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Strategies to Implement Effective Succession Planning

MICHELLE CHAPPLE
Walden University

Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Michelle Chapple

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Review Committee
Dr. Colleen Paeplow, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration
Faculty

Dr. Annie Brown, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Natalie Casale, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
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Michelle Chapple

MBA, Oklahoma City University, 2000

BA, University of Oklahoma, 1996

Doctoral Portfolio Program Evaluation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

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Abstract

Most U.S. hospitals do not engage in succession planning at the executive level to account for retirees aging out of the workforce. The potential loss of institutional knowledge transfer threatens leadership development and organization stability. Guided by the leadership model succession theory, the purpose of this qualitative program evaluation was to offer a formative assessment to understand better strategies needed for effective succession planning by healthcare leaders. Five healthcare leaders from a single healthcare facility in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, in the United States participated in semistructured, face-to-face interviews and provided company documents for review. Data were analyzed using descriptive and thematic data analyses. Four themes emerged from the thematic analysis: (a) use of organizational strategies to promote succession planning for leadership structure, (b) encouragement of mentorship for retention, (c) training, and (d) communication. The overarching lack of communication revealed a gap in career advancement for leaders. Policies and procedures at the facility embodied in-house training and development to prepare potential talent for executive leadership roles; however, a key recommendation is for healthcare facility leaders to implement a formal career stepladder that supports effective succession planning. The implications for positive social change include the potential to address health disparities and increase patient safety and satisfaction.

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Dedication

For your unwavering love and support throughout this doctoral journey, I dedicate this study to my husband, Mike; sons, Michael Jr. (study partner) and Kaleb; daughters, Micah (our angel), Mekale and Kyla; siblings, Tanyelle, Jerry Jr. and Timothy; family; friends; colleagues; and personal cheerleaders, Betty and Selma, whose encouragement was a pillar of strength that motivated me to the finish line. To my dad, Michael, thank you for never doubting me for one moment. I love you all! In memory of my mother, Sylvia, who demonstrated courage in times of despair in my early years of life; you live on in my achievements, and I am proud to have called you "Mama."

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To the head of my life, Almighty God, thank you for granting me the fortitude to accomplish this lifelong goal. With You, all things are possible (Philippians 4:13). To my committee chair, Dr. Colleen Paeplow; second committee member, Dr. Annie Brown; program director, Dr. George Bradley; and URR, Dr. Natalie Casale, thank you for your wisdom, guidance, encouragement, and support throughout my doctoral journey. I could not have been afforded a better team! To my cohort members and classmates who mastered this educational process with me, thank you for the encouragement to conquer this feat. May God bless each of you richly for helping to make my dream a reality.

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Section 1: Background and Context

Succession planning is key to improving performance and profitability in service industries to build a sustainable organization (Suchanek & Kralova, 2018). Despite the importance of succession planning, the leaders of healthcare organizations often fail to groom their in-house leadership to succeed the aging generation of upper-level leaders. Successful training strategies and succession plans allow healthcare leaders to develop rising managers to achieve optimal conformity towards organizational goals. One method of improving relationships among leaders and employees is to gain the loyalty of the staff (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). In one study, 11% of employees rated their leader relationships as positive and productive (Akpovirovo et al., 2018); in another, 40% who rated their leader relationships as inferior exited the organization (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). Effective succession planning training and strategies increase employee skill sets and productivity by stimulating creativity that contributes to organizational success (Børing, 2017; Fox, 2016). These statistics reinforce the importance for healthcare organizations of devising and implementing effective succession plans for core leaders.

Historical Background

The leaders of many U.S. hospitals have embraced the succession planning culture; however, they lack the tools necessary to close the gap in filling the loss of tenured employees. They have emphasized succession planning at the executive level because it promotes longevity for most hospitals and generates a talent pool of highly qualified employees for future leadership positions, research shows (Kim, 2012; Ward et al., 2018). Preparing for leadership, preserving institutional knowledge, and focusing on

leadership succession and training is essential to any organization's success (Munari et al., 2017). The lack of succession planning has made it difficult for organizations to expand their strategies and improve their industry footprint (Ward et al., 2018). Healthcare facility leaders realize the need to be sustainable yet senior leadership often lack the tools via succession planning to manage and encourage leadership continuity (Ward et al., 2018). Selecting skilled leaders and grooming in-house candidates for career advancement has been a problem in healthcare facilities; thus, strategies for effective succession planning are necessary to ensure organizational survival.

Succession planning requires in-depth research due to its essential role in facilitate leadership progression. It provides a framework that facility leaders can use in evaluating their current processes and determining the critical employees to take leadership roles (Desarno et al., 2020; Kim, 2012). Healthcare leaders 'abilities to create strategies to obtain talent, improve retention, increase training, offer career opportunities, promote career advancement, and develop qualified employees are all intertwined in their ability to engage in effective succession planning. It is imperative to research how executive-level healthcare leaders prepare to solve unplanned departures of key executives, as 70% of U.S. hospitals do not have succession plans in place at the executive level, research shows (Martin, 2021). The purpose of this qualitative program evaluation was to identify successful strategies that executive-level healthcare leaders use to facilitate succession planning at a healthcare facility located in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, in the United States. The goal was to prevent disruption of leadership

transitioning that affects the replacement of retirees aging out of the workforce. In this section, I surveyed the problem. My focus will now shift to the organizational context.

Organizational Context

Program evaluators seek to assess a program's effectiveness, suggest performance improvements, or assist in guiding resource allocations (Walden University, 2020). In this program evaluation, I focused on a single healthcare facility located in Oklahoma City whose leaders have sought to implement effective succession planning strategies. The healthcare facility's specific program endeavored to secure qualified leaders, equip leaders to advance career placement, and increase innovation for leadership structure. The facility stands out because, although the leaders of most facilities strive to improve the quality of care while minimizing costs, they often do not develop programs to promote leaders internally (Desarno et al., 2021). Developing qualified healthcare leaders who continue to offer services to the community and provide better care to patients typically offers social structures for organizations.

Problem Statement

United States healthcare organizations are experiencing a shortage of knowledgeable leaders due to retirement (Desarno et al., 2021; Sibbald et al., 2017). Consequently, healthcare leaders must be intentional with their efforts to develop future leaders. Prior research showed that only 21% of hospitals include succession planning as a key focus (Foster, 2019). The general business problem was that healthcare leaders who do not integrate succession planning limit leadership continuity for key positions. The

specific business problem was that some healthcare leaders do not implement strategies to execute effective succession planning.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this nonprofit program evaluation was to offer a formative assessment to gain a better understanding of strategies needed for effective succession planning by healthcare leaders. The goals of succession planning are to identify and develop new leaders who can succeed old leaders who exit the organization due to voluntary separation, retirement, or death. In doing so, effective succession planning increases the talent pool by fostering career advancement (Enslin & Schulz, 2015). The participants of this program evaluation were five healthcare leaders who worked in a single Oklahoma City healthcare facility. The results of this evaluation may advance positive social change by providing insight into current succession planning strategies utilized by the healthcare facility leaders. Implementation of the strategies may assist organizations that are struggling to secure qualified leaders and equip healthcare leaders with additional succession planning strategies to optimize career advancement, thus increasing innovation for leadership structure. These potential changes may improve families' quality of medical care by providing skilled healthcare leaders. Healthcare administrators, leaders, employees, and stakeholders may benefit from the findings of this study and gain an increased level of understanding of strategies for continued operational growth, which ultimately may promote the continued well-being of patients.

Target Audience

The target audience for this formative program evaluation is a healthcare facility in Oklahoma City encompassing healthcare administrators, leaders, employees, directors, and providers. Stakeholders include patients and members of the community with a vested interest in the program; as such, they may be interested in the results of the evaluation. To assess the needs and interests of all parties throughout the process, I had an initial stakeholder meeting with the organizational leader to convey the purpose of the evaluation program. The meeting provided needed content information for the logic model. Table 1 depicts the healthcare facility succession planning logic model that outlines the organization's succession planning initiative's inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes.

Additionally, the logic model displays the program strategies and possible measurements for each component. The purpose of this program evaluation was to offer a formative assessment to gain a better understanding of strategies needed for effective succession planning by healthcare leaders. The evaluation results demonstrate the program's effectiveness, highlight processes that can be improved, and reinforce the accountability that is required of leaders to support long-range planning.

Table 1

Healthcare Facility Succession Planning Logic Model

Criterion			
Input	Activity	Output	Outcome

Funding	Provide professional development	No. of professional development training offered	Higher rate of internal candidate promotions
Staff	Strengthen talent pool	No. of employees eligible for promotion	Career advancement
Training	Influence workplace employee participation	No. of internal employees promoted	Increase in skilled healthcare leaders
Mentorship			Leadership structure
Organization support			Increase organizational growth

Contextual factor	
Internal	External
Leadership	Economic factors
Training	Regulations
Culture	Innovation

Research Question

1. To what extent do healthcare leaders use effective succession planning?

Interview Questions

Data sources for the study included empirical research data, semistructured interviews, and documents. I performed descriptive and thematic data analyses on the collected data. The interview questions were as follows:

1. What strategies are healthcare leaders within your organization currently utilizing to implement effective succession planning?

2. How does your healthcare organization determine the strategies to implement effective succession planning?

3. What are the key challenges in implementing effective strategies for succession planning?

4. How has your healthcare organization overcome the critical challenges experienced with perceived barriers to implementing strategies for effective succession planning?

5. Based on your experiences, what benefits have resulted from implementing strategies for effective succession planning?

6. What additional information should be added about your healthcare organization's strategies to implement effective succession planning?

Significance

The study findings may be of value to healthcare leaders who lack strategies to implement effective succession planning. Research on succession planning strategies and leadership development could assist healthcare leaders who fail to recognize succession planning as a key component of organizational sustainability. The adoption of succession strategies could improve healthcare leaders' and employees' skillset and increase leadership continuity. Healthcare leaders could consider implementing new business practices to effectively train in-house staff to increase organizational performance and improve the quality of healthcare service to patients in the community.

