A systematic review of succession planning in higher education

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

The purpose of this study is to synthesize the corpus of literature relating to succession planning in higher education, in particular, this paper explores the growth of succession planning practices in the higher education sector, which allows equal opportunity for genders to secure leadership positions in a unique fashion. Through the systematic review of 73 studies related to succession planning in higher education published in scholarly journals and dissertations from university repositories, this paper evidences the growth of empirical research on succession planning. Nonetheless, the current work hardly addresses dearth of succession planning for females in academia particularly in unique contexts that depict organizational, cultural, and personal nuances that heterogeneously submerge performances. Through a synthesis of the literature, this paper proposes areas of research to evaluate the hindrance factors in future empirical studies. The results indicate that further robust studies using action research design, quasi-experiment, and pilot interventions may be relevant to address the leadership crisis in higher education.

1. Introduction

The sustainability of institutions and societies merits an inclusive design that leverage strengths of mix-gender participation (Yeo and Grant, 2019; Park, 2020; Jankelová, et al., 2020). Withering any sense of glass ceilings have tendencies toward strengthening organizational growth (Krotel et al., 2019). Despite this practical projection, gender equality in leadership and management position is still a worldwide dilemma. Diversity and inclusiveness in leadership, work environment, and decision-making empowerment have yet to reach a tipping point. Unequal access to power has been challenging for the institutions (Gillard and Okonjo-Iweala, 2021). Despite this slow-paced development, professionals those ambitious for leadership positions are still swarmed by formidable barriers. Leadership crisis has been a key problematic area for business and industry, lacking effective planning to deal with the situation. These challenges vary from gender stereotypes, unsupportive laws to explore opportunities, primary roles for homemaking, and lack of workplace policies (Keohane, 2020). The gender gap in leadership has detrimental rippling effects across communities and countries. The United Nation established 17 Sustainable Development Goals for the period of 2016–2030, one of which focuses on providing "females with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in the political and economic decision-making process." WEF (2020) pointed out that 31.4 percent of the average gender gap that remains to be closed worldwide, projecting current trends, will take 99.5 years to close the gap across 107 countries (WEF, 2020). The maximum time reported for East Asia and the Pacific countries is 163 years and 140 years in the Middle East and North Africa countries in overcoming gender disparities.

Within the sphere of higher education, institutions also realized that the internal system is lacking effective strategies to fill key leadership positions (King, 2019; Loomes et al., 2019). The limited number of studies that investigate issues of leadership crisis in higher education rarely connect it with succession planning and gender disparities. The high turnover rate in academics brought a challenging situation for the institutions to fill vacant leadership positions (Ebbers et al., 2010; Gaffney, 2005; Luna, 2010; Neefe, 2009; Rothwell, 2010). Scholarly literature pointed out this issue using the

term "leadership crisis" because most institutions are unable to strategize succession planning and provide enough training to staff who can take over the leadership positions in the future (Wooten and James, 2008; Luzebetak, 2010; Korb, 2004)

The literature on feminism in leadership areas remains unnoticed and undervalued by traditional leadership theories (Welde et al., 2019). Without enough talented people in senior management positions, institutions faced difficult situations to manage the operations. Most of the institutions were distracted from their mission and vision set by old senior leaders and unable to transfer the same work style pattern to new leaders in the institutions. To establish the case for succession planning, some institutions often generate new linchpin positions such as chief of academics, administration, student affairs, and information officers, which may connect to the senior management positions as deputy director, vice president, and executive director for smooth running of operations. How far such new linchpin positions offer opportunities to ensure gender equality across leadership positions has not been widely studied across various different contexts. From a standpoint of gender equality achievement in leadership positions, the change and transformation agenda has yet to be empirically studied and depicted. The limited number of studies within the spectrum of mixed-gender participation in holding leadership positions and institutional succession planning programs merit further trajectories.

Succession planning in higher education is still a new concept and is hardly being addressed in scholarly research (Keller, 2018; Alghofaily, 2019). This is in stark contrast with corporate and business succession planning that has been studied and developed with adequate initiatives, strategic designs, and formal processes for evaluation and control of the programs. Some emerging research topics support succession planning as of leadership development, employee performance review, and evaluation in higher education (Boggs and Kent, 2002; Davies and Davies, 2010). This paper generates a synthesis of the literature that supports understanding the role of succession planning in higher education along with exploring gender-related issues. In addition, we discuss how females cope with the challenges of securing higher education leadership positions. In exploring needs for an in-depth and broad understanding of factors that inhibit and promote equal genders involvement in leadership and succession planning, we develop the following inquiry: How does literature define succession planning in higher education along with current practices, challenges, antecedents, and consequences?

