

Conceptual Paper

Individual Differences in Succession Planning and Leadership Qualities: A Conceptual Paper

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Abstract: This study utilised quantitative and qualitative methods to provide insights into the factors influencing the succession planning process at the three-tier upper management and how they contribute to the development of leadership qualities in 5-star hotels in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Specifically, it explores the role of internal factors, such as individual differences, in the development of talented leadership qualities alongside a few specific internal factors, such as social identity, leadership talent, and workplace envy as the mediating factor. The study employed the human capital theory and the theory of planned behavior (TPB) as the underpinning theories that link anticipatory behaviour to social identity and leadership talents which leads to succession planning and the development of leadership qualities. The study sample consisted of 260 upper management personnel from 42 hotels in Kuala Lumpur. The findings shed light on how succession planning is conducted in the hotel industry, particularly given the diverse backgrounds of its employees. Further, suggestions of reassessing the current process of developing and grooming future upper management by considering the differences within the organisation are also discussed.

Keywords: Succession planning, leadership qualities, mixed methods, management, upper echelons

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Introduction

The hotel industry is an intensive workforce sector that heavily relies on its employees to deliver excellent customer service. The sector is also imperative in today's contemporary business atmosphere, particularly in Malaysia (Abo-Murad &

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Abdullah, 2019). Unfortunately, the hotel industry faces numerous human resource problems, namely high employee turnover, a shortage of talents, and low or no quality service (Beh & Shah, 2017; Downe, Loke, Ho, & Taiwon, 2012; Haldorai, Kim, Pillai, Park, & Balasubramanian, 2019).

Succession planning is an emerging concept that needs more research to determine its relationship to workforce members and organisational outcomes (Ali & Mehreen, 2019). According to Wiesman and Baker (2013), succession planning entails ensuring continuity and consistency in key positions, besides maintaining a cultivated intellectual capital as well as organisational knowledge. In addition, it helps the organisation to accomplish its objectives by ensuring that sufficient expertise is available to face the demands of turbulent market conditions (Alvani, Southeh, Jadaghi, & Inaloo, 2016).

The succession planning system is claimed to be implemented in the hotel industry. However, according to Akinniyi, Lkama, Idowu, and Oraegbune (2020), quoting the Society for Human Resource Management research, only 58% of organisations in the United States have an official and unofficial succession planning scheme, while another 26% have announced plans to create one. Consequently, there is a shortage of succession planning studies and lack of understanding on why most companies do not implement succession planning (Obedgiu, 2017). According to Daley (2020), companies with a clear succession plan engage 90% of their employees aged between 19 and 34 at a higher level compared to those without.

However, most international hotel companies are bound to select and appoint senior managers based on priorities to enhance their corporate and brand image amongst their stakeholders (Minkiewicz, Evans, Bridson, & Mavondo, 2011). This suggests that the majority of international and well-known hotel companies are likely to hire foreign nationals to hold senior management positions because of their global knowledge, industry standards, and experiences in their home country (Chang & Ma, 2015; King & So, 2015). Thus, based on study findings by Halim, Mustafa, and Azizan (2020), researchers assume that the hotel industry in Malaysia is facing the same stereotypical problems. Their study discovered 323 expatriates working in the 3-star, 4-star, and 5-star hotels in Malaysia. Most expatriates were Europeans (48.3%), comprising 88.2% (179) of respondents in managerial posts. Additionally, most expatriates (90.6%) have experience working in foreign countries before expatriating to Malaysia.

The hospitality and tourism industries lose more employees as they age compared to the retail, professional service, education, and health sectors (Chung & D'Annunzio-Green, 2018; Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou, 2019). Similarly, 43% of hospitality employers reported difficulty filling vacancies in Australia (Goh & Lee, 2018). To address this problem, the industry recruits young talents from hospitality schools so that these hires can inspire high career satisfaction (Chuang & Dellmann-Jenkins, 2010; Song & Chathoth, 2008; Song & Chon, 2012; Teng, 2008; Wan, Wong & Kong, 2014; Walsh, Chang, & Tse, 2015).

