



Building-up succession planning program by implementing transformational leadership characteristics: The case of public universities in Terengganu, Malaysia



Rohana Ahmad *, Aris Safree Yasin, Rosyidah Mohamad

Faculty of Business, Economics and Social Development, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Building up the next successful leader thru inadequate succession planning will have a huge impact on the higher institution, and without a good plan in place, the journey forward for the higher institution will be unclear and will lead to many structural challenges. Often higher institution also grapples with the challenge of having a succession blueprint for other senior-level roles. One way to achieve this is for management to redefine their relationship with the subordinate by assuming the role of leader as opposed to the role of teaching providers. As our theoretical understanding of succession planning is still limited; therefore, this study attempts to explore the relationship between leadership characteristics and succession planning programs in public universities in Terengganu Malaysia. We identify dimensions of idealizing influence, motivational, individualize, and intellectual stimulation that reflect quantitative approaches for employee's perspectives in implementing succession planning. The quantitative research design was employed by distributing survey questionnaires to 300 respondents from three public universities in Terengganu, Malaysia. Overall, this study provided support to the proposition succession planning and leadership characteristic and filled the research gaps. Idealized Influence and Intellectual Stimulation are the most dominant dimensions that affect the implementation of succession planning programs. The results offered several hints to the employees regarding the potential factors that may affect to achieve career success and provided some insights into the present Human Resources practitioners in formulating strategies to make succession planning success.

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1. Introduction

Leadership refers to the ability to influence and command the workforce to achieve the desired goals of the organization. In order to achieve the goals, priorities must set up by a leader who is able to make the staff work smart. In addition, a leader must practice the highest level of integrity, which will be the benchmarks for the staff and the organization. A good leader who will be able to implement change positively and successfully. Thus, leadership in an environment of turbulent change is a chest of knowledge that can be applied and practiced in the public sector. Global change and globalization are

now leading to the development of the university's role. Therefore, universities need to practice a triangle of knowledge that covers research, education, and innovation. The scenario has changed. Instead of teaching centers, the universities are now moving forwards to be corporate entities in the economy of the country and institution (Kok et al., 2011). In line with the National Higher Education Strategic Plan (2007-2010), which emphasized on human capital, the universities also play an important role in producing human resources. Good management practices and effective administration of the university management system are needed in developing succession planning.

There is a need for management staff to change their mindset to improve the quality of good governance. One of the important factors that influence good governance practices is good leadership. There are many areas in which leadership management contributes, such as direction, inspiration motive, performance, and

* Corresponding Author.

Email Address: rohana.a@umt.edu.my (R. Ahmad)

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Corresponding author's ORCID profile:

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7390-9309>

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strategic planning by employees (Abdulla et al., 2011). One of the leadership management methods is the transformational leadership style that has been widely used in recent years. The concept of transformational leadership was introduced by Burn (1978). The concept outlines the process of helping each other, leaders, and followers, to achieve passion and motivation. The implementation of transformational leadership was found to change the individual's social system and to create positive change for followers, which later will transform the follower to become leaders.

Several researchers found that leadership is a factor in an organization that also purported to shape follower works behavior (Lian and Tui, 2012). While it is within the expectation that leaders tend to produce negative attitudinal and behavioral responses from subordinates, such leaders are an exception rather than a rule. In the words of Mitchell and Ambrose (2007), abusive leadership has a low base rate in an organization. Indeed, much leadership training and development is geared towards developing leaders with good leadership qualities and competencies (Hargis et al., 2011) as it is generally thought that good leaders could elicit good behaviors and performance of their subordinates.

In Malaysia, there are studies conducted on succession planning (Julia, 2009; Fatimah, 2012; Rohana and Mazni, 2019). Nevertheless, there has been no research conducted on the relationship between leadership style and succession planning in public universities. Thus, this study hopes to make few contributions to the literature that has uncovered an important relationship leadership style and career development by examining the relationship between transformational leadership styles and the execution of succession planning in public universities.

2. Theoretical background and research framework

There has been amazing growth in research interests in leadership, especially on transformational leadership. This study contributes to the succession-planning program by conducting a systematic evaluation of subordinates' perceptions of leadership that affects their career path. For the purpose of this study, it is assumed that the quality of leadership has a significant impact on policy implementation for future leaders at Public University. This research focuses on the development of a more holistic understanding of the four types of leadership factors that influence future leaders at Public University.