This paper's structure continues with an explanation of how materials and methods are applied using a systematic review. The third section reviews the literature on succession planning in higher education. Next, we discuss the organizational, cultural, and personal barriers with a brief explanation that females face securing a higher education leadership position. Next, this paper proposes future research directions for theorists and practitioners, concluding remarks and recommendations.

2. Methods and materials

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the literature on succession planning in higher education through a systematic review approach. The systematic literature review method supports identifying the gaps and future research areas by sorting themes, trends, and gaps (Wright et al., 2007; Petticrew and Roberts, 2008). Fig. 1 shows the process of systematic review in this paper. This paper follows the methodology prescribed and suggested by Clark and Creswell (2014). We identified a set of key terms related to the study objectives and initial review of previous research studies as follows: succession planning in higher education and leadership in higher education. Multiple search strings were written and checked in the online database to locate the relevant literature. We retrieved 367 studies from 2005 to 2020 using an online database such as Emerald, Science Direct, Taylor and Francis, Wiley, EBSCO Host, and Google Scholar. We developed a manual coding process in an excel file to sort the studies as follows: Number, title, publisher, authors, year, methodology, and country. This step ensured a high level of reliability. In total, 73 relevant studies were selected related to the study topic, including 30 doctoral and one master degree dissertations (29 from the USA, one from Malaysia, and one from Tanzania). In terms of quality assessment, this paper cited the studies that fulfilled the criteria of scope relevancy, accuracy, updated content, published in peer-reviewed journals, and expert panel evaluation of dissertations and theses (Graham, 2007; Metzger, 2007). Removal of studies was based on the exclusion criteria set for database search i.e., time when published, scope of studies, irrelevancy of concept, non-peer reviewed publications, non-scholarly articles, and briefs from organizations.

Most of the studies reviewed in the global context of higher education by identifying females. Fig. 2 depicts the increasing trend after 2011, which studied succession planning in higher education and indicates accretion attention to address the issues. Fig. 3 shows the type of studies conducted by authors. Qualitative studies mainly focus on in-depth interviews and grounded theory. Table 1 depicts the classification of studies by type and context. The research mapping indicates that research on succession planning in higher education inclusive of female is comparatively novel and inadequate. Thus, future research demands would be succession planning in the higher education institutions with equal participation of male and female. Recent studies conducted by Gause (2021), Ahmad et al. (2020), and Phillips (2020) specified the strategic importance of succession planning in higher

