

# Leadership Succession Planning and Organization Transition: A Review of Literature

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**Abstract:** *The leadership succession planning literature has placed emphasis on the three diverse perspectives, first is the contention that a resource-based approach to human resource alignment through resource, capability, and competence deployment as preferable. Second, the premise that specific human resource management practices can increase organization performance when they are aligned with one another and the organization's strategic goals. Third, the focus on the use of organization's internal resources for leadership succession planning. In this study, the research focuses on leadership succession planning and organizational transition with the goal of implementing leadership talent development and retention strategies in the organization. The research examines existing conceptual, theoretical, and empirical literature and makes a case for a theoretical model that connects leadership succession planning and organizational transition in the perspective of both leadership talent retention and talent development policy dynamics. The study analyzes significant organizational outcomes as a result of the implementation of leadership succession planning, with implications for seamless organizational transition and leadership talent retention based on the establishment of leadership talent development policy. The research identifies a phenomenon originating from the deployment of leadership succession planning and presents a theoretical model with various implications for future empirical investigation based on the postulates of several underpinning theories.*

**Keywords:** *Leadership succession planning, organization transition, talent retention, talent development policy*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The literature review of human resource development indicates that the concept of leadership succession planning has undergone phases of change especially on the application of the new approaches to succession planning and their definitions. The importance and the need for advancement of approaches to leadership succession planning through planning frameworks and cycles have introduced additional constructs to the succession planning and proactive approaches to preparing successors in leadership (Wang & Wang, 2017). With the advent of fluidity of leadership roles and increased changes in management of organizations as a result of 21st century developments and complexities that lead to management termination, disability, death and retirement, it is critical that succession planning for the leaders receive an intentional attention in the human resource development of the organization. Effective organizations have invested in continuous leadership talent development and proactive succession planning in order to combat with the emerging challenges of transient management (Ali & Mehreen, 2019a). These organizations had to set up operational succession plans in advance and delve into leadership development of the possible successors in the organization. Leadership succession planning as a cyclic process (Ali & Mehreen, 2019b) of replacing exiting leaders has necessitated adoption of succession planning programs that assure the organization of the stability at the management level, knowledge or skill level, and personnel level when the current managers depart. Succession management, therefore, requires proactive approach to ensure smooth knowledge transfer, continuity towards the desired organizational goals and maintenance of competitive organizational advantage that would not be achieved when gaps are created when leadership exits.

The major impediment of effective leadership succession planning is the failure of an organization to address causes of leadership turnover and build systems that address the deterrents of leadership

continuity and enhance smooth organizational transition. Among the key methods of addressing succession problems is development of the plans that support and build the longevity of the existing leaders while preparing the current human resource to succeed the inevitable departure of senior leaders. The support systems afforded to the upcoming leadership including talent identification and management contributes to the stability of the staff who serve as possible suitable replacement of the current managers. Over time, leadership turnover has increased across industries especially in the small and medium enterprise sector due to internal organizational factors which are not necessarily inevitable in impending smooth organizational transition (Marcel et al., 2017). Leadership turnover, as a result, becomes a major obstacle to leadership succession planning since the time used to develop competent leadership and skills is usually longer than the rate of turnover hence further obstructing smooth organizational transition. In essence, critical and in depth understanding of organization transition serve as a mitigating factor to address concepts that improve leadership stability in the organization hence supporting the efforts of leadership succession planning. The relationship between leadership succession planning and organization transition has captured the interest of recent scholars to investigate these two specific human resource development concepts.

### 2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of leadership succession planning in human resource management literature, there exists criticisms on how these studies have generally portrayed the subject. First, several scholars have come up with definitions of leadership succession planning, however, there has been an evolution of the leadership succession planning studies that have created a gap and variations in the definition, framework and models of leadership succession planning (Addison, 2020). Secondly, the relationship between leadership succession planning and organizational transition has received considerable attention in the literature (Ali, 2019), however, there lacks direct correlational studies between the leadership succession planning models, organization transition, leadership talent retention and leadership development policy. In addition, the existing literature lacks compelling consensus on the standard leadership succession planning frameworks that influence smooth organization transition. Studies looking at the link between leadership succession planning and organization transition intentions have yielded varied results after more than twenty years of investigation; some studies suggest a positive association between the two, while others report a negative association of the same constructs. These discrepancies ought to be addressed in order to consolidate the accomplishments gained in previous studies while also drawing on diverse literature that can assist in resolving the conflicting conclusions (Moore, 2020).