Transformational leadership derives from the belief that charismatic leaders, as assumed by their followers that leaders will always retain their followers because of the great soul leaders (Krishnanathan and Mangaleswaran, 2018). For example, Zhao et al. (2016) argued that transformational leaders are people who have the

ability to touch the hearts of their subordinates. Transformational leaders are always encouraging leaders, capable of delivering and setting standards of behavior that can be emulated by subordinates (Wu, 2017; Xu et al., 2018). Burn (1978), the founder of the concept of transformational leadership, has set transformational leadership as "a mutual stimulus that transforms followers into leaders and can transform leaders into moral agents." Previous studies have shown that transformational leadership contributes positively to the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization (Guay, 2013). However, now most leaders in public organizations have tried to combine transformational leadership in their management style because leadership style inspires its followers (Gennaro, 2019).

According to Bass (1985), transformational leaders instill inspiration to his followers to put the organization's interest beyond self-interest. Thus, the leader of this type has deeper insight and reward each member's contribution. Transformational leaders are more focusing on motivational methods for staffing and encourage employees to think critically to solve problems and to encourage employee engagement in organizational activities. Besides, it also gives full confidence to employees to create loyalty to leaders and organizations. In addition, to ensure a good relationship between leaders and subordinates, organizations need to create a vision that is understood at all levels (Tahir et al., 2017). By practicing bilateral communication and promoting promotion opportunities and ongoing training, employees can improve their skills and provide room for career development (Mcknight, 2013; Ho, 2011). Hence, this study is based on the Leadership Theory of Avolio et al. (2004) with four components; the ideal influence, the inspired motivation, the intellectual stimulation, and the individual's influence.

2.1. Idealize influence

According to Abdulla et al. (2011), the ideal influence refers to leaders capable of self-identifying as eminent leaders and with noble character. This view is also in line with Riaz and Haider (2010), which stated that this leader becomes a "role model" and seeks to influence his followers. Hence, the way leadership it has seen has a relationship with subordinates' perceptions of their leaders. In fact, subordinates see the extent of the ability of the leaders to realize the needs of the employees while providing guidance and motivating towards career advancement.

2.2. Inspirational motivation

Inspirational Motivation refers to a leader who is capable of promoting his or her employees to achieve the objectives of the department or organization. It is charismatic, confident, and has a clear vision to ensure that organizational goals can be achieved. In fact, this leadership feature not only

stimulates but challenges employees with high standards, speaks with full-fledged and optimistic, and encourages employees to do their best to what they do (Guay, 2013; Cerni et al., 2014). This leader is not only motivated but allows subordinates to make decisions, study, and view situations according to the current situation. According to Ubben et al. (2004), leaders with motivational inspirational give freedom to individuals as well as encourage reform in decision-making.

2.3. Individualized influence

Leadership based on the style of an individual's influence is a leader that emphasizes the emotions of subordinates with counseling and encouragement for the advancement of his career. Each employee is assigned based on their respective abilities and the knowledge available to the employee (Avolio et al., 2004) to give employees the opportunity to work and gain a better chance of promotion (Ismail et al., 2011). The leader who has this style portrait a good attitude by being a good listener, charismatic, often considering subordinate needs as well as advising and also being a trustworthy leader. In addition to the support of workers' actions, leaders also give freedom to their subordinates in decision making (Zhu et al., 2009).

2.4. Intellectual stimulation

The next dimension of leadership is the intellectual stimulation of the leader, using his wisdom in solving the problem. In certain situations, the subordinate is given the freedom by the leader to use their creativity as well as their innovations to overcome the problems (Avolio et al., 2004). This approach allows employees to use their intellectual attitudes to think critically if they have problems and able to settle without expecting other people's help. It was pointed out that in this way, leaders train subordinates to gain confidence in facing challenges. Leaders with this style of intellectual stimulation make the organization on the right track of competence (Hall et al., 2002).

2.5. Career development

Career development is one of the dimensions of a succession plan that is an important element for an employee. The replacement plan, according to Rothwell (2010) is a 'systematic distribution' by an organization aimed at ensuring there is leadership incentive in top management positions, career development as well as stimuli to sub-coordination. This replacement plan is also a process that helps employees for career success and organizational stability (Falkiner et al., 2017; Earls and Hall, 2018). It is even an attempt by the organization to ensure the organization's performance is outstanding with the satisfaction of employees with the frequency of implementing a succession plan. Marshall (2005),

stated that a succession plan should be viewed as a career development process that starts with individual intake throughout the service. Zepeda et al. (2012) agreed upon this opinion, and Barton (2019) with reference to succession planning is a systematic process of providing individuals to fill the vacancy of the organization in the future.