education. Moosa and Coetzee (2020) identified factors that impact female's advancement to leadership positions such as a denial of capabilities, work-life balance demands, lack of acceptance by men, barriers to female's advancement, need for organizational support to advance, and success beliefs. Kalhori et al. (2020) suggested that higher education succession management should be based on academic environments and their professional dynamics.
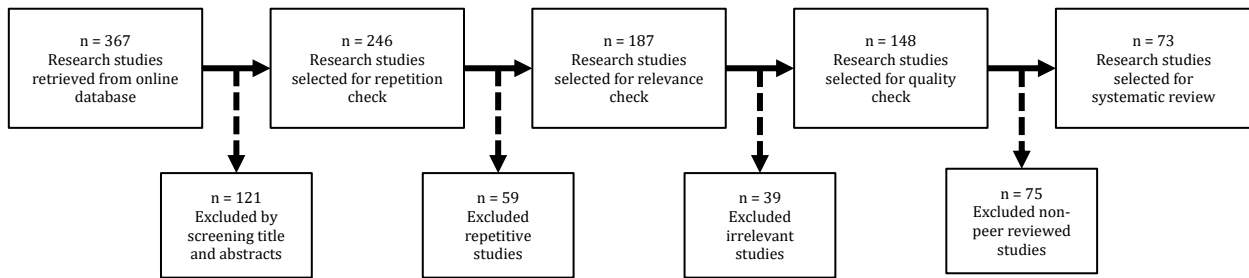
Fig. 1: Systematic review process
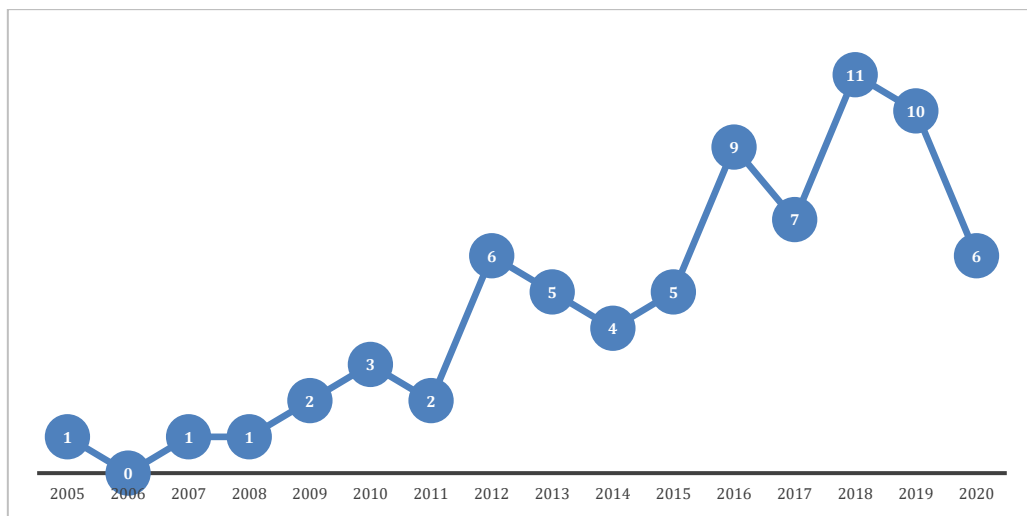
Fig. 2: Publication between 2005 to 2020
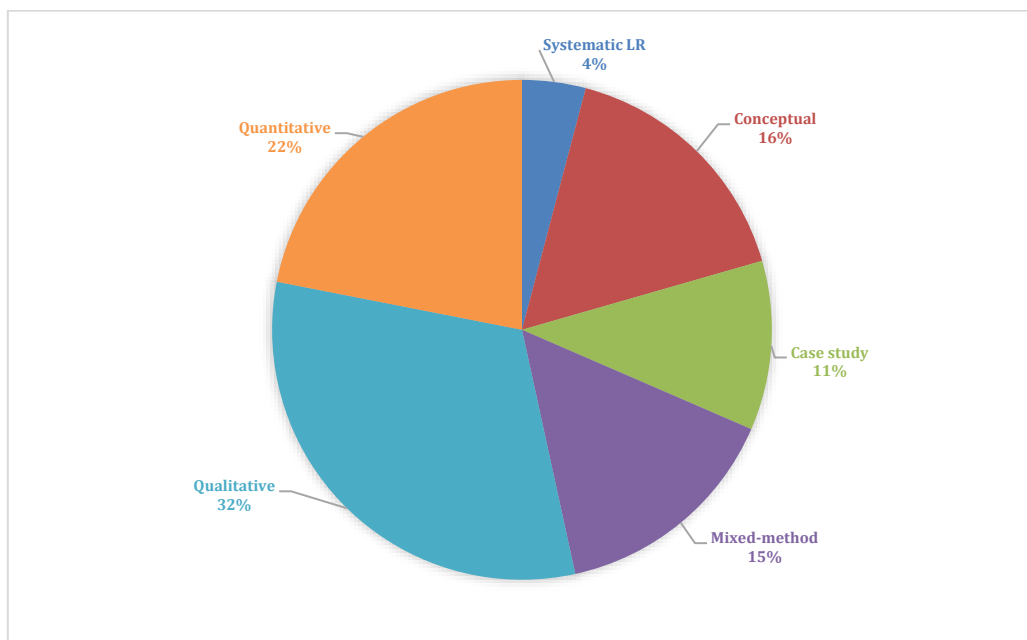
Fig. 3: Type of studies

3. Discussion and findings

The findings suggest that higher education's succession planning lacks a robust model/framework that institutions can use. Moreover, to overcome gender disparities female role in leadership positions is still a question mark in many regions. Higher education institutions are still in the phase of practicing the traditional approach for academicians' career development. Thus, recent trends should be changed as per the business market requirement (Barton, 2019; King, 2019). Table 2

depicts a summary of all reviewed studies. Most of the studies were conducted in the USA. However, it indicates their contextual perspective, which less likely to fit in other regions considering socio-cultural aspects. In addition, succession planning in higher education remains an eclipse in the academic literature specific to global context.

Table 1: Studies by countries with used methodology

Country	No.	Methodology
Australia	1	Qualitative
Ghana	1	Qualitative
Canada	1	Mixed-method
	3	Quantitative
Iran	3	Qualitative
	1	Case study
	1	Mixed-method
Malaysia	5	Quantitative
	2	Qualitative
	1	Conceptual
Nigeria	2	Quantitative
Oman	1	Quantitative
South Africa	1	Qualitative
	1	Mixed-method
Tanzania	1	Quantitative
	7	Case studies
	8	Mixed-method
USA	15	Qualitative
	4	Quantitative
	1	Systematic LR
Not-specified (General Contexts)	13	Theoretical papers

A limited number of studies are available about the practices of succession planning in private institutions, which describes the definition, plan, and value proposition of succession planning for academics (Klein and Salk, 2013). Rothwell (2010) argued that it would be very difficult for academic institutions, especially public sector higher education, to recruit and retain talent when there is no succession planning. Although higher education is lacking succession planning thus, Rich (2006) brought attention to the role of administrators in academic institutions those can look after the future need of institution, set directions to achieve goals, develop infrastructure, respond to current market demand and keep an eye on competitive advantage in the market. This is a fact that higher education cannot buy or import leadership personnel whenever they are in need. However, they must practice succession planning to produce in-house talents.