Contribution to Business Practice

Remaining competitive in the healthcare industry is an ever-changing endeavor. The findings of this study may be valuable to healthcare leaders who lack strategies to implement succession planning. Instituting effective plans may offer career advancement and potentially reduce employee turnover. Increasing employee satisfaction and organizational commitment and nurturing core competencies aid in achieving competitive advantages that will most likely provide economic contributions to an organization's bottom line, research shows (Xiu et al., 2017). In this regard, healthcare facilities need a structure that is mirrored across each facility and that supports business growth and the career advancement of healthcare professionals.

Incorporating succession planning builds trust between healthcare leaders and the organization, which may promote organizational success. Luke and Chu (2013) noted that existing business models that work effectively include repetition that increases viability and practical approaches. Organizational leaders should plan for staff eligible for retirement to participate in the brainstorming phase of creating plans to prepare a current team for advancement opportunities to stabilize the organization. These efforts can contribute to effective business practices that enhance training strategies with succession planning.

Implications for Social Change

Research on effective succession planning may promote positive social change for individuals and the communities in which they live. Executive-level succession planning has the potential to foster retention of talent that enhances employees 'liveliness and

continues the organization's service to the community (Patidar et al., 2016). Properly training employees who desire to remain employed with healthcare facilities increases their productivity and profitability (Payne et al., 2018). As a result, the healthcare facility can concentrate on providing better services to patients by qualified healthcare workers who are happy and supportive of the business's mission. Nurses, for instance, can invoke social change to target health disparities, which increases patient safety and satisfaction, according to researchers (Yulianti & Prameswari, 2020). Improving human interactions, transforming the professional culture, and enhancing relationships between healthcare leaders and employees may be outcomes of effective succession planning.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study was the leadership model succession theory (LMST). Nurturing interpersonal relationships and team building gives credence to the notion that leadership supports nurture (Foster, 2019). Although not authored by Oscar Grusky, the LMST centers on early works by Grusky that focused on management succession. Grusky (1969) suggested that managerial relationships with subordinates influence the type of succession experienced by the organization. Its general nature reinforces the rationale for using the LMST theory for this formative program evaluation by encouraging the organization to groom leaders within the company. Hence, Chiocchio and Gharibpour (2017) noted that when leaders fail to create succession plans, their ability to serve their constituents and sustain their organization is limited.

LMST is a nurturing concept that developed from seminal and current literature (Foster, 2019). The LMST theory offers sustainability to the organization by allowing

healthcare leaders to prepare for the departure of knowledgeable leaders with professional development plans. With that, the preservation of leadership knowledge, expertise, and career optimization among healthcare leaders must have synergy with succession planning (Foster, 2019). In this evaluation, I used the LMST framework to explore strategies for creating effective succession planning. In this framework, organizational leaders are encouraged to develop repetition in their management structure that allows for a straightforward path of communication. Keeping the talent pool structure in-house may provide a seamless transition from the current to the next generation of leaders.

Representative Literature Review

The purpose of this program evaluation was to offer a formative assessment to gain a better understanding of strategies needed for effective succession planning by healthcare leaders. The turnover of healthcare leaders is expensive and disruptive and continues to rise across the nation and Oklahoma as retirees age out of the workplace (CITE). In the literature review, I address the significance of answering the capstone's overarching research question. I also justify the selection of the LMST as the conceptual framework.

Yin (2018) observed that a literature review promotes mastery over the research topic and supports the importance of the research questions. The researcher's task is to assess the value of data, organize the information, and determine if the data are suitable for their research project (Saunders et al., 2016). Reliable resources for literature reviews consist of seminal, government, and peer-reviewed data sources. To gather the data

needed for this formative program evaluation, I retrieved documents from the Walden University Library. The databases that I searched included EBSCOhost for articles, books, and journals in addition to ProQuest for dissertations and themes, ScholarWorks, Sage, Academic Search Complete, and Emerald Insight. I also searched Crossref and Google Scholar. I searched for literature for the period of 1962 to 2021. Keywords searched included *succession planning*, *healthcare employee retention*, *career advancement*, and *leadership model succession theory.* I also used the Boolean terms "and" and "or" to increase the number of relevant articles I found. The cited references are peer reviewed and concern succession planning and employee retention strategies.

This literature review includes an explanation of succession planning through the lens of the LMST. This framework advocates nurturing interpersonal relationships that foster team building (Foster, 2019). Accordingly, personalized interactions are effective communication channels that build quality relationships founded on trust, satisfaction, and commitment (Banyte et al., 2016). Grusky (1969) suggested that managers ' relationships with subordinates are structured by their organizational succession experiences. The rationale for using the LMST theory for this formative program evaluation was its pertinence to the specific business problem. The findings of the evaluation may be useful to the facility's leaders in groom leading within the company. The LMST framework aligned with the aim of the evaluation to explore strategies for successful succession planning.

Leadership Model Succession Theory Framework

Predestined leaders who accept authority with the use of succession planning offer structured fields of stability for leaders. Instinctively, an individual conforms to authority in organizations to either avoid or reduce anxiety, as Grusky noted in his works relating to the theory of leadership model succession (Grusky, 1962, 1969). Suitably, the organization's requirement of complete loyalty heavily reinforces and builds a solid foundation of commitment between leaders and employees (Banyte et al., 2016; Grusky, 1962). Grusky (1962) found that employee engagement strategies foster positive work environments that, over time, yield organizational growth and sustainability. In addition, a person's commitment to an organization impacts the rewards received from the system predicated on the experiences to receive the rewards. Grusky (1966) hypothesized that the greater the rewards received, the stronger the commitment from a person. The greater the obstacles that the person has overcome to receive the rewards, the greater their commitment towards achieving career mobility. An organized and effective succession plan positions an organization to offer opportunities for career advancement to leaders who work to strengthen the company brand as they leverage movement for their current positions.

Each manager's career mobility determines their present position in the organization against the level of their first position. Thus, career advancement refers to movement across levels, not merely from position to position (Grusky, 1966, 1969). Employees who surpass their work expectations appear as competent, capable, and confident individuals who can step into the next leadership role (Cherniss & Goleman,

2001). Even with minimal training and skills development by organizational leaders, research supports the use of human resource strategies to retain employees (Fletcher et al., 2018). Yet, leadership models, such as transformational leadership aid in developing strong leaders through motivation and enhancing people skills by displaying empathy.

Transformational leadership theory was applicable to this program evaluation; however, it lacks emotional elements, such as motivation, empathy, or social skills to support employee training. The approach focuses on leadership styles that involve the use of motivation and encouragement of engagement among employees (Northouse, 2016). Transformational leadership aims to transform people regarding their emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals (Northouse, 2016). By using the transformational leadership theory, leaders are able to increase organizational success by implementing training for employees to become successful; however, the use of the theory does not have a substantial effect on employees, some researchers have found (Faupel & Sub, 2019). The transformational leader understands what employees need from the organization and seeks leadership strategies to motivate employees to carry out the company's mission and goals. The tenets of transformational leadership are stimulating the intellect, empowering individuals, and encouraging employee goals (Wang et al., 2018). Unlike the LMST framework used within this evaluation, transformational leadership concentrates on personal traits of engagement and inspiration.

Transformational leaders inspire employees to perform in practical ways that create impactful workplace engagement. To capture this process, transformational leadership showcases positive attributes that employees use to engage in the workplace

environment (Solis, 2017; Wang et al., 2018). Although effective, transformational leadership should be supplemented with professional development as a standard practice to develop talent to advance the organization's mission (Fletcher et al., 2018). Contrary to transformational leadership, the LMST focuses on leaders nurturing employees through succession plans to capture the institutional knowledge established by current leaders (Grusky, 1969). This theory creates a synergy desired by organizations to develop succession plans that identify processes to build, retain, and train employees to fill leadership roles. It is why succession planning can be a pliable tool for career growth.

Succession Planning

An organization's succession planning tool should encompass best practices for leaders who desire to transition up the career ladder. Succession planning grooms skilled employees to succeed current leaders in organizations to limit disruption in productivity, workplace morale, and crisis in restructuring (McMullen & Warnick, 2015). High turnover of healthcare leaders costs organizations nearly double administrators 'annual salaries (Enslin & Schulz, 2015). Given these data, it was apparent that the healthcare industry needs to increase employee retention to preserve corporate knowledge as retirees age out of the workforce. In consideration of the cost of employee turnover, during the research phase, I categorized themes for hospital succession planning to include knowledge (e.g., education, experience, knowledge in nursing, costs), skills (e.g., training, administrator skills, specialties), and behavior (e.g., relationships, organization solutions, negative employee behavior, administrator behavior). The themes are

complimenting facets to understand the instruments needed to increase employee retention.

Employee Retention

Employee retention is the focus of most organizations attempting to secure the healthcare workforce. Organizational performance drives the retention and development of talented leaders and the facilitation of succession planning (Wilkins, 2014). More often than not, tendering quality training for employees provides the necessary tools to succeed in the workplace (Loomba & Karsten, 2019). However, the costs incurred for recruitment, training, and loss of productivity invoke explicit costs for organizations (An, 2019; Zhang, 2016). Research shows that in 2016 organizations in the United States invested over $13 billion annually on career development to engage highly skilled leaders; this figure compared to $22 billion in 2020 (Freifeld, 2020; Swensen et al., 2016). Healthcare leaders agree that retention remains achievable when overall efficiency, personal benefits, and working conditions affect positive responses (Zhang, 2016). To that end, developing effective succession planning creates a culture of successful leaders through participation in employee engagement, employee training, and employee promotion. Correspondingly, the advantages of employee retention include organizational sustainability.

Advantages of Employee Retention

Retaining employees has numerous advantages. It is advantageous for organizations when the gap between low- and high-level employees is low (Zhang, 2016). Moreover, the investment rate in employees who act responsibly, seek challenges,

and demonstrate rational behavior and work ethics decreases turnover, research shows (Sun & Wang, 2017). Institutional knowledge endures with long-tenured employees who can transfer this knowledge to new hires. Many organizations in the healthcare industry experience a decline in growth when employees choose to end their employment before engaging in this transfer of knowledge.

The grounds for departure are varied and include choosing better facilities, higher pay, or career growth. The loss of skilled workers through retirement, resignation, illness, or sudden death stymies the organization's growth. Profits decrease as additional costs increase from excessive employee turnovers impeding organizational production (Sun & Wang, 2017). Taking proactive measures such as shaping the future of internal candidates via movement along career ladders (i.e., career advancement) offers sustainability for the organization and a higher employee retention rate.