Additionally, Mello (2011) saw a succession planning as a systematic and critique work process in identifying key management positions within the organization. The replacement plan is also the process of identifying potential and highly skilled employees, competence, knowledge, and experience, and at the right time (Rothwell, 2010). According to Kirk et al. (2000) and Chughtai (2018), career development is a mechanism fulfilling the vision of both employee and organization, containing the job information providing in helping employees with job opportunities, job satisfaction, and productivity of the employee. While Bowes (2008) and Maurer et al. (2017) pointed out that career development is an important strategy that facilitates internal promotions as well as planning and implementing career goals. The study conducted by Adewale et al. (2011) on Nigeria's Private Higher Education Center indicates that there is a significant relationship with employees of the organization in relation to career development. Career development also can be defined as career planning (Mehrabani and Mohamad, 2011). Meanwhile, Weare (2015) also noted that a replacement plan should be considered in the university library. In this regard, the factors that lead to career development are the career planning that organizations and leaders should take into account (Rothwell, 2010; Megheirkouni, 2018). Ibarra (2005) recognized that leadership in the organization could make choices of three (3) approaches to a succession plan that is to implement a simple replacement plan, plan the development of a succession plan and create talent planning.

2.6. Preparing future leader

Preparing future leaders is the key to ensuring that an organization keeps its ability to compete and prosper. Rothwell (2005) highlighted that the succession plan as a critical post. He stressed out that future leaders are the strategic planning of the organization by designing the provision of competent individuals by identifying possible nominees. It is indicated that the succession plan is a process for identifying and finding potential, experienced and efficient employees for the future. Hence, in an ideal situation, following the best practice, the best place to start grooming future leaders would be with the recruiting and selection system.

Mehrabani and Mohamad (2011), in their research, explained that key factors affecting the succession plan are the role of human resource management, including organizational development. Therefore, the evaluation process is important to see how the person is progressing and performing.

While McCauley and Wakefield (2006) believed that succession planning is a tool to develop the organization as well as develop human capital. An organization needs to have an ongoing commitment to train and develop its potential top executive. As the finding of Riaz and Haider (2010) disclosed that job success had a strong relationship with transformational characteristics. Leadership development isn't only about acquiring knowledge, skill, and experience, but it also about attitude resilience.

In Malaysia, there are studies conducted on succession plans such as Julia's (2009) organizational and career linkages and Fatimah (2012) in relation to the effectiveness of the succession plan. Nevertheless, there has been no research conducted along with the leadership style of leadership towards the carrying out of a succession plan in a public university. Thus, this study examined the relationship between transformational leadership styles in public university affects the execution of the succession plan. Therefore, this research examines the four-dimensional relationships of independent variables with two dependent variables in the context of leadership style and succession planning.

H1a: There is a significant relationship between transformational leadership styles and the preparation of future leaders.

H1b: There is a significant relationship between transformational leadership styles and career development

3. Method

3.1. Participants

A total of 200 academic and non-academic staff grade 41 to grade 54 from three public universities in Terengganu were involved in this study.

3.2. Measurement

3.2.1. Transformational leadership

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Avolio et al., 2004) was administered as a self-rated questionnaire to measure transformational leadership. This 20-item questionnaire measures the four dimensions of transformational leadership; idealized influence, motivation inspirational, individual influence, and intellectual stimulation. The Cronbach's alpha value ranging from 0.71 to 0.89

3.2.2. Succession planning

Succession planning was measured using Succession Planning and Management (SPM) (Rothwell, 2005). The scale contains ten items with five-point Likert scale measuring dimensions of

succession planning, i.e., preparing for future leader and career development. The Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.70 to 0.90.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive findings

The mean value was calculated as the highest $M=3.80$ ($SD=0.80$) motivational motivation indicating that subordinates are of the opinion that their supervisor is constantly encouraging them in their career satisfaction. This is followed by the mean value for the ideal effect calculated at $M=3.74$ ($SD=0.73$), reflecting the lower level of perception towards implementing succession planning in the public sector. Aggregate average $M=3.68$ ($SD=0.75$) for intellectual stimulation explains the tendency of subordinate administrators to orient subordinate leadership styles to the right career path. A mean value of $M=3.59$ ($SD=0.74$) for individual influence indicates that subordinates perceive career success as being related to leadership. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Means and standard deviations for the study variables

Dimension	Mean	SD
Idealized Influence	3.74	0.73
Motivational Inspiration	3.80	0.80
Individualized Influence	3.59	0.74
Intellectual Stimulation	3.68	0.75
Career Development	3.46	0.76
Future Leader	3.53	0.83

