the organization's long-term objectives, succession planning must be strategically completely linked with the business vision of the organisation. It's critical to have a large and varied talent pool, avoid concentrating on a single successor for a single position, and encourage an environment of ongoing learning and growth across the entire company. To provide a smooth leadership transition and maintain the organization's resilience in the face of the future, senior management's complete support and involvement are also essential to success (Kohl et al., 2022).

6. Conclusion

Based on the results of a literature review, human resource management plays an important role in the succession planning process. This study focuses on talent identification, leadership development, and organisational cultural alignment. As a forum for human resource development, organisations must be able to overcome challenges through strategic alignment, employee engagement, and continuous evaluation. The research findings also provide recommendations for organisations in managing human resources by building quality human resource investments.

Additionally, senior management must be able to participate in succession planning. Human resource management must also foster a culture of transparency and inclusivity in the succession planning process.

As a continuation of human resource management research on the succession planning process, future research that is more measurable is needed. This study is limited by its reliance on secondary data and descriptive analysis drawn solely from previously published literature. It does not incorporate empirical or primary data, thus restricting the generalizability and precision of its conclusions. Future research should adopt more measurable and data-driven approaches, such as longitudinal case studies or cross-sectional surveys, to validate the practical application of HRM practices in succession planning. Additionally, further studies should explore how succession planning models adapt to varying cultural and organizational contexts, particularly in multinational or cross-industry settings.

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This study has obtained the necessary ethical approval, and this manuscript is an original work that has not been previously published and is not currently under consideration by another journal.

Data Disclosure Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study can be accessed from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.



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