Career Advancement

Many organizations offer existing employees career advancement, allowing them to move up in rank and balance promotion from in-house. This provides sustainability for the organization (Caves, 2018). In contemporary organizations, career advancement guidance is often disseminated via online learning systems (Caves, 2018). On-the-job training increases productivity by developing relationships among healthcare administrators and frontline workers, allowing effective succession planning by the healthcare leader. Subsequently, employee turnovers must be minimized and decreased to protect the organization (An, 2019). Minimizing turnovers with effective succession plans encourages healthcare organizational growth while ensuring team development and

critical thinking and positioning the organization for environmental and social change. Healthcare leaders are thus able to align upper-level training that fosters high performance from trained employees. Fundamentally, career advancement incorporates strategies that give the employee purpose, defined work goals, and standards that support the organization's mission. These are successful attributes and leadership blueprints to offer current healthcare leaders and internal candidates seeking advancement.

Leadership by Design

Leaders seeking elevation can accomplish this goal with organizational commitment. Organizations can successfully close the gap to connecting with future healthcare leaders with the implementation of succession plans. Collins et al. (2016) concurred that the perceptions of CEOs in U.S. hospitals play a pivotal part in developing and maintaining succession plans. Surveys conducted by healthcare experts showed 93% agreement among executives that succession planning was trending upward but still had room for improvement (Collins et al., 2016). Succession planning should be proactive and long-term and span across all leadership positions within an organization. As such, succession planning programs groom future leaders and chart career paths as effective on-the-job training strategies develop. Ergo, engaging training and development strategies improve employee skills and boost healthcare industry standards. A benefit of healthcare leaders supporting senior leadership would be to underpin efforts to secure qualified staff to fill vacancies caused by individual retirements. A limitation that leaders encounter is inadequate experience to unlock the potential in individuals to master demanding positions (Ahmad & Saad, 2020).

Securing qualified staff for demanding positions due to the exiting of individuals can be challenging but regulated with a developed succession plan. Leadership vacancies are inevitable, and succession planning strategies help manage personnel shortages and preserve leadership and intellectual capital (Moore, 2018). Leaders should incorporate long-term plans to develop the service and the roles and skills required for the workforce (Coughlan & Patton, 2018). Ahmad and Saad (2020) found that successful leaders influence and motivate others to fulfill the organization's mission. In most instances, workforce planning for healthcare leaders strives to balance the supply and demand for the staff and ensure that staffing levels are sufficient for skilled personnel. Well-designed, evidence-based processes enhance professional development strategies and succession planning models that cultivate meaningful relationships between leaders and nurses. Albeit, poor succession planning strategies are risk factors for investors when overlooking sufficient measures to implement succession planning.

Organizations that partner with human service sectors to address the crisis in succession planning initiate a substantial return on investment for leaders of tomorrow (Vito, 2018). Professional values transfer from experienced healthcare workers to next-generation workers, which promotes cost-effective methods that enhance educational experiences (Vito, 2018). Furthermore, there is an increased need to have varying approaches to leadership development and integration of formal training that encourages new learning opportunities. Nevertheless, minimal information is available for in-depth leadership development initiatives of organizations; there is limited empirical research available in public and nonpublic sectors, such as healthcare (Vito, 2018). The percentage

of U.S. hospitals that planned for employee succession increased from 21% in 2005 to 75% in 2015 (Foster, 2019). In addition, Webb et al. (2017) concluded that 10% of healthcare organizations included effective succession planning in their career strategies in 2011. Therefore, leadership development is still crucial in the advancement of healthcare facilities.

Leadership development encourages individuals to hone their skillsets as they take on leadership roles, thus increasing organizational relationships. Although leadership development is forward-thinking for all industries, the healthcare sector generally lags a decade behind many other business sectors (Graystone, 2019). An example of the gap is incorporating digital relationships to lessen time constraints on leaders and slow adaptation to information technology. Leadership development involves financial assessments; institutional projects; and coaching of leaders to include nurses, administrators, scientists, and allied health. Organizations that develop institutional leadership create opportunities to build social capital, increase employee engagement, and build trust with leaders. Swensen et al. (2016) posited that the relationship between the leadership and employee directly affects employees' effectiveness and satisfaction. As a result, investment in leadership development through effective succession planning may bolster employee engagement, increase morale, and mitigate the risk of burnout.

How organizations respond to succession planning could influence business performance, employee engagement, and morale. To implement effective succession plans, Collins et al. (2016) offered seven measures identified to provide steps to effective succession plans. The first two measures are making room to groom leaders based on

knowledge and gaining a sense of the leader's philosophy on organization practices that align with the mission and vision of the company. The subsequent three measures include focusing the strategic goal on critical jobs, identifying employee methodologies to identify competencies required of leadership positions, and offering explanations of established development and training programs. The final two measures include examining barriers that prohibit effective succession planning continuity and implementing continual monitoring of the program outcomes and modifications. The research further provided data that revealed the reoccurring trend that perspectives wavered regarding the idea of leaders being born with leadership skills or if the skills developed through training. Eighty percent of the survey participants thought it was difficult to train a healthcare leader if they do not have the innate ability to lead (Collins et al., 2016). In addition, identifying leadership characteristics was crucial to developing effective succession plans.

Possessing leadership qualities in the healthcare arena is not only innovative, but appealing. It is beneficial for healthcare leaders to have the ability to distinguish leadership characteristics of healthcare executives from non-healthcare business-related executives (Collins, 2016). Specifically, skillsets for the healthcare leader that provide industry equity, value-based care, and cultural awareness. Inherently, the organization must avail itself to up-and-coming healthcare leaders to leverage its competitive edge. With this goal in mind, healthcare organizations are becoming innovative and proactive with creating succession planning to replace the employee and focus on in-house talents that can adapt to change (Moreno & Girard, 2019). However, increasing retirement and

challenges of the evolving millennial workforce causes organizations to lack the ability to capture critical institutional knowledge of voluntary employee separation, increasing turnover costs (Payne et al., 2018). Also, due to limited empirical-based evidence in the healthcare industry, future researchers seek answers regarding the internal versus the external leadership placement impacts of the organization's success.

Hiring in-house talent continues the development of transferable knowledge and skills that ultimately improve patient care. Henceforth, the measure of success of organizations centers on their ability to develop leadership through training in-house talent and conquer barriers such as lack of time and availability needed to increase skills incompetency in nursing leadership (Ramseur et al., n.d). In-house training efforts increase the sustainability of the organization and the desire of internal talent to remain employed as leadership investments increase. Intrinsically, leaders and managers have the task of shaping organizational success and identifying key positions of succession planning. Along with that duty, key competencies evaluate functions and the readiness of candidates to elevate to the next level. These efforts solidify the notion that succession planning should have ongoing and long-term processes to assess data points over time that lead to creative leadership and recruitment strategies.

Recruitment Strategies

The rise in patient acuity, the shortage of nurses, and an increased need for healthcare leaders make planning strategies critical components to the success of organizations. Successful succession plans develop budding nurses by increasing mentoring, providing training opportunities, and opening communication lines within an

incrementally structured program (Graystone, 2019). The benefits identified for an

excellent succession planning program allow organizational leaders to maintain ongoing

conversations with healthcare leaders at all levels of their careers. This engagement

signifies a genuine interest in the individual growth of healthcare leaders as they explore

new experiences in the healthcare arena. Innately, the work of the succession plan was to

attract competent individuals to join the organization as it facilitates additional resources

for talent pools (Graystone, 2019; Mehrtak et al., 2017). This information gives

organizations strategies to recruit healthcare leaders with proper training, mentoring

proactively, and incentives to stimulate growth now and in the future as the ballooning

demand expands for nursing managers.

Proactive Approach

The constant change in regulations, standards, and technology beckons the call for

succession planning to groom staff as leaders advance and term out. Overwhelmingly,

retiring baby boomers are causing a national shortage of nursing managers. With that,

Generation X and Y employees seek work that promotes strong working relationships to

balance work and life experiences (Fritz & van Knippenberg, 2018). Unfortunately,

leaders seeking to develop Generation Y nurses and healthcare leaders for advanced

positions face an urgent need for long-term leadership roles. In contrast, surveys showed

that 45% of nurses do not desire to seek leadership opportunities in nursing

administration (Martin & Kallmeyer, 2018). The lack of desire was mainly due to some

organizations promoting within regardless of the employee's qualifications, while larger

organizations hire externally. Moreover, younger nurses agree that nursing leadership

adds to the value of patient care; however current nurse leaders expect Generation Y nurses to adapt to current practices instead of advancing the climate and services.

Although the healthcare industry strives to improve the climate and services to patients, leaders also attempt to implement executive, fair and ethical succession plans. The limitation was employees who seek to do things the right way. Employees who take shortcuts in providing quality care to patients devalue their skillset and lessen the credibility of the organization's brand. The retention of successful managers is critical due to the impending shortage of leadership roles; however, just over half (51.8%) of organizations have executive succession plans (Sederstrom, 2018). However, many organizations' lack of succession plans allows researchers to find the missing link in addressing the relationship between organizational culture and succession planning.

Industry changes on the horizon have enhanced the need for organizations to create ongoing opportunities that fit the company's culture for newly trained leaders through succession planning. Increasing mergers and acquisitions in the healthcare industry suggest securing leadership roles was essential to allow the organization to adapt to evolving markets. Leaders should anticipate vacancies due to retirements and forecast succession planning by developing professional leadership opportunities (Peters-Hawkins et al., 2018). To create a solid foundation for organizational growth, leaders should possess positive cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses to direct the uncertainty in the healthcare industry (Bottle & Satlow, 2018). One problem was that organizations are constantly procuring mismatches in talent by outsourcing for external candidates (Bottle & Satlow, 2018). The results of having structured hiring processes help leaders

manage current employee expectations and recruit a qualified talent pool with in-house staff.