Although higher education institutions have realized the need for career development for employees yet, the picture is unclear how to cope with this situation in a strategic manner (Davies and Davies, 2010; Gaffney, 2005; Keim and Murray, 2008; Luna, 2010; Middlehurst, 2008; Neefe, 2009; Keller, 2018; Alghofaily, 2019). According to the "Society for Human Resource Management," 32 percent of organizations practiced formal succession planning. However, ineffective implementation of succession planning leads to a lack of motivation, turnover, demoralized employees, and reduce competitive edge in the market (Eshiteti et al., 2013). Contrary to this, higher education lacks succession planning for long and not having competent employees who can help them design plans for succession. Specifically, Gaffney (2005) highlighted that "succession planning, when implemented as part of business strategy, helps retain talented employees, deliver worth and value, better prepares the institution to take on future challenges, increases overall employee engagement and productivity, supports new ideas and innovations, and grows, grooms, and keeps the people they (organizations) need, for what they need, when they need it." At this stage, succession planning in higher education is still critical to practice in the academic environment, yet, this domain needs a theoretical foundation to develop the concept and robust approach to deal with it.

Table 2: Summary of all reviewed studies

No	Title	Authors	Context
1	White privilege, Black resilience: Women of color leading the academy	Gause (2021)	Not-specified
2	Climbing the illusive ladder: Examining female employees' perceptions of advancement opportunities at a higher education institution	Moosa and Coetzee (2020)	South Africa
3	Effective Strategy for Succession Planning in Higher Education Institutions	Ahmad et al. (2020)	Malaysia
4	Concept analysis: Succession planning	Phillips (2020)	Not-specified
5	A Conceptual Model of Succession Management at Medical Universities: Experience of Iranian Higher Education Based on Grounded Theory	Kalhori et al. (2020)	Iran
6	Structure, Culture, and Agency: Examining Succession Planning in California State University (CSU) Libraries	Goldman (2020)	USA
7	Investigating the Link between Transformational Leadership Style on Succession Planning Program in National Secondary Schools in Seremban District, Malaysia	Armugam et al. (2019)	Malaysia
8	Influencers of Succession Planning Among Rural Community College Chief Executives	Aylett (2019)	USA
9	Preparing for leadership turnover in Christian higher education: Best practices in succession planning	Barton (2019)	USA
10	The Professional Development Educator and Leadership Succession Planning	Bleich (2019)	Not-specified
11	Black, minority ethnic (BME) staff in further education: Progression and succession planning	Deane (2019)	Not-specified
12	A succession planning framework for leadership development of nurse educators in nursing education institutions in South Africa	Du Plessis (2019)	South Africa
13	Succession Planning and Leadership Development in Texas Public Universities	King (2019)	USA
14	Patterns of recruitment of academic leaders to Australian universities and implications for the future of higher education	Loomes et al. (2019)	Australia
15	Strategies for Succession Planning in Universities: A Mixed-Methods Analysis	Torabi et al. (2019)	Malaysia
16	Succession planning for successful leadership: Why we need to talk about succession planning!	Ritchie (2019)	Not-specified
17	The Challenges of Succession in Iran's Higher Education's Centers (Case Study: Universities of Ilam Province)	Abbasi et al. (2018)	Iran
18	Designing a Model for Integrating Succession and Career Planning of the Managers of Iranian Public Universities	Abbaspour et al. (2018)	Iran
19	Succession Planning Strategy for Non-Academic Staff at Malaysian Public Universities	Ahmad et al. (2018)	Malaysia
20	Level of Awareness of Succession Planning and Management Practices Among Educational Leaders at Gulf College, Oman	Dem and Khan (2018)	Oman