4.2. The relationship between transformational leadership and future leaders

Multiple regression analysis was used to test whether the four dimensions of transformational leadership style predicted future leaders. The results indicated that out of four dimensions, two dimensions are found to significantly predict future leaders. The variables were the effects of idealized influence ($\beta = 0.37$, $p = .007$) and intellectual stimulation ($\beta = 0.20$, $p < .05$). The regression model was found to be appropriate, $F(4.195) = 31.60$, $p < .001$. Although motivational inspiration ($\beta = 0.19$, $p > .05$) and individualized influence ($\beta = 0.25$, $p > .05$) were not significant, the results indicate that the correlation between all independent and dependent variables was moderate ($r = 0.63$) for 39.3% of the variance in future leaders ($adjusted R^2 = 0.38$). The strongest predictor is determined by looking at the largest absolute beta value (Hair et al., 1998). The beta value revealed that the idealized influence showed the largest and significant ($\beta = 0.37$, $p < .001$), followed by intellectual stimulation, ($\beta = 0.20$, $p < .001$). The idealised influence has affected most of the variance in preparing for the future leadership program seen by the subordinates. This finding provides full support for the hypothesis. Thus, these findings are consistent with Bass and Avolio (1994)

that transformational leaders are leaders who inspire their followers to work for their career path. The results are summarized in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2: Model summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.63 ^a	0.39	0.38	0.44

a: Predictor: Idealize influence, Motivation, Individualize, Intellectual
b: Dependent Variable: Future Leader

Table 3: Summary of multiple regression analysis: Independent variable and future leader

Independent Variable	Standardized β	t	p
Idealized Influence	0.32	3.57	.001
Motivational Inspiration	0.18	1.90	.060
Individualized Influence	0.02	0.29	.770
Intellectual Stimulation	0.18	2.16	.032
F Value			31.60
R ²			0.63
Adjusted R ²			0.38
p			.001

4.3. The relationship between transformational leadership and career development

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine if transformational leadership as an independent variable predicted career development as a dependent variable. The results revealed that two dimensions contribute significantly to career development. The variables were the idealized influence ($\beta = 0.23$, $p < .05$) and intellectual stimulation ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < .05$). As presented in Table 4, the regression model was found to be appropriate, $F(4.195) = 31.60$, $p < .001$. The results yielded that the correlation of all Independent and Dependent Variables was moderate ($r = 0.56$), accounting for 31.2% of the variability in career development ($adjusted\ R^2 = 0.30$). The strongest prediction was determined by studying the absolute largest beta value (Hair et al., 1998). The intellectual stimulation showed the largest beta value ($\beta = 0.28$, $p = .05$), followed by the idealized influence ($\beta = 0.23$, $p > .05$). The intellectual stimulation variables influence most of the variance in career development programs perceived by subordinates. It can be concluded that followers rely on leaders to provide better direction to leverage good job support to increase their career opportunities and prepare for future leadership. In addition, the positive effects of transformational leadership characteristics and relationship support were found in this study to study the influence of subordinate careers. The results are summarized in Table 4. Table 5 shows a summary of multiple regression analysis: Independent variable and career development.

5. Discussion and conclusion

It takes excellent on the job training, careful career management, and motivation by competent and bright human resources leaders to build diversified, motivated, and skilled workforces in the organization. This research is one of the steps towards the understanding relationship between

transformational leadership and succession planning in Malaysian public universities. The purpose of this study to examine the impact of leadership style on implementing succession planning in public universities in Terengganu Malaysia. Furthermore, our investigation of transformational leadership is quite different from other researchers. In this research, transformational leadership as a height-orders construct. This will enable us to theorize and examine the influence of transformational leadership towards building up succession planning. The present study yielded a significant influence of leadership characteristics on succession planning. Idealized influence and intellectual stimulation were the most dominant dimensions affecting the implementation of succession planning programs.

Table 4 Model summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.56 ^a	0.31	0.30	0.64

a: Predictor: Idealize influence, Motivation, Individualize, Intellectual
b: Dependent Variable: Future Leader

Table 5: Summary of multiple regression analysis: Independent variable and career development

Independent Variable	Standardized β	t	p
Idealized Influence	0.23	2.25	.026
Motivational Inspiration	0.07	0.72	.472
Individualized Influence	0.09	1.03	.303
Intellectual Stimulation	0.28	3.06	.003
F Value			22.06
R ²			0.31
Adjusted R ²			0.30
p			.001

Changes at the community level are also required to support a high-performance workforce. The leaders need to actively participate in the management and development of their employees in helping to chart the course that takes the employee to a higher level of prosperity. It is consistent with Spendlove (2007) and Soene et al. (2015) that leadership intervention should start much earlier in the career path so that success is built from below rather than from above. Therefore, top management should decide the competencies that the organization will need in the future leader, for example, those who initiative, strong ethics, and visionary thinking aligned with the organization's objectives.