Thirdly, although leadership succession planning has been studied widely, there is minimal application efforts due to the theoretical nature of existing studies which do not provide practical solutions to organizational human resource leadership (Tunji, 2021). Results from most studies provide recommendations that do not mirror the actual application of findings to improve the succession planning. Literature on organization transition, leadership talent retention and leadership development policy exist in isolation hence do not link causation to leadership succession planning. In essence, the literature that abounds on both leadership succession planning and organization transition are presented in isolation hence denying human resource development practitioners opportunities to integrate the findings in these disjointed literature. Fourthly, it is critical to note that different organizations adopt succession planning and address organization transition with organizational transition in their own unique ways. Existing literature suggests that most organizations have adopted varied models of leadership succession planning with a particular focus on the large organizations'. Nevertheless, based the increased number of small and medium enterprises, it is recommendable that studies on leadership planning and leadership turnover involve the small and medium level enterprises (Devaughn, 2018). Additionally, further research is needed to address the relationship between planned leadership transition and leadership succession especially in the small and medium enterprises. So far, there is very little information on how leadership succession may be pursued in the long term while also improving planned leadership transition.

Finally, while there is a wealth of literature on a variety of constructs that may be linked to a phenomenon arising from leadership succession planning and organization transition, it is observed that each of the diverse constructs has been discussed on a stand-alone basis, resulting in a scarcity of literature on the phenomenon from a multi-disciplinary perspective (Addison, 2020). This necessitates

the development of a multidisciplinary integrated approach to the conceptualization of leadership succession planning and organization transition that not only draws on the causation relationship but also incorporates concepts from other well-known disciplines that have served as foundations for human development organizational studies, such as economics, organizational theory, behavior, and psychology, as well as social science research. As a result of the foregoing, the study aims to contribute to current understanding of the leadership succession planning principle by investigating how various aspects of leadership succession planning relate to organization transition in the context of organizational operations. Subsequently, the research focuses on three objectives: to review extant conceptual, theoretical and empirical literature on leadership succession planning and organization transition; to identify the emerging knowledge gaps from the reviewed literature and to propose a suitable theoretical model for advancing research or knowledge development on leadership succession planning.

### 3. CONCEPTUAL LITERATURE

At the turn of the twentieth century, management expert Henri Fayol recommended succession planning as a strategic technique for ensuring company stability by building a pipeline for leadership continuity at all levels of the organization. Fayol believes that in order for an organization to thrive and remain competitive, leaders must begin the process of developing the leadership characteristics and skills essential for long-term success. According to Fayol, if an organization continues to react to leadership continuity, empty senior posts will be filled by unqualified successors (Chevalier, 2008). As a result, management was responsible for improving workplace performance through task planning, coordination, execution, and evaluation (Chevalier, 2008). Peter Drucker, Fayol's successor as a pioneer in the field of management and workplace productivity, shared Fayol's notion that the manager was liable for the productivity of the business (Chevalier, 2008). Many scholars commended Fayol's attempts to create a comprehensive framework for improving organizational performance (Chevalier, 2008). Famous scholars such as B. F. Skinner (1904-1990), Fredrick Herzberg (1923-1990), Abraham Maslow (1908-1970), and Peter Drucker (1909-1925) employed Fayol's (1841-1925) methodology to build their approaches to enhancing organizational performance (Chevalier, 2008). Fayol was a pioneer in succession planning as a means of preserving organizational expertise (Grossman, 2014). Fayol suggested that organizations should engage in the training and development of successors to key leadership roles to mitigate the negative consequences of hiring unqualified personnel. Currently, models vary in their emphasis based on where they focus leadership on: the individual, the position or the process leadership domain (Muthimi & Kilika, 2018). When leadership is placed on personhood, the qualities, attributes or abilities of a leader and the leader/follower connection are crucial. Influence, expertise, role, and hierarchy will all play a role in positional leadership, with an emphasis on the leader within organizational systems. When leadership is viewed as a process, interactions and link reciprocity will be the primary focus of attention (Manthi et al., 2018).