However, low income, low status, and a lack of career development opportunities, on the other hand, have negatively affected the job satisfaction of hospitality students (Brown, Thomas, & Bosselman, 2015; Wan et al., 2014). These unsupportive factors are even more prevalent amongst racial/ethnic minorities (e.g., people of colour) (Wen & Madera, 2013). To make matters worse, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission of the United States (EEOC) recorded an 18% increase in racial discrimination charges from 2016 to 2018. In Australia, there has been a consistent 5% annual increase in the number of people reporting discrimination since 2016 (Markus, 2018).

Situmorang and Japutra (2019) argued that by appointing fewer local managers to upper echelons and managerial positions, the future local workforce would be intimidated to work in the hotel industry. Therefore, this study provides insights into the factors influencing the succession planning process on the three-tier operation managers and how they help develop leadership qualities in 5-star hotels in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, by intersecting quantitative and qualitative data. The objectives of the study are to:

1. Determine individual difference factors that contribute to the succession planning process
2. Establish the workplace envy effect as a moderator of individual difference factors with the succession planning process and leadership qualities
3. Explore the leader's (manager's) perceptions of individual difference factors in the succession planning process
4. Explore the influence of leadership qualities on the implementation of succession planning in 5-star hotels in Malaysia

Research Questions

1. What are the contributions of individual difference factors to the succession planning process in 5-star hotels?
2. What effects does workplace envy have as a moderator on individual difference factors and leadership qualities?
3. What are the leader's (manager's) perceptions of individual difference factors in the succession planning process?
4. How do leadership qualities perpetuate or challenge the succession planning process?

Literature Review

Strategic succession planning is essential to the overall business processes, competitive advantages, profitability, and business continuity. Wiesman and Baker (2013) identified the importance of succession planning management to ensure continuity and consistency of key positions as well as to maintain and cultivate intellectual capital and organisational knowledge. It helps organisations accomplish objectives by ensuring

that sufficient expertise is available to face the challenges of turbulent market conditions (Alvani et al., 2016). Most organisations have begun to step away from the traditional style of replacing internal talent pools (Gothard & Austin, 2013). Rothwell (2010, p.10) defined succession planning as “a deliberate and systematic effort by an organisation to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and encourage individual advancement”. While Sobol, Harkins, and Conley (2007) described succession planning as a comprehensive approach to ensure that an organisation has a consistent and reliable supply of talents to fulfil future leadership needs and other core staffing positions.

Hypothesis Development

Hypothesis 1 [Social Identity and Succession Planning]

Generally, social identity relates to an individual’s perception of self based on his or her connection in a group, such as ethnicity, race, or gender (Vecci & Zelinsky, 2019). A person’s social identity indicates a set of rules that controls group behaviour, as it can identify behavioural differences across groups. According to a study done by Zainol, Ahmad, Nordin, Tazijan, and Ab Rashid (2015), quoting the Malaysia Employee Federation (2011), the estimated turnover rate in the hotel industry was 65.7%. To help the industry, Chung and Dellmann-Jerkins (2010) encouraged the industry to recruit new young talents from hospitality schools by inspiring them with high career satisfaction. However, low income, low prestige, and a lack of job development prospects have detrimental impacts on the happiness of hospitality students in their careers (Brown et al., 2015). Another factor that contributes to the high turnover is race or ethnicity. This influence of factor is even stronger (Wen & Madera, 2013). The hotel industry is not impervious to racial discrimination which is, as described by Ong, Fuller-Rowell, and Burrow (2009), “unfair, differential treatment based on race and ethnicity”. Racial discrimination may be a factor that undermines the fulfilment of the hospitality profession, which is described as “an evaluation of a person’s success toward self-defined career goals” (McGinley, 2018, p. 204). Thus, the study proposes:

H1: Social identity has a significant influence on the succession planning process.