21	Planning for the future: Leadership development and succession planning in education	Fusarelli et al. (2018)	Not-specified
22	Leaders in the Making: Succession Planning Starts in Library School	Green (2018)	Not-specified
23	Building the Case for Succession Planning in Higher Education: A Study of Succession Planning Pilots within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System	Keller (2018)	USA
24	Succession Planning Research in the Educational Sector	Melton (2018)	Not-specified
25	The Practice of Succession Planning in Tanzania's Higher Learning Institutions: A case of Local Government Training Institute (LGTI)	Ndunguru (2018)	Tanzania
26	Effective strategies for the establishment of integration model for succession planning and career progression path of Iranian Azad universities administrators (Qualitative Research Based Grounded Theory Approach)	Raeespoor et al. (2018)	Iran
27	Employee Perceptions of Succession Planning within Higher Education: A Qualitative Case Study	Swanson (2018)	USA
28	A conceptual model of succession planning for public higher learning institutions in Malaysia	Bano (2017)	Malaysia
29	Succession Planning in Chicagoland Academic Libraries: A Case Study	Carey (2017)	USA
30	Who will lead? The success of succession planning	Cavanaugh (2017)	Not-specified
31	Succession planning relating to the millennial generation in private four-year universities	Gilbert (2017)	USA
32	The Examination of Executive Leadership Succession Planning Strategies in Georgia's Community Colleges	Jackson (2017)	USA
33	Perceptions of Succession Planning in Educational Organizations: A Mixed-Method Study of Four Florida School Districts	Parfitt (2017a)	USA
34	Examining the role of management succession planning (MSP) in talent identification and empowerment of human capital in Hormozgan University of Medical Sciences	Salari and Abedini (2017)	Iran
35	Preparing Future Leaders: An Ethnographic Study Exploring the Culture of Succession Planning and Leader Development in Christian Higher Education	Barton (2016)	USA
36	Succession Planning: What Community Colleges Can Adapt from Business and Industry	Gray (2016)	USA
37	Managing Talents in Higher Education Institutions: How Effective the Implementation of Succession Planning?	Kamil et al. (2016)	Malaysia
38	Succession planning at higher education institutions: leadership style, career development and knowledge management practices as its predictors	Ishak and Kamil (2016)	Malaysia
39	Female in leadership: The future of Christian higher education	Longman and Anderson (2016)	USA
40	Collegiate leadership: A case study of succession planning and selection strategies for effective university presidential selection	Nakutis (2016)	USA
41	Approaches to succession management of non-academic leaders in higher educational institutions: evidence from the University of Cape Coast, Ghana	Oppong et al. (2016)	Ghana
42	Succession planning in higher education: The influence of culture on the succession process in a community college	Richards (2016)	USA
43	Succession planning in higher education	Washington (2016)	Not-specified
44	A journey through leadership succession in higher education: An autoethnography	Blackburn (2015)	USA
45	Human resource planning and succession planning in Nigeria's higher education	Fapohunda (2015)	Nigeria
46	The Relationship of Talent Management and Succession Planning with Employee Retention in Higher Education Institutions: Roles of Career Development and Employee Engagement as Mediators	Kamil (2015)	Malaysia
47	Blooming Leaders Among Equals: A Case of Leadership Succession Planning in Malaysian Higher Education	Omar and Hassan (2015)	Malaysia
48	The exploration of executive leadership succession planning strategies in New Jersey community colleges	Trickel (2015)	USA
49	A Study on the Relationship between Succession Planning and Strategic Planning. Case Study: Payame Noor University of Aleshtar	Darvish and Temelie (2014)	Iran
50	Succession planning and knowledge transfer in higher education	Grossman (2014)	USA
51	An Exploratory Multiple Case Study of Succession Planning for Higher Education Community Engagement Practitioners in Selected Higher Education Institutions in the Southeastern Region of the United States	Louisy (2014)	USA
52	Comparing the present and ideal situation of succession planning and talent management in higher education	Zeynoddini et al. (2014)	Iran
53	Lifting as we climb: A multiple case study of succession planning in historically Black colleges and universities	Adams (2013)	USA
54	Presidential succession planning for governing boards in higher education	Channell (2013)	USA
55	The Dreyfus model of skill acquisition: A career development framework for succession planning and management in academic libraries	Hall-Ellis and Grealy (2013)	Not-specified
56	Presidential succession planning: A qualitative study in private higher education	Klein and Salk (2013)	USA
57	Factors That Are Important to Succession Planning: A Case Study of One Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology	Morrin (2013)	Canada
58	Leadership development for faculty women at The Ohio State University: The president and provost's leadership institute	Hornsby et al. (2012)	USA
59	Planning for an American higher education leadership crisis: The succession issue for administrators	Luna (2012)	USA
60	Two-year College Succession Planning: Utilizing the Mission Statement for Selection of the Vice President of Human Resources	Lacey-Nevitt (2012)	USA
61	Succession planning for community colleges: A study of best practices	McMaster (2012)	USA
62	An examination of Maryland community college trustees' intentions to promote succession planning	Snowden (2012)	USA
63	Presidential succession: The role of the president in succession planning at Baptist colleges and universities	Wright (2012)	USA
64	Succession planning and organizational survival: Empirical study on Nigerian private tertiary institutions	Adewale et al. (2011)	Nigeria
65	Community college leadership crisis: Identifying and preparing future leaders through succession planning in selected North Carolina community colleges	Smith (2011)	USA
66	Leadership, diversity and succession planning in academia	González (2010)	Not-specified
67	Community college succession planning: Preparing the next generation of female for leadership roles	Luzebetak (2010)	USA
68	Understanding succession planning and management efforts at Midwestern University: A mixed methods study	Mateso (2010)	USA
69	A new paradigm: Strategies for succession planning in higher education	Richards (2009)	USA
70	Succession planning in two-year technical college systems	Neefe (2009)	USA
71	Community college leadership succession: Perceptions and plans of community college leaders	Mackey (2008)	USA
72	Succession planning: Identifying and preparing future leaders in the Colorado Community College System	Carlson (2007)	USA
73	Community-College Leadership: An Art to Be Practiced: 2010 and Beyond	Fulton-Calkins and Milling (2005)	Not-specified