#### 3.1. Conceptualization of Leadership Succession Planning

The essential elements behind the leadership succession planning architecture are discussed in order to achieve the study's objectives. To appreciate the concept, it is important to first understand the Succession Planning design. The leadership succession planning conceptual framework looks into planning for leadership through a progressive development of individuals. Rothwell's (2015) conceptual framework includes a seven-step process for Leadership Succession Planning that can be used as a guide for analyzing the process of leadership succession planning which involves management succession planning. Bennis (1989) provides a distinction of leadership from management by depicting that leadership innovates, inspires, originates, focus on people, develop, challenge the status quo, have a long term perspective while management administers, controls, imitate, focus on systems, maintain, accepts the status quo and focus on the short term results (Bennis, 1989). In essence, leadership succession planning is not mere vacancy planning but a proactive approach to systemic development of leadership capabilities for with a long term perspective.

Rothwell (2015) investigated leadership succession and how anticipating future leaders' responsibilities aids in the process. His work serves as a foundation for the literature on leadership continuity through succession planning, which is the focus of this study. Rothwell's notion encompasses more than just identifying substitutes for important tasks. It focuses on identifying

internal positions vital to an organization's stability and effectiveness, as well as actively developing skills in employees with leadership potential so that they may take over those critical duties in the event of retirement or an unexpected vacancy (Rothwell, 2015). Rothwell uses the terms important roles and critical positions interchangeably, describing them as positions critical to the survival and continuation of an organization. To put it another way, these individuals not only function as leaders within their organizations, but they also have competencies or unique qualities that are crucial to the efficacy and success of their organizations.

Approaches to leadership succession planning is varied depending on the organization, first the rifle approach to leadership succession planning focuses on a specific issue, such as filling critical positions within an organization that have become vacant due to retirement or high turnover (Rothwell, 2015). This targeted technique can assist businesses in identifying and analyzing important positions critical to the organization's viability, as well as developing succession plans to ensure that such positions are filled. This emphasis on leadership continuity in critical roles in the face of departing leadership is critical to this study because it sheds light on how succession plans are developed in advance of leader's departure, such as retirement (Rothwell, 2015). This framework is a continuous, purposeful, and rigorous process by which organizations develop people with the knowledge, competences, abilities, and experience required to fill critical jobs when they become vacant or retire (Rothwell, 2015).

Secondly, Rothwell's model emphasizes the need of preserving institutional knowledge from predecessors and passing it on to successors before they go. When a leader is ready to retire, a transition period is established between the predecessor and successor, resulting in a "relay race" effect between arriving and outgoing leadership. There is also an emphasis on the importance of aligning leadership succession planning with the company's strategic goals and objectives (Rothwell, 2015). As a result, succession plans should be incorporated into organizational strategy plans, which include particular strategies and actions for preparing future leaders in advance of retirements from important roles within the corporation (Rothwell, 2015). In essence, succession planning strategy is meant to assure the sustained effectiveness of an organization, department, or team by assisting in the improvement, replacement, or planned assignment of essential employees. Unlike prior succession models, Rothwell's framework is designed to connect current organizational leadership talent with future organizational demands, and it connects succession planning with succession leadership. This drives daily efforts to cultivate leadership talent within the organization through mentoring and coaching personnel in accordance with the succession plan. This ongoing step in Rothwell's method distinguishes this conceptual framework since it enables long-term leadership development in response to the future demands of the company.

Thirdly, this paradigm is useful because it supports long-term efforts to build and retain leadership over a long period of time by examining the effects of departing leadership (Rothwell, 2015), institutional knowledge loss as a result of leadership retirement, and the total cost of employing new managers and leaders. Despite the fact that succession planning has been shown to be beneficial across industries, critics have pointed out faults in the strategy based on trans disciplinary techniques employed across industries.