Hypothesis 2 [Leadership Talent and Succession Planning]

Leadership talent is defined as personal, exceptional characteristics and developable abilities within organisations that enables one to reach excellent performance (Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou, 2019). Attracting and retaining talent remains a perennial and important issue, as there is a scarcity of staff and limited career lifespans in the hospitality industry (Goh & Okumus, 2020). The present hospitality

workforce is dominated by young talents, while older employees retire and exit the industry. Hospitality personnel analysts have labelled this pattern as a “perfect storm” in which older employees retire because of the inevitable life cycle turnover as younger hospitality workers join the workforce (Solnet, Baum, Robinson, & Lockstone-Binney, 2016). The young generation yearn for career accomplishments, where 40.2% of hospitality graduates ranked “holding a very high-level powerful job” as the most significant graduation career target and 88.4% planned to be a departmental manager within 5 years of graduation (Ly & Adler, 2009).

However, it is necessary to plan a long-term career direction. Past studies have shown that hospitality managers suffer from stagnation and disengagement due to a lack of substantive career planning (McGuire, Polla, & Heidi, 2017). Similarly, employees who are unable to envision their career future in an organisation have a higher tendency to leave the industry (Reilly, 2018). Therefore, Rothwell (2010) emphasised that one of the main purposes of a succession plan is to identify and develop critical leadership talent to increase the number of highly promotable employees. Different beliefs, demographic backgrounds, languages of origins, and cultures should be considered in the hiring for key positions. Thus, the study suggests that:

H2: Leadership traits have a positive influence on the succession planning process.

Hypothesis 3 [Succession Planning and Leadership Qualities]

Internally, identifying and cultivating high-potential managers is an important part of organisational planning and efficiency (Risher, 2015; Yamkovenko & Hatala, 2015). The competencies and capabilities of future managers are essential components of leadership succession planning (LSP), which must be tested appropriately and consistently (Moradi, 2014; Hanson, 2013). Each organisation benefits from keeping a list of internal applicants for the talent pipeline which is examined on a regular basis (Saratun, 2016). The industry should invest in LSP to source high-potential internal talents systematically and synergistically (Cho & Poister, 2014).

When it comes to coaching, the continuous participation of potential managers in an active leadership development system or scheme fosters motivation and trust in the higher-level management, especially their mentors, as they advance in their careers (Saratun, 2016). Executive coaching is one of the most successful tools for cultivating high-potential internal managers for various job levels and promotions, and the top management should utilise it to inspire and improve future leaders (Chung & Xiaowei, 2012). The sustainability of hotel companies is heavily connected with certain leadership qualities. Previous studies suggest that certain leadership qualities and styles affect the succession planning process and vice versa. Leland, Carman, and Swartz (2012) found

a positive impact on the succession planning process when leaders adopted succession planning as a part of their role. When successful leaders manage hotels, the chances of the organisations to sustain growth and profitability are higher. Thus, the study suggests that:

H3: Succession planning has a significant influence on leadership qualities.

Hypothesis 4 [The Effect of Workplace Envy on Succession Planning and Leadership Qualities]

A significant number of studies have examined the adverse consequences of how envy can impact group satisfaction and contribute to absenteeism, social undermining, and counter-productive work in an organisation (Khan, Bell, & Quratuain, 2017). High performers are more likely to be the envy and victim of group members (Kim & Glomb, 2014). For example, envy can lead to aggressive actions by a leader against a high-performing employee (Yu, Duffy, & Tepper, 2018).