This important finding is in line with previous researchers who examine the relationship between transformational leadership and well-being (Skakon et al., 2010). The findings were parallel with Soane et al. (2015) and Notgrass (2014). In fact, the findings of this study also confirm leadership plays an important role in parallel with the study of Hasel and Grover (2017). According to Bass (1985), leaders who show clear vision and facilitate affairs will increase the perceptions of subordinates towards organizational success. The findings are also consistent with other researchers (Voon et al., 2011; Hinduan et al., 2009; Chi et al., 2007).

Theoretically, this study has contributed to the relevant literature on succession planning. The findings show that charismatic, transformational

leadership should lead to the success of career development. However, subordinate action should be effectively driven by the strong support given by the transformation leader. The current study contributes to team creativity in the context of relationship leadership and succession planning. It is shown that this study is important to be relooked by the public university to implement succession planning in University. On awareness of self-environment, the result of this study is in line with Sung and Choi (2014) and Elrehail et al. (2018). They found that leadership characteristic factors could greatly assist in individual career development. Leaders can also enhance work unit creativity by forming organizational climate. They could also help employees to accept performance management tactics constructively by providing constructive feedback and developing trust between leaders and subordinates. On the other hand, most of the previous studies (Lian and Tui, 2012) had indicated that a leader who portrays a clear vision was positively correlated would increase the positive perception of followers in the organization. In addition, leaders must also make sure that the rewards offered are in the form of motivation factor to the subordinate. The results of the finding on transformational leadership characteristics found that inspirational, motivational character has a strong influence significantly associated with implementing succession planning. Sekaran (2003) mentioned there is one limitation for cross-sectional study, which is the cause-effect relationship amongst variables.

Empirical studies have been carryout to evaluate both the independent and dependent variables. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to fill the gap of succession planning in the role of leadership management in the public university. Based on the findings, there are some suggestions that need to be addressed. First, leaders need to share the same vision and goals between leaders and subordinates. Organizational vision and mission need to be clear to every employee and to be the main pillar of the organization. Employees should also be directed to achieving the goal, and leaders need to inculcate innovative thinking to subordinates to increase productivity. Second, leaders need to be aware of pathways to leadership. Career replacement plans to produce a future leader should be conducted in a long-term succession plan program to meet the diversity of interests. Third, a conducive organizational environment also plays an important role. Bolman and Deal (1997) pointed out that organizational weakness is also due to focus too much on the actors, and too little on stage, they play their role. Fourth is the reduction of power (Empowerment). The contribution of the competency movement towards the development of managers cannot be disregarded. The extracted characteristics and traits needed by managers to be efficient, do at the least from a part of management knowledge. Most respondents, the study stated that the succession of the implementation plan depends

on the Administration department. Socialization to organizational culture, for example, is the best learned on-the-job (McCall et al., 1988). This same perspective also perceived an organization's regeneration as being dependent on senior manager self-development (Castanias and Helfat, 1991). Hence the highest leader of the organization should be autonomous to act and make decisions as to the success of the succession plan in a public university. Replacement plan planning will not mean that the organization's climate and top management flexibly prevent the initiative and trickle the creativity of the employee.

Organizational culture, capacity, and capability to transition are the frames for good succession planning, and with that, individuals could operate in new and seniors' role. The competence set of assessment tools could be created by the performance management process as a basis for the development of the organization. Moreover, the organization should amend leadership development with the process design in alignment with the task priorities. Therefore, the institution should develop the capacity to withstand "brain-drain" by developing a robust talent pipeline by matching skills available internally with higher-level roles. In today's global place of growth, this understanding must be enlarged to span cultures and to be innovative, perhaps even be willing to revolutionize the rule. This explanation can be concluded that the subordinate is totally dependent on the leader to help them to improve career opportunities. Hence, the findings of this study are important as it can be used by the public university in Terengganu in implementing a succession planning program and promoting organizational effectiveness. In addition, regarding the fact that leadership style affects the process of subordinate career path, an organization can consider it worthwhile to invest in leadership training.

More importantly, the findings of this study provide some practical insights on the needs of the public university to review succession planning and leadership style as a tool for enhancing employee career development. The planning and selection could be achieved as a reward by implementing expertise management function with the perspective of continuity. Leaders need to bear in mind that prejudices and subjective performance assessments can pose a negative impression of subordinates.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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