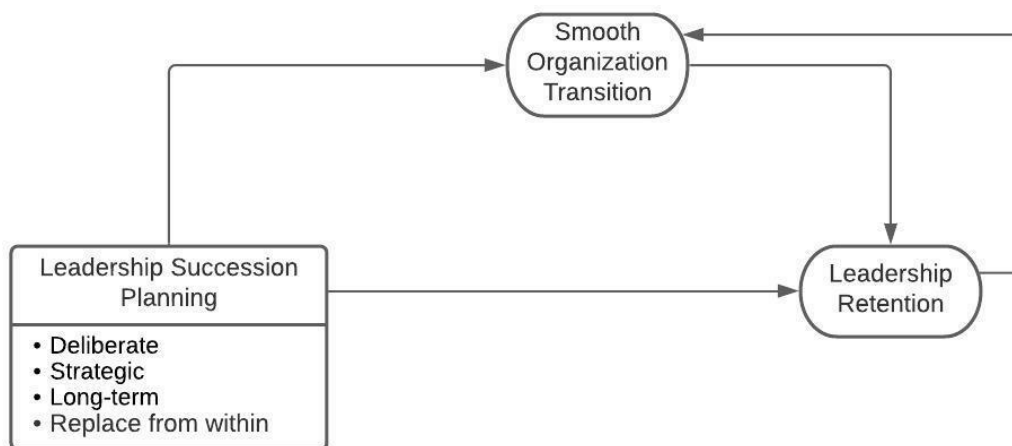
### **3.2. Leadership Succession Planning, Leadership Retention and Transition**

The antecedent cause of the postulated phenomenon is the implementation of leadership succession planning. Rothwell (2015) defines leadership succession planning as a seven-step process that guides the examination of the process of leadership succession planning, which includes management succession planning. The concept's operationalization pervades all aspects of an organization portraying its intentions that leadership succession planning is more significant than management replacement in order to usher in deliberate, strategic, long-term planning and objectives for the entire organization. The application of strategic leadership succession planning will, in this case, produce a situation where one of the key hallmarks of the leadership strategic succession option originates within the organization rather than outside of it.

This condition will actualize a form of an organizational structure that steadfastly focuses its goal and works together to accomplish its goals in terms of actual leadership achievement. Using Armstrong's (2009) postulates, the state of the system established may be viewed as an evolution of leadership

succession development for the organization that possesses all of the characteristics of strategic resources for leadership development. The succession leadership strategy construct, which develops a people-oriented organizational system, has been broadly evaluated using objective measures that are mostly performance in nature; however, the results will go beyond the performance results considering the nature of the leadership succession leadership construct, which develops a people-oriented organizational system (Kilika, 2012).

The purpose of implementing strategic leadership succession planning is to provide leadership transition that maximizes leadership retention as shown in Figure 1, hence increasing the likelihood of smooth leadership and organizational transition. Considering that leadership will permeate the organization, leaders at all stages and operations will influence policy through actions that select, empower, train, and develop abilities and skills that are aligned with the organization's objectives, and ensure leadership modifies and motivates the competencies available to accomplish the organization's mission through the effective use of power (Muthimi & Kilika, 2018).



**Figure 1.** Theoretical Model Linking Leadership Succession Planning, Leadership Retention and Organization Transition

## 4. LITERATURE REVIEW

The core construct in this conceptual study drove an intensive review of the enormous amount of relevant theoretical and empirical literature. As a result, this section discusses the ideas that underpin the concept of leadership succession planning, leadership retention, organization transition and leadership talent development policy.

### 4.1. Theoretical Review

Following the emerging conceptual issues, it is considered that leadership succession planning and performance literature is divided into three fundamental categories: universalistic, contingency, and configurational theories (Richards, 2010). The behavioral perspective is one of the more distinctive and widely applied theoretical frameworks in the strategic human resource management literature. Another approach to human resource management is based on universalist ideas, which believe that certain approaches to human resource management are suitable for all organizations (Armstrong, 2014). According to this, regardless of company situation, there is a universal solution that many organizations can use to manage their personnel. Another essential point to notice is that, while the best practices approach has widespread acceptability, it has also been criticized in the literature from a variety of perspectives (Gabriel et al., 2020). Organizations ought to use their resources, especially intangible assets such as human capital, to improve their overall model and outperform competitors. Furthermore, the contingency school has expressed concerns about best practices. It is evident, however, that there is no one-size-fits-all set of human resource management approaches that should be used in every situation. Best fit methods are more adaptable than universalistic or best practice methods. The contingency school of thinking has placed a strong emphasis on the relationship between strategy and human resource management.