3.1. Conceptualization of succession planning and higher education

Succession planning is a useful technique for the organization to develop in-house human capital to meet future organizational needs (Mondy et al., 2002). This technique supports organizations in creating a pool of skilled employees and provides the opportunity to be most competent to grow further and render services at top management positions (Pennell, 2010; Johnson et al., 2018). Ali et al. (2014) argued that succession management practices provide direct support to increase employee performance by providing training and learning opportunities. Patidar et al. (2016) support another argument that succession planning pays worthy attention to potential employees and puts effort into preparing them for future leadership positions. Rothwell (2010) mentioned that if organizations need talented leaders, they should strategize succession planning. Added to this, Sweeney (2013) highlighted that succession planning also boosts the confidence of employees when they see their new role towards leading organizational goals. Succession planning is a process to identify and develop employees' ability to perform a leadership role (Neefe, 2009). There are several terms used for succession planning as "transition planning," "replacement planning" and "strengthen talent pipeline" which will ensure to provide enough supply of talented, motivated, competent employees for the key positions in the organization and run the business in a strategic manner (Conger and Fulmer, 2003). Organizations that run their business with strategic plans pay worthy attention to develop in-house talent to fulfill the need for the future workforce at managerial and leadership levels (Rothwell, 2010). Indeed, stable leadership in the organization will ensure stable business in the future (Robken, 2007). In a broader term, succession planning is part of talent management. Organizations put efforts to develop employee knowledge, skills, and abilities and attract a skilled workforce in line with current employees' retention (Davies and Davies, 2010). The difference in talent management and succession planning depends on the senior leadership's focus on the organization. Succession planning is a unique way that helps organizations to identify, groom, and assign new leadership roles to employees as a part of talent management strategy (Gaffney, 2005). Succession planning ensures transparency in selecting competent employees for the leadership position and removing the biased or favoritism approach to assign senior roles (Pierce, 2015). The aim of succession planning in the organization is to give a chance to the experienced, capable, and potential employees to lead the senior position role and render services with due diligence (Berchelman, 2005). This process kept the valid and justified criteria to prepare future leaders for the organization, less attention towards personal selection, or extra favor to any employee. Succession planning systematically ensures enough supply of future leaders for the organization and builds intellectual capital (Rothwell, 2010).

Business sectors pay more attention to succession planning. Hence, it is evident that higher education may obtain similar kinds of benefits and overcome the leadership crisis (Robken, 2007). The key difference is based on the development process for succession planning considering the type of operations by the business entity and higher education (Klein and Salk, 2013). However, succession planning in higher education is more important because of its primary focus: Developing the intellectual capital for a country that will serve in the business sector (Klein and Salk, 2013; Austin, 2010). Succession planning in higher education passes through the dilemma that they have to produce their leaders for the institutions that are time-consuming and require a lot of effort to identify, develop and retain the intelligent academician (Rich, 2006). Higher education leadership already recognized that efforts are needed to develop the talent, perform actions for staff development, and take strategic initiatives for succession planning (Gaffney, 2005; Neefe, 2009; Luna, 2010). Succession planning as a part of business strategy supports talented employee retention, creates institution worth, tackles future challenges, improves engagement and productivity, and develops new ideas and work on need and long-term commitment (Gaffney, 2005).

Higher education institutions are still in the phase of practicing the traditional approach for the career development of academicians (Land, 2003). Thus, recent trends should be changed as per the business market requirement (Keller, 2018). It becomes evident that the need to strengthen the organizations' leadership pipeline so far, they look for a strategic approach to do succession planning (Boerner, 2015; Austin, 2010). Austin (2010) raised an important point that institutions always need to prepare a generation of leaders to keep the organization alive and minimize the risk factor for a leadership crisis.