Retaining and recruiting qualified candidates requires creativity and best practice strategies. Five best practices for recruiting and retaining leaders include elevating succession management as a critical focus for the organization, documenting retirement patterns internally and within the region, creating academic-service partnerships, formalizing talent pools, and finally documenting returns on investment for implementing the succession planning (Bleich, 2019). In doing so, even with the greatest of efforts, there continues to be a downslide in retaining CEOs for healthcare systems. With mixed messages yielding from data collection, the preference for hiring outsiders continues to pursue to maintain productivity (Ford et al., 2018). However, to gain footing in the industry, the authors suggested that health system boards promote staff internally to eliminate the negative impact on hiring external talent. In addition, developing a mechanism to evaluate internal talent was advantageous for organizations to weed out non-qualified candidates.

Incorporating evaluation systems gauges how well an employee is performing their job duties. The evaluation system is a tool to manage development strategies. Ranking and rating systems used to evaluate internal candidates make logical sense but not emotional sense, thus causing bias and favoritism (Bleich, 2019). Long-term and pre-role mentoring exchanges between seasoned leaders and potential future leaders offer transferability of institutional knowledge. Healthcare leaders should lead in a manner consistent with the realities of change management time horizons as well. With these

methods in place, if organizational leaders address bureaucratic overburdens, more people consider a leadership position (Taylor & Youngs, 2018). Successfully balancing work-life experiences for employees through succession planning was advantageous for sustaining the organization's mission and goals using creative strategies.

Creative Strategies

Creativity outlines the blueprint for succession planning strategies to hire employees. The key was finding a balance between needs versus desires by healthcare employees. Healthcare leaders are encouraged to brainstorm creative strategies to balance work-life synergy as an essential feature for Generation X and Y recruits to secure the future of nursing (Sherman et al., 2015). Researchers suggested that key attributes in succession planning for Generation X and Y recruits provide healthy workplace environments, offer positive learning spaces, allow flexible schedules, increase individual skill sets, and give autonomy in practices (Martin & Kallmeyer, 2018). This goal achieves career mapping, which begins with a career vision, created career goals, and strategies for career plan blueprints that adjust with set goals (Feetham & Doering, 2015; Webb et al., 2017). Suitably, career mapping is an invaluable tool to assist professional excellence goals and assists organizations to retain talented staff in leadership roles while embracing professional development, leadership succession, nurse engagement, and overall satisfaction in a professional environment (Webb et al., 2017). Further, creating individualized succession plans creates innovative management tools that deliver best practices for career growth.

Individualized succession plans act as catalysts for healthcare leader advancement. Seamless leadership handoffs and transitions are unclear in most organizations, and with succession planning implemented, organizations can limit the stress-related burnouts and turnovers experienced by nursing managers (LaCross et al., 2019). Further research could identify additional transparency and recruitment tactics to retain healthcare leaders. Currently, four tips offered for succession planning include identifying leadership position vacancies, defining role expectations and competencies, developing methods to identify internal candidates, and pairing high-performing nurses with qualified mentors (Graystone, 2019). These strategies, coupled with the mission of the healthcare industry to remain viable, create a vehicle to develop sustainability and responsibility for any healthcare facility.

Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility

Healthcare organizations continue to lose great talent by not responsibly promoting in-house talent, thus limiting sustainability. Leaders often focus on top-down structuring and overlook great leaders, such as nurses or healthcare leaders, for the leadership continuum. Nurses and healthcare leaders develop knowledge bases working directly with patients. However, there typically is not a structured process to identify potential leaders within their ranks. Jones' (2019) study showed that internal talent pools tap into creating succession planning strategies when growing a company. The conversation should take place between nursing leaders and human resources professionals to plan for anticipated vacancies due to retirements and resignations. Organizations that invest in their current employee's leadership development will secure

sustainability and see a greater return on investment (Galbraith et al., 2012). To aid these efforts, healthcare organizations could learn from the best practices of businesses in different fields that employ entry-level employees groomed for long-term and progressive career paths, thus offering sustainability.

Sustainability

The healthcare industry is complex and embodies a dynamic process to capture sustainability. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability are associated with the three pillars of economic, social, and environmental aspects (Purvis et al., 2019). Factors such as leadership change, public funding, top-staff focus, and organizational policies led to trends in sustainability initiatives (Rodriguez et al., 2020). Sustainability is helpful to improve or establish corporate reputations as organizations seek sustainable measures with the central role of communication, behavior, and corporate reputation as key outliers (Suarez et al., 2020). A lack of guidelines and homogeneity in sustainability planning revealed the absence of an evaluation phase for sustainability initiatives. By redirecting resources to new initiatives in corporate sustainability, outcomes improve for stakeholders who possess poor perceptions and need structured approaches for decision-making (Calabrese et al., 2019).

Stakeholders' perceptions and decision-making processes increase when a solid foundation creates corporate sustainability. Urguhart et al. (2020) explained that healthcare leaders understand the standard definition of sustainability and the benefits of incorporating strategies to increase innovation. Coincidentally, sustainability embodies continued capacities that deliver innovation and ensure that healthcare leaders are

available to human, financial, and physical resources (Urguhart et al., 2020). The goal

was to help leaders highlight the perspective of those working directly to create processes

to sustain innovation. Continuous delivery in creativity provides employees with

implementation knowledge that overlooks the process. Sequentially, continued benefits

afforded to patients, providers, and the healthcare system increases. One gap in the

literature was adaptation and its critical role in ensuring relevancy and fit to deliver

benefits. Urguhart et al. (2020) concluded that sustainability is contingent on being able

to demonstrate benefits. Furthermore, the sustainment of capacity may reflect the need to

adapt the organizational context to ensure the sustained use of any innovation.

     Sustainability through innovation benefits the organization and advances the

healthcare leader's processes and skillset. In 2019, not many organizations included

integrating corporate sustainability in their global management strategy (Rodrigues &

Franco, 2019). Yet, managers encourage the implementation of sustainability

developments in their organizational processes. Rodrigues and Franco (2019) discussed

the context of sustainability and the impact on executives' decision-making processes

regarding the strategies to adopt and implement sustainability. The authors defined

sustainable strategy as strategically developing competitive advantages that allow

organizations to capitalize on environmental opportunities and minimize threats

(Rodrigues & Franco, 2019). The findings led to leaders incorporating sustainable

measures in organizational functions. Also, research suggested that there was no single

best way to govern the promotion of sustainability due to the difference in opinions of

corporate governance interpretations based on geographical plains; however,

sustainability frameworks increase efficiency in organizations (E-Vahdati et al., 2019).

To increase efficiency through sustainable frameworks, healthcare facilities must

place their best foot forward to brand the organization as a thriving, efficient, and viable

company while using corporate social responsibility (CSR) to attract millennial

healthcare leaders. Essentially, organizational sustainability focuses on the macro-level of

profitability achievements and moral obligations on government, society, and employees

(Yulianti & Prameswari, 2020). One key factor influencing an organization's reputation

was its commitment to CSR. CSR includes organizational actions and policies to achieve

financial, social, and environmentally sustainable development.

CSR policies include those that show concern for the environment, promote

community relations, improve employee relations and improve diversity and benefits.

Critical benefits identified to develop CSR in organizations are that millennials are

confident, optimistic, and prefer flexibility at work. Millennials value completing

assigned tasks which inevitably helps productivity. In addition, millennial expectations of

career and pay advancement are realistic for their first job after graduation (Yulianti &

Prameswari, 2020). The authors suggested that millennials believe that organizations

bring work safety, and millennials desire to work in nurturing environments, which

provides a balance between work and life. An additional benefit of the research suggests

that corporate social performance dimensions significantly predicted company reputation

and employer attractiveness. The attributes mentioned above are competitive forces

needed for healthcare facilities' added responsibility and viability in this ever-changing industry.

Responsibility

Researchers ask how corporate responsibility translates into corporate sustainability (Yuan et al., 2020). Corporate sustainability is the belief that organizations simultaneously achieve environmental integrity and social equity through CSR. CSR is a multifaceted concept that focuses on an organization's response to stakeholders, society, and the environment (Yuan et al., 2020). The adoption of CSR activities in business strategies allows leaders to capitalize on the strategic value of CSR practices (Zaman & Nadeem, 2019). Corporate sustainability and CSR are beginning to converge, although scholars provide varying definitions of the two theories. Tong et al. (2019) advocated that CSR activities create a sense of pride for meaningful work produced by employees, which promotes a supportive work climate and employee creativity. Employees' perceptions of CSR strengthens their work engagement, thus proving CSR is an essential strategic tool in shaping employee creativity. With the organization's support, the link between CSR and employee creativity bridges a safe environment for employees. In doing so, employee creativity was essential for organizational performance and innovation. Allowing the employees to benefit by contributing to the company's success increases employee loyalty when CSR initiatives are high (Tong et al., 2019).

Benefits. CSR can contribute to increased profits and better uses for the organization as turnover rates decrease. Healthcare facilities can use CSR strategies to increase visibility and credibility with social media to promote CSR activities (Benitez et

al., 2020; Illia et al., 2017). The presence and use of social media allow for higher

visibility resulting in enhanced employer branding and demonstrates the organization's

socially responsible investments to generate business value. Benefits from the study by

Illia et al. (2017) revealed that a mix of four dialogue processes allows any corporation to

communicate effectively in online spaces. The processes include directing, moderating,

building open scripts, and crowd-sourcing multi-dialogue. These components improve

communication regarding CSR activities and build a framework for organizations to

create an open dialogue. The results of these actions through technology provided

organizations with decision-making strategies on how to best interact with the public

(Illia et al., 2017; Lobschat et al., 2019).

Technology

Technology is the catalyst to frame innovation for healthcare leaders to meet the

competitive needs of the organization. Interacting with the public through advancing

technology in the digital age is evolving and challenges organizations to increase their

competitive strategies to conduct business (Orbik & Zozulakove, 2019). CSR and

corporate digital responsibility (CDR) are leading factors shaping the ethical use of new

technology. CDR is the values and rules organizations should follow concerning the four

main digital technology processes and data (Lobschat et al., 2019). The conceptual

framework of CDR comprises four stakeholders considered by corporations and four

primary functions of digital technology and data that include technology and data

capture, operation and decision-making, inspection and impact assessment, and

refinement of technology and data (Orbik & Zozulakova, 2019). Coincidentally, with

CSR, organizations are socially accountable to society and stakeholders as they apply principles that influence the economy, social, and environmental surroundings. When leveraging different digital technologies with digital transformation, organizations gain sustainable techniques to advance their competitors. Orbik and Zozulakova (2019) suggested a positive relationship between CDR and an organization's ability to compete with industry challenges and financial performances.