### *4.1.1. Universalistic Theory*

The resource-based approach to aligning HR practices with organizational strategy offers the conceptual and theoretical underpinning for strategic human resource management, whereas the 'best practices' and 'contingency' approaches place a stronger emphasis on how human resources may assist organizations attain a sustainable competitive advantage. Many early studies on the management succession planning depended on best practices, emphasizing the uniformity of strategic human resource management practices across organizations (Hamid, 2013). This position asserts that some human resource management activities are superior to others and that establishments should recognize and embrace them. This demonstrates that researchers hypothesized that adopting a best-practices strategy in leadership succession planning would increase organizational performance through smooth organization transition. Internal career opportunities in an organization, professional training mechanisms, result oriented appraisals, career progression opportunities, involvement in problem solving and decision-making, and revenue sharing are just a few of the benefits of leadership succession planning. Several scholars and academicians, however, have highlighted concerns regarding best practices. The best-practices approach may hinder organizational innovation and the opportunity to generate new, culturally relevant practices (Cavanaugh, 2017). Attempts to use the universalistic method in nations other than the United States and the United Kingdom, according to the findings of various investigations, have not been convincingly substantiated (Kaufman, 2010). Another issue was that it may be difficult for a company to produce value and preserve a competitive edge when best practices have been codified and adopted by other organizations.

### *4.1.2. Fit or Contingency Theory*

Human resources management and organization performance research has changed as a result of criticisms of best practices methodology and challenges with its implementation across organizations (Van De Ven & Drazin, 1985). Human resource management practices have been shown to boost an organization's performance in a synergistic manner (Drazin & Van De Ven, 1985). In a horizontal fit, human resource management practices are homogeneous, whereas in a vertical fit, these policies are linked to the organization's bigger strategic goals (Iivari, 1992). Research supports the contingency plan, revealing a correlation between internal consistency in human resource management practices and organizational efficiency. These high-performance work systems are made up of a variety of human resource management strategies that function collaboratively rather than individually to improve an organization's overall efficiency and effectiveness (Trkman, 2010). The contingency technique is founded on the idea that specific human resource management practices, when aligned with one another and the company's strategic goals, can improve organization performance. The success of human resource policies is judged by how well they are integrated both horizontally and vertically under the contingency theory.

### *4.1.3. Resource-Based-View Theory*

In the literature on organizational economics and strategic management, the resource-based view of business has lately been proposed as a fresh theoretical contribution to discussions on strategic human resource management (Agus Zainul Arifin, 2020). The theoretical framework for the concept's current prominence is provided by Resource-Based Human Resources Management (RBHRM), a novel approach to strategic human resource management (Sajeevanie, 2015). To provide an organization with a sustained competitive advantage, resources must meet four criteria, in accordance to the Resource-Based-View theory: (1) the resource should increase value to the organization, (2) it should be rare and unique among rivals, (3) it cannot easily be imitated, and (4) it must be imperfectly imitable. Human resource management policies and practices that match these criteria can aid in the improvement of organizational effectiveness. Rather than the old-style external method of building strategy to fit the environment, resource-based management prioritizes the organization's internal resources (Piwovar-Sulej, 2021). Internal resources are seen as a source of competitive advantage since they allow a company to stay one step ahead of its competition. To put it another way, the traditional strategic management paradigm focuses on the industry environment, whereas the resource-based approach focuses on the organization's internal resources and strategy performance. According to this trend in mainstream strategic management literature, the resource-based approach to competitive advantage and sustained competitive advantage contrasts from the conventional strategy paradigm in that it focuses on how strategy and an organization's internal resources are related.