Theorizing the concept of feminism in the educational practices, the teaching environment, and research work of feminism have enabled female studies to flourish (Lin, 2019). However, the theoretical foundation lapses in terms of equal rights for females to own leadership positions in higher education. Females face limitations in claiming their rights equal to males in higher education (Policastro, 2015). The female role as a leader has gained greater recognition worldwide. It is often assumed that the inclusion of females in the workforce plays a significant role in economic development and social well-being (Grigoli et al., 2018). Despite females' important contribution to boosting the economy, relative to men, they cannot achieve equal status (WEF, 2020). Studies have shown that the positioning of females as a specialist and rendering services to lead organizations remain

underrepresented (Murray and Mifsud, 2019; Mifsud, 2019; El-Alayli et al., 2018; Fitzgerald, 2018). In particular, the shift toward greater support for females in leadership can be related to increasing discontent with economic circumstances and the attitudes and behaviors of people (Jones et al., 2018). Females faced some obstacles to achieve leadership roles due to job segregation, gender discrimination, race, status, and incompetency (Hodges, 2017; Alghofaily, 2019). Although females entered the labor market, it lacks professional engagement in leadership and management positions (Alaqahtani, 2020)

3.2. Succession planning practices and challenges

According to research on leadership development and succession planning, academic leaders are unaware of their colleges' or universities' succession plans or programs, and they do not believe their institutions are prepared for a leadership crisis (Neefe, 2009; Luzebetak, 2010; Mateso, 2010; Luna, 2012). Unlike public higher education, where open employment practices, including compliance with equal opportunity standards and processes, are mandated, the private sector has more latitude in recruiting and hiring leadership. Academic planning is more commonly linked to cultural and institutional values, whereas corporate planning is dominated by organizational processes and structures (Slaughter et al., 2004). When a person is groomed as a successor for a specific post in higher education institutions, it is viewed as unequal, and it is seen as a violation of the academy's egalitarian norms (Kasper, 2008). Higher education professionals consider institutional culture to be influential in comparison to the business sector (Tierney, 2008). Higher education faculty describe the academic culture as inclusive, collegial, and transparent (Schein, 2010). However, leadership preparation involves multiple stakeholders to impose their decisions and take advantage of trust-based relationships (Kezar, 2004). Full-time professor positions are frequently used as a stepping stone to a future leadership role. Those aspiring to leadership roles, on the other hand, report that there are no clearly apparent career advancement steps (Luna, 2012). Furthermore, strong collectivity has kept the administrative process running in higher education. Despite the fact that a lot of university administrators have begun to appreciate the need of training the next generation of leaders, research reveals that such programs are often led by individuals rather than institutions (Caldwell, 2007). Leadership in higher education is tribal and personal in nature. In this regard, decisions for succession are often monitored and controlled by selection committees and boards outside of the department. As the selection board has full right to keep the momentum or make changes in the institutional direction. In the current era, there is utmost need to guide higher education institutions with a modern strategic leadership approach that brings effective

results to achieve the organizational goals; thus, old leadership approaches seem ineffective (Kezar and Holcombe, 2017). Another perspective for lacking succession planning in higher education is the faculty's lack of interest to take the initiative for administrative positions and similar positions (Land, 2003). Moreover, leaders' age, number of years' leadership experience, and academic disciplinary background are significantly related to their preparedness (Mohnot, 2019). However, studies related to the implication of future research on leadership development for academic institutions. There is a need to conduct studies using a robust methodology and explore the nature and impact of leadership development programs in some novel and emerging organizational settings, especially targeting the senior-level leadership styles at educational institutions (Dopson et al., 2019). Research conducted in Arab countries reported that females are securing managerial and leadership positions after the gender equality initiatives announced by the government (Sidani et al., 2015). Reference to this, females are still facing socio-cultural issues on female working status in the organizations (Afiouni and Karam, 2014). In the Saudi Arabia context, higher education institutions are lacking succession planning. Females in Saudi Arabia faced knowledge and competency gap to secure leadership positions (Abalkhail, 2017).

3.3. Succession planning model implementation

Models for succession planning were not connected or integrated with strategic or comprehensive plans when it was documented (Riccio, 2010; Bisbee, 2005; Luna, 2012). In view of that, models were based on the informal and unstructured approach; lack of alignment with institutions policies, strategy, mission, and vision; implemented without considering input from concerned personnel and shared-governance processes (Kezar, 2004; Neefe, 2009; Washington, 2016; Ahmad et al., 2020). Models comprise of talent management component that supports succession planning for future leaders (Heuer, 2003; Mercer, 2009; Riccio, 2010). In many contexts, succession planning entrenched in institutional core values and principles is rarely depicted in higher education institutions. Wolfred (2008) stated that succession planning as a part of strategic leader development is seldom heard of especially in higher education. It is necessary to address the three components of succession planning in order to seek organizational growth such as identifying potential leaders, development, and engagement of employees, and retention of high-performing employees (Chavez, 2011). The concept of succession planning was derived from human resource theories. Thus, it has evolved with the passage of time with a significant change in technology-based personnel planning and need-based recruitment strategy (Parfitt, 2017b). As compared to the business sector, higher education institutions have been slower to adopt the

succession planning model in their strategy (Riddick, 2009).