An organization's competitive nature has a positive correlation to CDR. The four processes of the stakeholder and digital lifecycle of CDR blends key lifecycle stages with CSR that are beneficial to all parties. CDR explores how digital communication changes the corporation's interaction with external stakeholders and civil society (Orbik & Zozulakova, 2019). The stakeholders are the organizations, individual actors, artificial and technological actors, and institutional, governmental, and legal actors. With the advancement of digital transformation, the gap between labor and technology closes as CDR is fusing ethical concerns at the organization level. Advancing organizations with digital initiatives improve their business strategies to trump competitive organizations. The plans include the idea that digital initiatives are the core of an organization's business strategy and support particular objectives. The downside to an organization not maturing digitally was the missed opportunity to become diverse and productive in a rapidly growing industry.

Diversity

Developing a strategic training program that accounts for diversity among candidates attracts and retains a desirable workforce. An organization's ability to be

productive is contingent upon the employees 'job satisfaction and job performance that increases with sufficient diversity management with inclusion initiatives (Ohunakin et al., 2019). Improving the cultural sensitivity of interning medical and nursing students is critical to the provision of healthcare services. Research shows it would be beneficial to develop programs designed to increase cultural sensitivity and language proficiency in university curriculums and offer more significant opportunities to acquire experiences abroad (Sekerci & Bicer, 2019). Medical and nursing students interacting with immigrant patients and those that speak and understand foreign languages at sufficient levels have higher levels of cultural sensitivity. In light of that, cultural health lessons deem it necessary to raise students' cultural sensitivity and curriculum suggestions. Cultural sensitivity training increases open-mindedness, and cultural awareness inculcates an understanding of multiculturalism and improves the ability to communicate with minorities (Sekerci & Bicer, 2019). The research also showed that domestic and international programs should support students 'language development.

The inclusion of domestic and international programs to develop students ' language assists with enhancing nursing education with programs that improve the students 'cultural sensitivity and cultural intelligence. The programs aid in successfully managing cultural differences and providing culturally appropriate care in the nursing practice (Gol & Erkin, 2019). Understanding the person's individual experiences related to bias, prejudice, and racism allows the user to reflect on the person's experiences of fear, trauma, lack of exposure, and anger (Crawford et al., 2019). An additional benefit

was for the user to acknowledge the role of cultural factors in health care and invite

conversations for collaboration and transparency. Future research suggests that the

provider's responsibility was to be knowledgeable about the experiences, biases,

prejudices, and racism patients contend with due to their cultural identities. The provider

should be aware of the poverty impacts of the patients, health literacy, and other social

determinants of health while patients convey their challenges related to follow-up

treatment (Crawford et al., 2019). One additional factor in understanding systems allowed

providers to identify patient experiences rather than view patients based on their cultural

identities. Lundin et al. (2018) recommended that rectifying routines and transcultural

awareness heightens to achieve the aim of person-centered and equal healthcare.

Summary

In Section 1, I presented the foundation of this qualitative formative program

evaluation, which includes (a) the historical background of the problem; (b)

organizational content; (c) problem statement; (d) purpose statement; (e) target audience;

(f) research question; (g) significance; and (h) conceptual framework, including the

components of the contributions to business practice along with the implications for

social change. Section 1 concluded with a review of the representative literature review

highlighting the healthcare facility succession planning logic model and the need for

healthcare leaders to implement effective succession planning strategies to counteract the

loss of aging out retirees.

Section 2: Project Design and Process

In Section 2, I describe the design and process of this formative program evaluation. In addition to discussing my role as the researcher, I provide information on the program participants and the sampling techniques. I also describe the data collection and analysis process and reliability and validity considerations.

Method

The purpose of this program evaluation was to offer a formative assessment to gain a better understanding of components needed for effective succession planning by healthcare leaders. Leaders engage in succession planning to identify and develop new leaders who can succeed old leaders who exit the organization due to voluntary separation, retirement, or death (Enslin & Schulz, 2015). In this evaluation, I examined succession planning within the study organization. The target population consisted of five healthcare leaders who worked in a single Oklahoma City healthcare facility. Effective succession planning produces an organization's desired results and achieves the organization's desired outcomes of increasing the talent pool (Bleich, 2019). However, the lack of succession planning makes it difficult for organizations to expand their strategies to enhance their industry footing. Thus, healthcare leaders need to select skilled leaders, groom in-house candidates, and use appropriate survival tools to promote organization sustainability.

Qualitative methodology reflects participants' feelings, opinions, and experiences detailing their thought and behavior patterns and reasoning processes (Mohajan, 2018). The explorative nature of the qualitative method allows the researcher to collect data via

interviews, focus groups, or observations (Bleiker et al., 2019). Quantitative methodology gives the researcher access to analytical data through statistical interactions, laboratory procedures, and experimental paradigms and involves the testing of hypotheses (Park & Park, 2016). As I undertook a program evaluation, I did not study the relationship among variables, therefore solidifying the qualitative methodology as best suited to determine if healthcare leaders use effective succession planning.

The results of this study may advance positive social change by providing insight into current succession planning strategies utilized by the healthcare facility leaders to assist organizations struggling to secure qualified leaders. This knowledge may equip healthcare leaders with additional succession planning strategies to optimize career advancement while increasing innovation for leadership structure. This may benefit communities and improve families' quality of care. I plan to share the findings with healthcare administrators, leaders, employees, and stakeholders, who may benefit from an increased understanding of strategies for continued operational growth. Organizational growth may support patients' ongoing well-being. As part of the program evaluation, I completed a formative assessment of the components needed for effective succession planning. I conducted interviews with study participants to answer the following research question: To what extent do healthcare leaders use effective succession planning? Participants shared the critical challenges in implementing effective succession planning and the tactics to overcome the implementation barriers.

Design

In qualitative research, program evaluation, ethnography, narrative research, and phenomenology are appropriate research designs (Jorrin Abellan, 2016). Yin (2018) posited that program evaluation design fosters opportunities for the researcher to inquire into a group, organization(s), or a change in processes to answer research questions. The rationale for the formative evaluation design was to provide results of the study that could advance positive social change by providing insight into current succession planning strategies utilized by healthcare leaders. I also wanted to identify additional succession planning strategies that may enhance innovation. The evaluation results demonstrated the program's effectiveness, identified processes for improvement, and demonstrated the accountability of leaders to support long-range planning. Based on the participating healthcare leaders' experiences, I noted several benefits of implementing strategies for effective succession planning. My role as the researcher was to ascertain additional information added about healthcare organizations' plans to implement effective succession planning.

I considered additional qualitative research designs for the evaluation. A researcher conducting an ethnography investigates the actual context of human behavior of groups or cultures (Dogan et al., 2019). Exploring the human behavior of groups or cultures was not the intent of this evaluation; thus, the ethnographical design would not have been beneficial. A researcher using a narrative research design interprets shared stories about participants' lives (Papakitsou, 2020). This focus was counter to the goal of data collection for this evaluation. A researcher using a phenomenology design explores

and interprets individual life, beliefs, and attitudes towards the world, which offers a

psychological disconnect (Kelly & Kelly, 2019). These designs were not applicable. I

concluded that a formative program evaluation was the best way to determine the extent

to which healthcare leaders use effective succession planning.

Population and Sampling

The population for this formative program evaluation consisted of five healthcare

leaders working in a single Oklahoma City healthcare facility who have effectively

developed their succession planning processes. The target audience for this formative

program evaluation consists of healthcare administrators, leaders, employees, directors,

and providers. Gentles and Vilches (2017) suggested that sampling methods provide in-

depth insight into relevant concepts in qualitative research. The use of purposeful

sampling was most appropriate for this program evaluation as the participants chosen had

direct attributes pertaining to the conceptual constructs of this evaluation. Selecting

knowledgeable participants provides quality information for an evaluation (Moser &

Korstjens, 2018). Participants answered specific interview questions about actual

experiences of theirs. This provided valuable data and increased the scope of the data

collection. Moser and Korstjens (2018) agreed that participant interviews provide the

researcher and participant benefits based on the interaction of interview questions that

allow the participant to share their firsthand account of the phenomenon.

The program evaluation demonstrates the program's effectiveness, identifies

process improvements, and demonstrates the accountability of leaders to support long-

range planning. The basis for internal contextual factors was leadership, training, and

culture. The inputs of the logic model center on strategies that secured funding, increased staffing, and increased training opportunities. Activities included developing talent pools, providing professional development programs, and incorporating workplace employee participation. The contextual factors, such as economic, regulations, and innovation, determined the outputs, such as employee promotions. Positive outcomes increased the opportunity for successful career advancement, leadership structure, and organizational growth.

A range between five and 10 individuals is an ideal target size for a research project (Hamilton & Finley, 2020). Evaluation participants selected for this study played vital roles in the healthcare facility. Because of their experience, I concluded that a sample size of five was adequate. Participants could be vulnerable during research interviews; thus, researchers should consider all factors to protect participants from harm or risk and provide confidentiality throughout the process. Incorporating data saturation into the interview process mitigates risk. Data saturation occurs when no new themes arise from data analysis and when there is enough data to replicate the findings of a study (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Morse, 2015). Data saturation was reached with the five participants.

I served as the primary data collection instrument during this formative program evaluation. Empirical research data, semistructured interviews, and document analysis were the data collection techniques that I used. Peesker et al. (2019) noted that semistructured interviewing is a structured method for collecting rich data yet offers the researcher flexibility. Research showed that participants in semistructured interviews

share the topic's experiences and allow the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the phenomena (Peesker et al., 2019). I followed an interview protocol (see Appendix) in conducting each interview. I conducted audiotaped interviews with the permission of each participant to ensure the interview's validity.