Ironically, envy can also take a benevolent form. The counter-intuitive variation of envy involves pro-social conduct, such as favouring and befriending envied individuals, because benevolent envy motivates envious individuals to achieve self-improvement goals (Puranik, Koopman, Vough, & Gamache, 2019). It is important to recognise envy and its meaning as a result of upward social contrast (Lange & Crusius, 2015). Attention should be given to understanding the workplace's roles and the administrative ramifications of workplace envy so that the processes and forces of envy can be examined while seeking to reduce envy at the workplace. Unfortunately, very little comparative research has been conducted in the hospitality industry (Zhang, 2020) with regard to this topic. Thus, the study proposes that:

H4: Workplace envy has a negative effect on the succession planning process and leadership qualities.

Proposed Conceptual Model

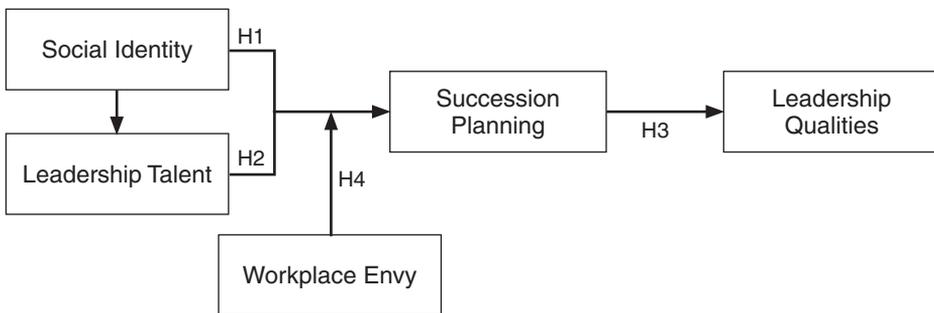


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual model

Theoretical Perspectives

This study employed two popular theories to explain human resource development in any organisational set-up which are the human capital theory by Schultz (1961) and the theory of planned behaviours (TPB) by Ajzen (1988, 1991, 1995). Schultz (1961) developed the human capital theory to explain the variances among individuals concerning education and training. The human capital theory suggests that education and training increase the productivity and efficiency of employees (Jerzak, 2015). Human capital is any state of innate or acquired characteristic such as individual ability, knowledge, know-how, talent, education, skills, and experience that contributes to productivity (Green & Roberts, 2012; Park, 2018). It increases the efficiency of succession in organisations. For this study, the human capital theory was adopted to explain two independent variables that represent individual differences, that is, social identity and leadership talent.

Succession planning must be linked to other processes such as individual development, career aspiration mapping, and manpower forecasting (Pandey & Sharma, 2014). The rapid growth of the global knowledge economy requires organisations to be equipped with the right intellectual capital to increase sustainability and competitiveness. In today's knowledge economy, the influence of human capital indicates that investments in intangible resources are valuable (Muda, Ridhuan, & Rachman, 2016). Recent studies have shown that internal social capital has a stronger level of influence in an organisation that requires innovation (Cuevas-Rodriguez, Cabello-Medina, & Carmona-Lavado, 2014). The linkages increase the efficiency of succession planning, which is an integral part of the human capital theory. Intellectual capital is an essential component to ensure that an organisation is sustainable (Patruti, 2013).

The present study also adopted the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) which extends the line of thought in this area by linking personal beliefs with actions and behaviour as well as outlining how attitude can influence actual human behaviours (Conner, 2020). One of the perspective used to describe the High Commitment Human Resources (HCHR) and succession leadership quality relationship is the behavioural perspective. The behavioural perspective in succession planning includes selecting the right employee as a successor for promotional opportunities. Then, the successor should assist with that growth (Spurk & Abele, 2011). In succession planning, the perception that one can perform and carry out strategic and long-term planning is crucial toward the success of an organisation because perceived behavioural control is situated in the social-cognitive theory as established by Bandura (2011). In succession planning, leaders make decisions concerning the creation of a succession plan under certain assumptions (Bennington & Minutolo, 2013)