3.4. Antecedents and consequences of succession planning

In view of succession planning in higher education, the main antecedents are strategic planning, identifying talent, leadership development, mentoring, and education of potential talent (Carriere et al., 2009; Kim, 2010). All senior leaders should have an appreciation for succession planning, as well as a leadership succession plan, which should be incorporated in the institution's strategic plan (González, 2010). The leadership team must identify future needs in line with the institution's mission and vision in order to take it forward. By recruiting people who suit the current organizational culture can enrich and strengthen the organization in the long run. In order to gain effective results of succession planning, higher education institutions should identify potential talent and train them for a future leadership role (Prestia et al., 2014). To uncover strengths and weaknesses, identified persons should be evaluated using leadership competencies. Moreover, it should be determined where educational and leadership capacity-building sessions can be developed. Experienced leaders in higher education should use a systematic mentorship program to prepare future leaders. Individuals with leadership potential must be recognized, educated, supported, mentored, and maintained in order to gain effective results from succession planning.

The consequences of succession planning will appear in the form of retention of high-performer employees, a healthier work environment, and sustainability of higher education institutions. Succession planning is a tool for recruitment and retention of potential talent with a goal to advance their career in leadership. In case of the absence of leadership, the pipeline will result in the failure of institutions in the distant future. A person with great leadership skills can effectively convey the organization's mission and vision, as well as motivate and inspire others to achieve common goals. Succession planning increases employee retention ensures leadership stability, maximizes job satisfaction, and improves the workplace environment (Laframboise, 2011). When succession planning is not in place, leadership stability, institutional values, and job satisfaction are compromised.

4. Future research areas

Throughout this systematic review on succession planning in higher education, we identify the lack of discussion and empirical work on females' career development. While dimensions, antecedents, and consequences that enrich the concept of succession planning have been debated as precedence to

institutional sustainability, there is a lack of empirical work on succession planning and gender equality within the higher education contexts. Through our review of literature, a limited number of studies addressed female leadership issues in higher education with a greater focus on the challenges females face. This paper is in line with current work that encourages further broad and in-depth empirical studies in the area of gender participation and succession planning (Alsubaie and Jones, 2017). Further investigation is required to evaluate the current practices of academic institutions in terms of talent management, career development, and growth for their employees. With the transformation in both higher education and gender participation along spectrums of the "new normal" after the Covid-19, it is pivotal to explore and examine possible designs and mechanisms in creating talent pools and leadership pipelines. The realities of integrating academic responsibilities and expertise with managerial leadership roles require effective growth processes that encapsulate organizational, cultural, and personal perspectives. It is further challenging for academia to hold legitimate positions such as the head of departments, deans, deputy vice-chancellors, and vice-chancellors, leading among equals. In its necessity, succession planning research for higher education merits new directions, contextual relevance theoretical, and practical links toward sustainability. Gender participation and female inclusion are critical aspects that pathways for best practices in talent development that support long-term goals.

Thus, three research areas have been identified for future research direction, which can be supported for doctoral students and academic scholars to contribute, refer to Table 3. It may also support government bodies sponsoring research in higher education to engage females in succession planning.

5. Conclusion

This paper is based on the synthesis of the literature covering the aspect of succession planning in higher education. It also established a rationale to conduct robust studies to better understand the higher education dynamics for human capital management. Indeed, succession planning in higher education is hardly investigated in scholarly work. It is important to evaluate the current practices of employee career development in higher education at the initial stage, then understand the situation to design a succession planning framework for academic institutions. Along with that, females in higher education may be neglected to secure a leadership position due to specific barriers; so far, action research design will support bringing new insight into this. This paper contributes new knowledge and future research directions for scholars and higher education institutions to support pilot intervention design for succession planning. It may also support government bodies to sponsor

research in higher education to engage females in succession planning.

Table 3: Proposed research studies

No	Area of study	Objectives	Design and method
1	Identify senior management perspective on how to strategize succession planning in higher education	To evaluate the current system for talent management in higher education and understand the situation to design a succession planning framework for academic institutions	Qualitative study (In-depth interviews, grounded theory)
2	Factors support as well as impede from higher education management personnel to practice succession planning in an academic setting	To explore factors that restrict higher education institutions to design strategies for succession planning in higher education, develop a framework and action plan to deal with it	Qualitative study (Focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and action research)
3	Application of social exchange theory to address the leadership crisis in higher education	To know female's perspective about succession planning and leadership role in higher education, comparison with male	Quantitative study (Pre-/post-tests, randomized control trials)

6. Study limitations

This study was restricted to certain criteria, which will allow researchers to pursue new pathways. First, this study is time-limited and susceptible to database search. The study's findings are confined to a literature review of succession planning, particularly in higher education. In this sense, the findings are susceptible to context and implementation of succession planning in higher education; therefore, their generalizability is restricted. Nonetheless, this study provides a strong basis for researchers in terms of focusing succession planning in higher education considering the gender equality aspect.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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