Data Technique and Analysis

As new research data is collected from any available stem of knowledge, qualitative data analysis techniques are developed (Leo, 2019). Using the qualitative research method for this formative program evaluation was most appropriate for exploring strategies to implement effective succession planning. Formative program evaluations magnify strengths and identify weaknesses to shape professional development and reinforce positive operational processes. Qualitative research begins with studying how people live in realistic environments while performing their everyday roles (Yin, 2013). The researcher should collect empirical research data analysis and interpret data that will provide new knowledge for the program evaluation. Upon transcribing each semistructured interview, I scheduled a phone interview with each participant for member checking. Member checking encompasses participant validation of the data analysis to ensure the credibility of the results (Birt et al., 2016). I analyzed the transcripts by coding and pulling themes from the data. Consent forms, electronic data collection, and accompanying documents will be stored in a locked file cabinet for 5 years from the program evaluation's approval date. In addition, I saved the electronic data on a USB drive, which I keep within the locked file cabinet when not being used to protect the confidentiality of participants' names and organization information. The

Walden University Institutional Review Board assigned an approval number (01-07-22-1012188) to the final formative program evaluation.

A formative program evaluation was appropriate to measure changes in practice needed for growth opportunities and training (Thomas et al., 2019). The program evaluation design was the preferred method to explore this formative qualitative program evaluation because it entails asking what, how, and why. The program evaluation gives an in-depth inquiry into a phenomenon to understand the dynamics of the studied topic (Saunders et al., 2016). Additionally, Peterson et al. (2020) explained that a researcher conducting a formative evaluation collects data to improve existing programs or services. A program evaluation expands the study's analysis through an engagement with data collected from previous studies. I employed qualitative methodology utilizing a program evaluation research design for these reasons. Table 2 depicts the qualitative data collection and data analysis techniques used in the study.

Table 2

Qualitative Data Collection and Data Analysis Techniques

Research question	Data collection	Data analysis
What strategies do healthcare leaders use to implement effective succession planning?	Empirical research data	Descriptive analysis
	Semistructured interviews	Thematic analysis
	Document analysis	

In analyzing the data, the researcher creates summaries and abstracts by coding data and developing memos, which support the identification of common themes to

answer the research questions (Leo, 2019). Throughout this program evaluation, I used

descriptive and thematic analyses. I reviewed participant interview transcripts, notes,

audio recordings, and company policy documents. As Yin (2018) outlined, the five

techniques to analyze data include data pattern matching, explanation, data trend

detailing, cross-case synthesis, and evaluation of the data outcomes. To categorize

participants' responses for pattern matching, I used NVivo 12 software and hand coding

to confirm accuracy of the data.

Credibility

I assessed the qualitative data's trustworthiness on the basis of its credibility,

dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Credibility and dependability center on

the researcher's trustworthiness and the presented data collection (Cypress, 2017).

Credibility and dependability are equally pertinent in qualitative program evaluations

data using multiple data sources. The goal of credibility, typically, is to reduce errors or

biases in an evaluation process, and the given results are retraceable for an auditor to gain

the same outcomes (Yin, 2018). The appendix includes the interview protocol that I

followed. I performed member checking to verify the accuracy of the data summary

analysis and interview transcripts (Bizri, 2017; Kern, 2018).

Dependability

The dependability of the formative program evaluation was to support the

concepts of accuracy and consistency of participants. To strengthen the credibility of the

data collection, member checking and methodological triangulation apply. Member

checking aids the participant's review and verifies transcribed data analysis, ensuring the

summary's dependability. The inclusion of methodological triangulation conjoins data from different perspectives and multiple sources during the qualitative research process (Kern, 2018). Triangulation data sources included numerous participants, interview notes, audio recordings, and company documents. The research methods used accordingly garnered the trustworthiness of a quality program evaluation.

Transferability and Trustworthiness

Transferability suggests the researcher can offer specific qualitative program evaluation findings that document rich data sets for other researchers in similar research fields. Researchers gain additional perspectives from broad descriptions of research findings transferable within different research contexts or with other individuals (Morse, 2015; Soroush et al., 2018). Along with transferability, trustworthiness justifies the agreement between the researcher and participants on the presentation of data collection and its purpose (Soroush et al., 2018). Participants shall recheck the transcript for accuracy to ensure trustworthiness, which is the process of member checking (Cypress, 2017).

Ethics

The informed consent process is autonomous and establishes an ethical research covenant between the researcher and participant that protects the interactions of both parties (Axson et al., 2019). Appendix B includes a consent form to receive participants' permission to conduct the semi-structured interviews. I collected the signed consent form from the participant at the beginning of the semi-structured interview to confirm their acceptance to participate and their acknowledgment of reviewing the outlined

professional, ethical standards required of the evaluation from both parties. After

obtaining Institutional Review Board approval, I contacted the participants to begin the

data collection process. I used the Belmont Report (National Commission for the

Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979) as the

guide to adhere to common curtsies offered to persons to protect their human rights.

I asked each participant the same six questions in the same order while protecting

identities. Each healthcare leader received an identifier such as L1, L2, and so forth. The

organization's names or participants' names are not included in the final program

evaluation documents to alleviate confidentiality breaching. If a participant desired to

withdraw from the evaluation they were able to withdraw during the data collection

process by informing the researcher in writing via email or via verbal notification by

telephone. All participants successfully completed the interview process.

Summary

In Section 2, I restated the purpose statement, research question, and rationale for

this formative program evaluation to identify leaders' strategies to implement effective

succession planning and determinants. I outlined the role of the researcher and the

consensus that established the evaluation objectives centered on the inputs, activities,

outputs, and outcomes of the contextual factors. Participant expectations, research

method, design, data technique and analysis, and data trustworthiness outliers conveyed

reliability and validity for the evaluation. Additionally, I detailed population and

sampling, and ethics protocols. The data collection process described data security,

participant identity protection, and procedures for participants to withdraw from the

evaluation process. In Section 3, I presented the program evaluation findings, recommendations for action, and implications for social change.

Section 3: The Deliverable

Executive Summary

The executive summary outlines what the reader should expect to find in the report. This summary may be used separately from the report. For instance, it may serve as an efficient means of sharing key findings of the evaluation with a large audience or potential funder. I provide a suggested format comprised of the purpose, goals and objectives, overview of findings, and recommendations.

Purpose of the Program

Leaders engage in succession planning to identify and develop potential leaders capable of succeeding aging leaders who exit an organization for many reasons. Effective succession planning is achievable by advancing the organization's mission to increase its in-house talent pool. The investment in human capital improves employee engagement, innovation, and links career growth to developed training opportunities (Desarno et al., 2020). The purpose of this program evaluation was to offer a formative assessment to gain a better understanding of strategies needed for effective succession planning by healthcare leaders.

The results of this evaluation may advance positive social change by providing insight into current succession planning strategies utilized by the healthcare facility leaders. Applying a qualitative methodology design may illuminate participants' feelings, opinions, and experiences and detail their thought and behavior patterns and reasoning processes (Mohajan, 2018). Hence, the explorative nature of the qualitative method allows the researcher to collect data via interviews, focus groups, or observations (Bleiker

et al., 2019). In conducting the program evaluation, I sought to identify strategies that can assist organizations struggling to secure qualified workers and equips healthcare leaders with additional succession planning development that optimizes career advancement, thus increasing leadership structure.

Goals and Objectives

The program goals and objectives for assessing the program's effectiveness included identifying process improvements and demonstrating the accountability of leaders to support long-range planning. The basis for internal contextual factors was leadership, training, and culture. The inputs of the logic model centered on strategies that secured funding, increased staffing, and increased training opportunities. Activities included developing talent pools, providing professional development programs, and incorporating employee participation. The contextual factors, such as economic, regulations, and innovation, determined the outputs, including employee promotions. Positive outcomes increased the opportunity for successful career advancement, leadership structure, and organizational growth.

Overview of Findings

Interview participants agreed that the healthcare facility lacked innovation and strategies to improve retention, develop effective succession plans, and strengthen communication with potential leaders across multiple specialties. There was a pattern of a lack of communication between healthcare workers, leaders, and executive-level management that revealed a gap in training efforts and in-house leadership continuity.

Organizational documents showed minimal procedures to grow developing talent into potential next-level performing leaders.

Recommendations

The objective of this qualitative formative program evaluation was to assess the strategies needed for effective succession planning by healthcare leaders at an Oklahoma City healthcare facility. Although the research provides rich data to identify the importance of leadership continuity through succession planning strategies, a few limitations exist for future researchers to address. Leaders should not feel obligated to promote employees based on performance alone, but also by their potential to develop into leaders. The Oklahoma City facility human resources department is developing a succession development program that should be fast-tracked to provide healthcare leaders the tools to retain and advance in-house talent with a structured transition. Future researchers can determine if a phased approach to succession planning is more effective than a creative dyad partnership between the organization and leaders.

Due to the urgency of securing the next generation of healthcare professionals in this volatile market, the organization should invest in succession planning programs. The plans should develop and train incumbents at all levels simultaneously with on-the-job training, add additional paid professional development courses, and assimilate guidance from a centralized handbook. The limitation is the availability of human resource staff to develop the steps to an effective program and said centralized document. Communication lines should be open and extended to all employees in a safe place that allows reciprocal decision-making opportunities. Furthermore, improvement of executive-level practices

through programmatic changes may enhance the management of the talent pool.

Implementing these recommendations may achieve the healthcare facility organizational

goals of producing a higher rate of internal candidates for leadership promotions, thus

enhancing career advancement strategies across multiple specialties. An increased

number of skilled leaders may provide quality care to patients and improve organizational

growth.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question for this qualitative formative program

evaluation was, To what extent do healthcare leaders use effective succession planning? I

conducted semistructured interviews with open-ended interview questions to expedite

data collection and analysis. The interview questions elicited data from an Oklahoma

City healthcare facility with five participants reflecting their expertise and knowledge.

The questions concerned their perspectives of the phenomena about the program

evaluation. The target size for a qualitative research project is between five and 10

individuals (Hamilton & Finley, 2020). A purposeful sampling strategy is used to identify

participants with attributes pertaining to the conceptual constructs who can provide

quality information for evaluation collection (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). I chose a sample

size of five to ensure credible data analysis and to have the ability to interview

participants until data saturation was achieved. Data saturation occurs when no new

themes arise from the data (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Morse, 2015). I also analyzed company

documents. Following the interview protocol (see Appendix) enhanced the quality of

communication with research participants. Member checking confirmed the accuracy of my analysis of participants' interview responses.