### 4.1.4. Emerging Theoretical Issues

The resource-based viewpoint provides the theoretical motivation that is required for research in the field of strategic human resource management and organizational behavior (Karman, 2020). When explaining the importance of human resource practices in organization success, strategic human resource management professionals have increasingly relied on a resource-based view of the organization (Delorme & Arcand, 2010). Human resource management systems, according to theoretical studies in the field of strategic human resource management, may increase corporate performance and serve as a source of long-term competitive advantage because they are often different, causally ambiguous, and difficult to imitate (Radcliffe, 2005). According to the Resource-Based-View (RBV) concept, when organizational human resource practices and policies are integrated with the appropriate organizational strategy and human resource resources meet four distinct requirements (rare, valuable, inimitable, and non-substitutable), the organization is better positioned to achieve enhanced organizational performance and sustain competitive advantage over the long term. Therefore, according to the Resource-Based View, a company's competitive advantage is decided mostly by how effectively it utilizes the limited resources at its disposal. It is highly difficult to replicate a company's competitive advantage through excellent human resource management, but competitors can easily replicate a company's competitive advantage through superior technology and goods. When a company selects highly qualified individuals and trains and develops their abilities and technical competencies in a superior and unique manner than its competitors, the company has ensured that its human resource practices in this area are unique, valuable, inimitable and irreplaceable. Given that internal organizational resources are made up of employees' talents and abilities rather than physical assets, the resource-based viewpoint theory provides a framework for understanding human resources as a pool of skills and talents that can serve as a source of long-term competitive advantage. During the formulation stage of strategic management, organizations can make use of the resource-based view technique to analyse the pool of human resources that are either capable or incapable of carrying out a given corporate plan. It is possible that this perspective implies that organizational strategies are not always implementable, but are more contingent on having the appropriate balance of human resources.

## 4.2. Empirical Literature Review

Following the extant empirical literature anchored on the identified constructs and components of leadership succession planning and leadership retention, this study shall propose a conceptual model that seeks to suggest the nature of relationships between the identified constructs. The relationship of the constructs is anchored on the application that leadership succession planning is the independent variable while organization transition is the dependent variable whose relationships are moderated by talent development policy and mediated by leadership talent retention.

### 4.2.1. Leadership Succession Planning and Leadership Talent Retention

Execution of effective leadership planning that focuses on identifying leadership gaps, developing leadership plans, and implementing the agreed plans directly influences the organization's ability to retain its leadership. The constructs of leadership succession planning have also demonstrated their relationship with characteristics that retain leaders in an organization, including psychological conditions, remunerations, job fit, and perceived alternative employment (McKenna, 2007; c, 2009; Olaolu & Uwaleke, 2017). Other constructs of leadership succession planning that address leadership development curriculum, culture reflection of the leadership plan, and development of young leaders in an organization address the need for the organization to retain its incumbent leaders and upcoming leaders by making the organization attractive through the improvement team member engagement hence boosting organizational affiliation by leaders and employees in the organization (Hess et al., 2014; Downs, 2017; McCowan, 2020).

Leadership succession plan implementation ensures that career pathways and goodwill of leaders are reflected in the creation of capacities within the organizational teams. In essence, they boost the organization's attractiveness and improves the organizational citizenship behavior, hence building

capability and reducing transitory employment. When these factors are addressed, the tendency for leadership turnover is minimized based on the availability of opportunity in the current organization (Govender, 2010; Bonin, 2018; Cook et al., 2021). When the leadership succession planning has implemented its constructs of leadership capacity evaluation, preparation for change, internal leadership capacity and quality of leadership development, the tendency for psychological conditions that push leaders to turnover is minimized. Since, closing the leadership capacity gaps, improving organizational climate, and communicating psychological and perceived contracts improves leadership retention, it follows that the fulfillment of leaders' expectations reduced the need to seek alternative employment. These factors are supported by the characteristics of leadership style that would provide the foundation of talent and leadership retention (Moquin et al., 2019; Jung et al., 2017; Suifan et al., 2020).