Method

This study employed a mixed method research design, a mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches to build rich insights in the topic of interest (Venkatesh, Brown, & Sullivan, 2016; Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). Mixed method analysis is useful to resolve confirmatory and exploratory research problems (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003, 2009) and to create new analytical insights by incorporating the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods (Venkatesh et al., 2013, 2016). The primary purpose of this design is to use a qualitative dimension to clarify the original quantitative outcomes. The explanatory design is appropriate as this study required qualitative evidence to describe quantitative significant or non-significant outcomes, positive exemplars, outlier results, and unexpected or confounding results (Bradley et al., 2009; Morgan, 2014; Morse, 1991). The researcher forms a group based on the quantitative findings and follows up with the group through qualitative analysis or uses the quantitative results of the characteristics of the participants to guide the purposeful sampling for the qualitative process (Morgan, 2014). This helps to clarify the phenomenon by providing qualitative evidence that explains why the quantitative effect has arisen and how they could be explained (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2017). This design suited the nature of this study.

First, the present study employed a stratified sampling method to select for each category of the three-tier operation managers in 5-star hotels. Etikan and Bala (2017) mentioned that stratified sampling is used when a population from which a sample is drawn does not form a similar group. Thus 42 5-star hotels in Kuala Lumpur were first contacted to determine the population of the study, that is, to determine the number of operation managers who were in charge of the room division department (front office, housekeeping, and reservation) and the food and beverage department (restaurant, banquet, and kitchen). Based on the information given, a total of 260 managers then became the respondents of this study. For data collection and analysis, a face-to-face survey was conducted. The data obtained was analysed through Structural Equation Modelling using the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS).

In the second phase, focus group interviews were conducted using the Zoom application until theoretical saturation was reached (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Each session consisted of three to four participants with different backgrounds and demographics. The participants were selected using purposive sampling which means that the researchers intentionally selected participants who have experienced the central phenomenon or key concept under study. According to Han (2013), this technique is one of the most favourable approaches in hospitality and tourism management. Participants in the qualitative follow-up interviews were a subset of the respondents who participated in the quantitative data collection. Further, only those who were accessible and volunteered participated in the interviews (Cozby & Bates, 2015).

Discussion and Conclusion

There is a dearth of research on this topic, specifically in the context of the Malaysian hotel industry. The focus of past studies had been primarily on different industries such as the public sector, SMEs, and public universities (Bokhari, Muhammad, & Zakaria, 2020; Ahmad & Keerio, 2020; Ahmad, 2018). Therefore, this study fulfils a research gap in succession planning and human capital development.

Succession planning is a process that involves identifying and developing ideal individuals to replace the upper echelons in an organisation or company. In the context of the hotel industry, this ensures that a hotel business can maintain its competitive advantage in an evolving industry (Kim, 2012). This strategy also fosters knowledge retention and corporate skills to avoid the cost of external recruitment and training to maintain a competitive edge (Shaari, Areni, Grant, & Miller, 2014), as well as build loyalty, trust, and leadership development; all of which contribute to organisational success. It also helps eliminate racial and gender stereotypes in the workplace. Further, performance-based evaluation encourages employees to develop their skills and improve performance (Letchmiah & Thomas, 2017).

Undoubtedly, the competencies and capabilities of future leaders or high-potential managers are essential components of leadership succession planning. This strategy aligns with one of Malaysia's National Tourism Policy six thrusts, that is, upskilling human capital by ensuring an attractive career path in tourism and the creation of a service culture that personifies the warmth, hospitality and professionalism of the people in the tourism industry. The policy intends to transform Malaysia's tourism industry by harnessing public-private sector partnerships and embracing digitalisation to drive innovation and competitiveness towards sustainable and inclusive development in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Future research can incorporate other variables in the present study model that may influence succession planning, such as emotional intelligence and personality traits. In addition, moderating and mediating variables can predict leadership qualities such as employee behaviour and trust. Moreover, future research could expand the present study to include other demographics or different organisational settings to validate the results of the current study and support the generalisability of the constructs.

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