The findings from the program evaluation revealed that the healthcare facility did not possess a well-developed succession planning program. As discussed in the literature review in Section 2, Coughlan and Patton (2018) suggested that leaders incorporate long-term plans to develop the service and the roles and skills required for the workforce. As Hartney et al. (2022) noted, additional research has revealed that it is advantageous to create psychologically supportive workplaces with agile and adaptive leadership to provide leaders leverage to move systemic change forward. Additionally, integrating diverse perspectives within and across organizations, leveling hierarchies by bringing together various perspectives in the decision-making process, and engaging people more broadly in the cocreation of strategies is a blueprint for success. The participants all agreed that their organization had limited policies and procedures to identify potential healthcare leaders. Participants' responses disclosed that facility leadership continuity at the executive level mitigates the risk of turnover of potential leaders. The overwhelming consensus was that a top-down approach to developing leadership talent was necessary to advance retention efforts and incorporate footsteps for innovation.

I identified four emerging themes from the data analysis. The first theme referred to organizational strategies for promoting succession planning for leadership structure. The second theme related to mentorship to ensure retention. The third theme involved training to increase skills to prepare future healthcare leaders within the organization. The final theme, communication, centered on top-down dissemination of information that

guides staff on all levels of their career path. Figure 1 depicts commonly used words

compiled from the participants' responses to interview questions. The commonality of the

terms was a basis for the determination of the four emergent themes from the data

analysis.

Figure 1

Commonly Used Words in Participants' Responses

The findings of this formative program evaluation align with the concepts of

Grusky's (1969) LMST. Grusky's LMST theory encompasses nurturing interpersonal

relationships and team building, crediting the notion that leadership supports nurturing

and motivating change within employees. LMST theory applies to the executive level

leaders' ability to develop future leaders to implement succession planning within their

healthcare facility. The act of concealing participants' responses during the interview

process promotes confidentiality (Petrova et al., 2016). To maintain their privacy, I

assigned codes (L1 through L5) to identify the participants' responses outlined in this

section. The five female participants comprised over 40 years of combined healthcare

service. The four emergent themes that were derived from coding and data analysis are

reported in Table 3.

Table 3

Frequency of Primary Themes From Interview Data Collection

Emergent theme	Frequency	%
Organizational strategies for promoting succession planning for leadership structure	77	64
Encouraging mentorship for retention	25	21
Training	11	9
Communication	7	6
Total	120	100

Theme 1: Organizational Strategies Promoting Succession Planning for Leadership Structure

Theme 1 was that organizational strategies promote succession planning for

leadership structure. Human capital is a way to invest in plans to develop succession

planning that nurtures internal talent. The LMST theory advocates nurturing interpersonal

relationships and team building to demonstrate leadership supports nurture (Foster,

2019). Saxena et al. (2018) suggested that one individual alone cannot lead complex environments while managing knowledge workers in an age focused on information. The organizational strategies components included leadership development, identification of leadership potential, and alignment of the healthcare facility goals with knowledge capital to develop a program to support succession planning. The data findings were the foundation for Theme 1, which corresponded to the LMST theory, the conceptual framework for the program evaluation.

Based on the findings, the participants recognized the necessity of using leadership development strategies within the healthcare facility to improve the structure and career steps for internal growth. However, participants described their experiences with succession planning and development plans as very limited. L1 stated, "Succession planning differed across the organization based on the role of leaders." L2 noted, and L4 confirmed, that the succession planning is not super formal and that the succession planning development program had not officially started. The consensus was that the current leaders figure out what works to groom a candidate to take over their position as turnover occurs or retirement nears. L5 agreed that we are currently in between programs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. L5 acknowledged that the healthcare facility had a policy that mimicked succession planning strategies that identify and select internal candidates from supervisor's performance ratings. However the ratings lean heavily on leadership performance rather than potential. L4 suggested the organization was on track to implement the succession development program at the end of 2022, focusing on key positions at the senior level.

The Oklahoma City healthcare facility's Board members allowed healthcare leaders to develop performance metrics to assess individualized talents based on the potential leader's knowledge and skills. The purpose of the performance assessment is to gauge the bench strength or readiness of the internal talent pool for critical executive-level leadership positions (Philpot & Monahan, 2017). L4 confirmed the current practice of the healthcare facility was to ensure that adequate bench strength within internal candidates was suitable to eliminate the need to hire external candidates. L2 added that some healthcare leaders seek employees interested in future leadership by asking the right questions that get them noticed. Accordingly, the healthcare leader rates the direct report based on strengths and opportunities on a performance scale. From there, L5 created a list of potential healthcare leaders from the performance evaluations that might fill a leadership role based on potential. Although aggressive efforts are made to secure a competent talent pool, L1, L2, and L4 all suggested that being a good healthcare employee does not mean the person will be a good leader.

Healthcare facilities link performance assessment tools to leadership development compared to potential leaders' levels of knowledge and competency (Cairns, 2011; Grider et al., 2014). L5 garnered that succession planning is a function of Human Resources. Frontline workers are not in the weeds of creating a succession development program. Therefore, it is crucial to create structure within the strategic planning phase to identify key positions to determine the leadership pipeline, then determine the approach for internal and external candidates, per L5. L3 conveyed that the healthcare facility has implemented an ERP Oracle cloud application for Human Resources finance and supply

chain service lines for systems of records. L3 believed the system could identify key personnel for leadership by the employee acting on an individual contributor level and entering their resume and skill set that qualifies them for upper-level management through the Human Resources component. The rationale for this avenue is to see firsthand where the employee desires to grow on their career path and answer the leader's question on how to help make the transition possible.

According to L3, the Oklahoma City healthcare facility, like many other facilities, has placed succession planning on the back burner because we are so busy all the time. L5 stated, "The healthcare facility doesn't have many layers and the ability to train a pool of people to take over the next level role potentially." These changes present a need to build a structural foundation to incorporate a workable solution for a successful planning program. The participants credited performance-based assessments to motivate potential leaders to obtain knowledge and skills to assume healthcare leadership roles during the organization's gap period. Yet, the participants believe that creating an effective succession planning program linking the organization's mission and goals with knowledge capital creates an atmosphere for career growth and retention. A review of the organization's leadership assessment document, interview data, and current organizational strategies provided credible evidence of a minimally involved succession planning effort to promote leadership development. As a direct result of this program evaluation, L1 suggested the need to have structure among levels such as direct care nurse, managers, supervisors, and directors. This goal can be accomplished by creating a

centralized facility handbook with specialized cohorts collaborated between Human Resources and the facility leadership.

Theme 2: Encouraging Mentorship for Retention

Mentorship heightens when leadership opportunities present advancements such as shadowing at staff meetings, conferences, advocacy events, or simply emulating leadership behaviors (Andrews & Cook, 2021). Inherently, skilled employee retention is rooted in trust in leadership and job satisfaction. L1 stated, "Frontline employees have a hard time dealing with succession planning strategies that can increase retention." L1 suggested mentoring potential leaders by allowing the person to attend higher-level leadership meetings to engage in decision-making processes and adding flexibility to healthcare leaders' schedules by inviting creative staffing models. The gain from active inclusion of potential employees would be an encouragement of empowerment and developing a sense of autonomy even if they are in the meeting room to listen or share their thoughts while in lower-level roles. Healthcare leaders also benefit from mentoring by engaging in professional networking organizations, such as nursing or healthcare groups. Many great effective succession planning strategies come by way of asking employees how they would handle a situation, teaching staff to increase their critical thinking skills, and networking, according to L1. Moreover, L2 agreed that potential leaders strategically place themselves at employee meetings and offer to serve in leadership roles such as representative of committees or workgroups. L3 offered this strategy as the basis for building relationships, spending time with colleagues, and being consistent.

L4 noted, there is minimal research that touches on leadership for seasoned clinicians, and due to this gap, many leaders lack formal leadership development. Therefore, it is paramount to incorporate mentorship strategies to enhance retention for all healthcare facilities. L3 added that it is hard to recruit and retain people in the current volatile market as healthcare employees are mentally and physically exhausted with the healthcare leader shortages. L2 advised that with the lack of mentorship, there is a learning curve that requires leaders to be dedicated to understanding the goals potential leaders desire and have a leader who can help explain the process to career elevation. Equally, peer-to-peer mentorship requires executive-level healthcare leaders to think outside of the box and create opportunities to mentor employees through motivation, coaching, and shadowing. Encouraging peer mentorship develops future leaders with talent, strategies, and innovation to lead without continuity disruptions (Pandiyan & Jayalashmi, 2016). L2 provided the example that the healthcare director informally introduced mentoring to them, including sitting in on different situations that eventually prepared L2 to handle problems independently. L5 vowed that watching the mentor interact with employees during disciplinary actions, merit reviews, budgeting, and handling difficult conversations with providers and staff prepares the individual to take on the next role of leading, which adds retention of internal staff for the organization.

L4 indicated many healthcare employees leave the healthcare system early in their careers because they have a hard time fitting in and are weeded out. Healthcare leaders feel it is difficult to develop candidates into good leaders, per L4; however, high potentials are promoted to managers through extensive development programs and

mentoring. Yet, L1 suggested that current leaders should ensure an opportunity for succession planning strategies for the entire staff they manage. Efforts should be made to identify potential talent that can fill their shoes and offer employees a visual of leaders they can see are positive examples to follow. L2 advocated that leaders emerge when there is a change in innovation or leaders that expose leaders that would not have been noticed. With that, seasoned leaders are developing different ways to manage without verbally saying I am mentoring you. More so, L3 suggested that leadership needs to start at the top down to align with the mission and values of the organization to meet the needs of the community. A key to mentoring for retention is to determine what the perfect person looks like in healthcare and try to create them and then do your best to select a leader based close on this criteria to decrease high rates of turnover.

Theme 3: Training

Patidar et al. (2016) suggested that the transfer of knowledge acquired internally improves organization performance and innovation. Accordingly, organizational sustainability solidifies by including knowledge sharing between senior executives. As healthcare facilities face obstacles to enhancing efficiencies of cost savings and patient care techniques, it is evident that on-the-job training is more critical to align with its mission and goals. Training furnishes leaders with tools to shape the culture of the workplace and influence the attitudes and behaviors of employees when the leader is actively involved in work to streamline waste (Ingelsson et al., 2020). The biggest challenge for healthcare leaders is on-the-job training, according to L5. There is a limited number of leaders available to train a pool of employees to take over the next level role

potentially. L5 also stated, "That due to the shortage of trainers, the perception is that leader's pre-select successors that exclude others who may want to apply for a leadership role."