The salient characteristics and constructs of leadership talent retention which include psychological conditions, remuneration, job fit, and perceived alternative employment opportunity, can be addressed through the implementation of an effective leadership succession plan. The plan must address the element of salary distribution, loyalty compensation, consideration of previous experience when calculating remuneration, provision of learning and support, effective assessment and fairness in evaluation in the provision of continuous learning which essentially garner together to streamline organizational intention to retain current and incoming leadership (Braendle, 2015; Ucho et al., 2015). Consequently, the construct of job fit in leadership retention is addressed through the impact of a leadership succession plan that takes into consideration the needs of the current potential leaders and internal leadership talent development (Carless, 2005; Lang et al., 2016).

Owing to previous literature findings, which showed the relationship between some components of leadership succession planning and leadership talent retention, this study proposes that implementation of effective leadership succession planning that would positively impact leadership talent retention (Nawaz & Pangil, 2016; Nemerowicz, 2010; Saleem & Gul, 2013).

***Proposition 1: Implementation of effective leadership succession planning positively impacts on leadership talent retention***

#### *4.2.2. Leadership Succession Planning and Organization Transition*

The relationship between leadership succession planning and the organizational transition is extant in literature hence the correlation between the impact of leadership succession planning on the effectiveness of organizational transition. Under the reasoning that effective leadership succession planning influences smooth handover of leadership, enforces succession planning continuum, implements a system of smooth handover and inculcates a culture of performance and stability; it is, therefore, imperative that leadership succession planning impacts organizational transition. The development of leadership succession planning that embodies the link between the precursor and successor through the planning process and predecessor preparedness without compromising the successor's credibility ensures a smooth handover process. The need for critical leadership skills development and the implied operational commitment of the successors cements preliminary functions of the succession plan. Handover procedures, especially during generation transition in leadership, depending on extant leadership succession planning, improves the system of leadership handover. It is through this process that strategic leadership succession planning process must be in place to safeguard the organizational culture, performance and sustainability (Andric et al., 2016; Dakoumi et al., 2013; Sujan et al., 2015).

***Proposition 2: There is a positive correlation between effective leadership succession planning and smooth organization transition in an organization***

#### *4.2.3. Leadership Succession Planning, Leadership Retention, and Organization Transition*

During the leadership handover, when the identity of the predecessor is engaged and recognized in the organization, the handing over process is geared towards smooth transition since the founders'



characteristics, and strategic succession planning would have addressed issues arising from the characteristics of successors' leadership style and the perceived preparedness of the predecessor's leadership capabilities (Bozer et al., 2015; Byrnes, 2010; Santora et al., 2013). The role of critical skills development and consideration of generational differences during succession leadership development ensures succession planning continuum, a component of organizational transition that originates from leadership succession planning. In essence, a leadership succession plan addresses leadership styles and supervisory approaches hence grounding organizational culture, organizational performance, and organizational stability in its transitional process hence improving the perceived operational commitment of incoming leaders and accolades ascribed to outgoing leaders. As a result of the findings of previous studies, it has been demonstrated that there exists a positive correlation and a strong influence in the deployment of leadership succession planning on the leadership retention and the degree of the plan on the organizational transition process hence the third proposition that even though the deployment of leadership succession planning impacts on leadership retention, the degree of its impact is dependent on the tenets of the organizational transition process.

***Proposition 3:*** *Even though the deployment of leadership succession planning impacts organizational transition, the degree of its impact is dependent of the tenets of leadership talent retention processes.*

#### *4.4.4. Organization Transition, Leadership Succession Planning, Leadership Retention and Talent Development Policy*

The emerging phenomenon is that leadership succession planning is the foundation of effective organization transition and has a strong role in leadership retention and can only be safeguarded through policies, procedures, practices, and programs that protect its implementation. The role of leadership and talent development policy in an organization defends the existence of leadership and transition planning in an organization based on the tenets and the understanding of ensuring the support of the plan towards leadership retention and smooth organization transition (Dawson, 2020; García-Martínez et al., 2020; Macpherson, 2009; Sablok et al., 2017). The leadership succession planning, leadership talent development, organization transition and retention policies would invest in leadership talent acquisition, leadership talent sustainability, and the leadership practice that reflect the objectives of the organization (Akuffo & Kivipöld, 2021; DeConinck & DeConinck, 2017; Naeem & Khurram, 2020). It is from this backdrop that leadership development policies, procedures, practices and programs would provide strong grounding to the organizations succession planning practices that encourage leadership retention and enforce smooth organizational transition. The justification of the role of leadership and talent development policy emerges from its significance in the analysis of current and future leadership capabilities which embodies: long term capability planning, network building, the link between succession exercise and professional development (Barrios et al., 2020; Egbuta, 2019; Trickel, 2015). This thought process is also supported by the policies on leadership talent acquisition, sustainability and leadership development which ensures that leaders are nurtured and allowed to grow, strategic human resources management orientation is practiced and evidenced through development systems, job engagement, and compensation systems (Al Suwaidi et al., 2020; Johnson, 2020; Mutunga & Gachunga, 2013).