L3 proffered that healthcare organizations do not always do a good job of providing business training to potential leaders who touch patients 99.9% of the time and are wired to be kind, compassionate and highly relational. L2 supported this conclusion and stated, "Leaders need to be given a playbook to understand this or that and then let them experience an event and not rescue them to determine if enough training has been provided to see if the employee would be a good leader." The benefit of this succession planning strategy is to eliminate placing employees in awkward positions with expectations they do not want for themselves. L3 posited that training should seek to add value to the skills and knowledge the potential leaders already possess. Furthermore, innovation and creativity need to inspire the younger generation of healthcare employees to go into leadership roles, as suggested by L3. One recommendation would be for the healthcare organization to look outside the healthcare industry to get best practices from other organizations. To support that suggestion, L5 added that training tactics such as developing potential leaders' public speaking skills offer the ability to make presentations to the healthcare Board and articulate important material to employees.

Leaders with similar interests, but with opposite career strengths can create great synergy together and provide counterpoints to each other (Sierra & Calabrese, 2019). Several interview participants offered suggestions for specific training modules implemented before the COVID-19 pandemic. L5 confirmed healthcare leaders were

taking classes through the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) professional executive training series. The ANCC's Pathway to Excellence Program recognizes healthcare organizations' commitment to engage staff by creating positive practice environments. L1 proposed creating a brainchild plan to offer standardized learning programs similar to the ANCC series, boot camps, and cohorts that include resource information to address new position duties, system access, and continued education training. A handbook would outline the strategies for all employees of the healthcare facility. An additional succession planning strategy offered by L4 was to build a nursing executive leadership academy. The healthcare facility aims to implement this program for senior-level executives by year-end 2022, followed by a two-year plan for directors in 2023. The on-the-job training and continuing education classes funded by the organization would position potential leaders in a position to complete the 18 to a 24-month development plan, per L4. Once leaders can develop themselves and their direct reports, the organization will shift the focus to frontline workers for future career succession plans.

Theme 4: Communication

Employee retention increases as trust in leadership and job satisfaction expands the employee's desire to remain a productive team player. There is a connection between effective communication from a top-down approach to frontline workers that mitigates stress as the quality of relationships build between leadership and staff. Leaders strive to reduce stress, promote adaption to change, and allow flexibility to advance during times of crisis (Sangal et al., 2021). Several strategies effectively achieve this goal, such as

empowering stakeholders, building trust, and disseminating new information. During the health crisis of COVID-19, healthcare leaders experienced challenges to manage data that constantly changed guidelines, policies, and even resources. L1 suggested the healthcare facility moved to a level of transparency that promoted positive change in aiding the growth of potential leaders and preparing them for the next step in leadership.

Succession planning strategies should build a foundation of communication for all healthcare caregivers. L5 asked the question, what does the succession development program look like? How can leaders get involved? What avenues are open if leaders want to move up in the organization? These are questions answered by executive leadership communicating the goals and mission of the organization. L3 stated, "Building a foundation from the roof down instead of the foundation up assists potential employees from going into other careers." Leaders of the healthcare organization have been very clear about what level they started at in the organization to convince potential leaders that no matter where you start, leaders are there to help you grow, per L1. This open communication demonstrates the executive leaders' desire to support long range planning by addressing the hard conversations needed to advance the organization's growth with increased, skilled healthcare leaders.

Current healthcare leaders concluded that effective succession planning strategies communicate the tools needed to become well-rounded. The consensus was that emotional intelligence must be a part of the complete skill set that internal candidates seek to advance. Per L5, leaders should be able to read people, hold their tempers, and have a coaching model to help guide honest and open conversations that are safe. These

soft skills developed from experience on the potential healthcare leader's career path; not taught. The detriment of not having these conversations sets the leader up for failure because leaders make decisions based upon perceived expectations of executive-level leadership, per L4.

Recommendations for Stakeholder Action

Organizations fail to identify and align their internal talent pool with successful business strategies when there is a lack of structured leadership and succession planning policies (Bowen, 2014). In consideration of that, the transition among healthcare leaders can diminish the confidence of the shareholders and employees internally with the absence of a formal succession planning program. By implementing effective succession planning strategies, healthcare leaders should identify future leaders while grooming them for executive-level positions (Kaplan & Gingrass, 2017). It was evident that the Oklahoma City healthcare facility needed to develop a stepladder for career growth and leadership development plan with guidance from effective succession planning strategies. The best way to accomplish this goal is to implement a mentoring program that centers on the heavy development of skillsets that boost the employee's potential for leadership roles. The healthcare facility leaders should establish an integrated approach containing knowledge management, leadership development, and retention applications to eliminate a knowledge gap. High potential employees could create an organizational dyad that promotes the vision and mission outlined as strategic goals to master the successful implementation of effective succession plans.

The healthcare facility's stakeholders and executive level leadership should pay attention to the program evaluation results as it offers the opportunity to improve corporate relationships with staff and the community. The data showed that current leaders resist sharing institutional knowledge with potential leaders to maintain job security. These actions should prompt the organization to develop written succession planning procedures to protect knowledge transfer from aging-out executives to other healthcare leaders. The investment in developing healthcare leaders at the executive level through structure, communication, mentoring, and training offers sustainability. I will disseminate the program evaluation findings via email with the participants, healthcare facility organizations, healthcare leaders, and other publications outlets, such as healthcare-focused journals.

Communication Plan

The development of a communication plan recommends the direction of effective strategies that achieve reciprocal communication avenues with the target audience of an organization (Granizo et al., 2021). The healthcare facility should look at implementing a communication plan that promotes internal career advancement, organizes Human Resources communication efforts to maintain employee relationships and to convey important information that address concerns of potential leaders, current employees, stakeholders, or provider partners. The communication method could be distributed via email, newsletter, and direct mail or via a dedicated section of the healthcare facility's website.

The content of the communication plan should provide clear and concise strategies in a reoccurring manner that depicts the expectations of the organizational leaders, such as increasing workplace employee participation, introducing policy changes and standards, and the expectations from the healthcare leaders. Investing in your employees on the front end saves time and is cost effective. Therefore, the Oklahoma City healthcare facility is in need of strengthening executive-level leaders' open door policy in an effort to increase two-way communication. Executive leaders should convey what avenues are open for career growth, identify which leaders have the ability to groom an identified internal talent pool, and be able to give and receive constructive feedback from leaders and potential leaders.

Social Change Impact

Executive-level succession planning has the potential to foster retention of talent that enhances employees 'liveliness and continues service to the community (Patidar et al., 2016). Properly trained employees who desire to remain employed with healthcare facilities increase productivity and profitability. As a result, the healthcare facility can concentrate on providing better services to patients by qualified healthcare workers who are happy and supportive of the business's mission. Nurses can invoke social change to target health disparities, which increases patient safety and satisfaction. The aim was to change the view of society in seeing unification among healthcare facilities that promote structure. Consequently, improved human interactions, transforming the professional culture, and enhancing relationships between healthcare leaders and employees set the stage for change in the future.

Additionally, employees using new and improved transferable skills to increase their skillset and career paths will increase retention. Inevitably, healthcare facilities will gain different latitudes to impact communities by using effective strategies that boost career opportunities and improve families' quality by providing skilled healthcare leaders. Healthcare administrators, leaders, employees, and stakeholders can benefit from the findings of this program evaluation and gain an increased level of understanding of strategies for continued operational growth, which ultimately affects the continued well-being of patients.

Skills and Competencies

The healthcare facility should consider the skills and competencies healthcare leaders possess in comparison to ones needed to further develop success in leadership roles. Abraham et al. (2021) identified skills and competencies that healthcare leaders need to have to be effective. These include

- soft skills
- critical thinking
- leadership
- problem-solving
- career management
- face-to-face communication
- conflict management
- team building
- staff motivation
- training programs
- employee shadowing
- executive-level support

Deciphering competencies allows the executive level leader to make informed decisions for the hiring process, promotion of leaders, and needed strategies to implement effective succession plans. .

OptimalResume link:

https://waldenu.optimalresume.com/modules/documentcenter.php?SPUpdateProfile=yes

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Hello! I am Michelle Chapple, a doctoral student at Walden University. Have a seat and make yourself comfortable.

Recap of Confidentiality:
- I will not use your personal information for any purpose outside of this research project.

- I will lock the secured data in my home office. I will use an identifier such as L1, or L2, etc...

- I will not publish the company name or any demographic information to shield the risk of breaching confidentiality.

- You can withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason by contacting me by phone or email.

- I will store all paper documents and the USB drive with electronic data in a locked drawer in my home office for five years after the publication of my study to protect privacy and confidentiality.

- After five years, the researcher will destroy secured data by shredding all paper documents and smashing the USB drive.

- I will share with you a summary of my findings after my research.

- Do you understand?

The Program Evaluation:
The purpose of this program evaluation is to offer a formative assessment to gain a better understanding of components needed for effective succession planning.

Expectations:
The expected time length of the interview should be about 50 minutes. Do you have any questions before we start the interview? Do I have your permission to record the interview to capture your responses?

Wrap up:
Do you have any questions, comments, or concerns? I will demonstrate an expression of gratitude and provide a handwritten thank you card.

Interview Questions:

1. What strategies are healthcare leaders within your organization currently utilizing to implement effective succession planning?

2. How does your healthcare organization determine the strategies to implement effective succession planning?
3. What are the key challenges in implementing effective strategies for succession planning?
4. How has your healthcare organization overcome the critical challenges experienced with perceived barriers to implementing strategies for effective succession planning?
5. Based on your experiences, what benefits have resulted from implementing strategies for effective succession planning?
6. What additional information should be added about your healthcare organization's strategies to implement effective succession planning?

Wrap up:
Do you have any questions, comments, or concerns? I will demonstrate an expression of gratitude and provide a handwritten thank you card.

Conclusion of Interview:
Thank you for participating.
- Recap confidentiality

- Confirm accuracy of the summary transcribed

- Conclude with a handshake