***Proposition 4:*** *Talent development policy moderates the relationship between leadership succession planning and organization transition.*



**Figure2.** Leadership Succession Planning, Leadership Talent Retention, Talent Development Policy, and Organization Transition.

**Proposition 5:** The mediated effect of leadership talent retention on the relationship between leadership succession planning and organization transition will be moderated by the dictates of the talent development policy.

**Proposition 6:** The relationship between leadership succession planning deployed and organization transition practices is moderated by the extant level of talent development policy.

#### 4.4.5. Summary of Empirical Literature Gaps

In essence, despite the studies robustness; the conclusions of studies, they are not generalizable due to the study's contexts. Nonetheless, some studies fail to give practical features that can be used, particularly in the development of leadership potential, leadership talent retention, organizational transition and talent development policy hence restricting the scope of application to theory. The limitation in demonstrating the applicability and sustainability of the findings in the industry emerges just like the lack of a broad consensus on the most effective approaches to the constructs. On the

methodological aspect, the insufficient correlational data and the subjectivity from qualitative approaches to support the effectiveness of most studies frustrates their ability to be replicated hence their reliability. The limitation of other studies is in their selection of participants which are not sufficiently representative of the population poses a challenge in maintaining, assessing, and demonstrating rigor in the studies. While the empirical studies have provided a comprehensive set of findings on the constructs of leadership succession planning and leadership retention, this study reveals an emergent gap on the strategic approach to these constructs, the formulation of standards that emerge from consensus of practitioners and the development of policies that safeguard the process of leadership succession planning in organizations.

### 5. CONCLUSION

The goal of this study was to review existing conceptual, theoretical, and empirical literature in order to gain a better understanding of the construct of leadership succession planning and the outcomes it produces in organizations, as well as to propose a theoretical framework for modeling the relationships between the identified constructs in the emerging phenomenon. In the study, it was discovered that the construct can be used in strategic leadership succession planning as a strategy to improve leadership talent retention and organization transition. During times of transition, strategic leadership succession planning, in conjunction with leadership development policies, provides an organization with a once-in a lifetime opportunity to retain its best and brightest employees, leaders and talent. According to the findings of the study, in order to achieve leadership continuity and smooth handover systems from predecessors to successors, policies, procedures, practices, and programs that are grounded in generational organizational transition must be implemented. The paper went on to discuss the role that talent development policies play in governing the relationship between leadership succession planning, leadership retention, and the smooth transition of an organization from one stage to the next. The paper clarified each construct's conceptual understanding by finding specific indicators and grounding each construct to the overarching theoretical framework premised on universalistic theory, contingency theory, and resource-based-view theory.

Nevertheless, the study acknowledges that there are some shortcomings in its demonstration of the findings of this study. First and foremost, despite the fact that the literature was extensive, it was drawn from a small number of relevant disciplines that were considered to be critical in improving the understanding of the phenomenon of leadership succession planning in organizations. To this end, the paper extends a call for contributions from the existing body of knowledge drawn from multiple disciplines, with the goal of strengthening and enriching the ongoing discussion on the implementation of strategic leadership succession planning and the outcomes that result from it. Secondly, the propositions made by the study have yet to be empirically validated. Accordingly, future researchers are encouraged to consider the importance of adopting contexts on which future studies can be built, as well as the translation of the proposed theoretical framework into an appropriate conceptual framework relevant in guiding empirical studies that use the constructs' indicators in order to verify the assertions made by the hypotheses using empirical data.

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