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Succession Planning: Strategies HR Managers Use To Fill Key Leadership Positions

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Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Larry W. Smalls

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Succession Planning: Strategies to Fill Key Leadership Positions

by

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BS, University of Maryland University College, 2001

MBA, Webster University, 2005

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2022

Abstract

Business organizations spend billions of dollars annually on leadership development programs. Some senior business leaders in the banking industry lack succession planning strategies to fill key leadership positions, which can lead to decreased productivity and overall loss of profits. Based on Rothwell's seven-pointed star of succession planning and management model, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies human resource (HR) managers in the banking industry used to fill key leadership positions. The participants included six HR managers in the banking industry in the southeast region of the United States. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. Four major themes surfaced: succession planning, leadership, training and development, and evaluations. A key recommendation for leaders is to incorporate a strategy to include (a) the identification of critical positions, (b) an analysis of the current depth and breadth of leadership talent, (c) the expected future needs of the institution in various areas of leadership, and (d) a risk assessment of any associated gap. The implications for social change include the potential to improve the organization's overall health and the quality of service to the community, thereby improving the local economy.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my family. My parents inspired and motivated me to be the best that I can be and to never give up on my dreams. They convinced me that I could do anything I set my mind to. My wife supported and encouraged me through the entire process. She assured me that I had her full understanding and support. My friends also encouraged me and supported me through the process, and I am forever grateful for them as well. Without the support of my family and friends coming along with me on this journey, I probably would not have made it. Being able to complete this DBA program is a dream come true. I want to thank God for giving me the strength to see this through to the end.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

In recent years, business leaders have struggled to develop leaders ready to fill key leadership roles within their organizations. Across private and public sectors, leaders are finding better ways to hire and promote employees within their companies, which increases their ability to fill critical roles within the organization in the future (Ballaro & Polk, 2017). A better understanding of successful succession planning strategies may help leaders fill key leadership positions within their organizations with well-qualified candidates ready to lead. This study explored the succession planning strategies used by human resource managers in the banking industry to help fill key leadership positions.

Background of the Problem

Organizations recognize the challenge of successfully building programs to effectively develop managers and employees who can fill essential leadership positions within their companies in the future (Holt et al., 2018). Business organizations in the United States spend approximately \$14 Billion on leadership development to produce effective leaders ready to fill critical roles. Producing more leaders ready for their new leadership roles can potentially generate better overall organizational results (Joseph-Richard et al., 2020). The focus of this study was to explore strategies human resource managers use to create leadership development programs (LDPs) to provide qualified leaders with crucial leadership competencies to meet the organization's needs.

Problem Statement

Senior business leaders across the United States are under pressure to develop leaders within their succession planning strategies who can meet the organization's future

needs as current leaders retire from the workforce (Ballaro & Polk, 2017, p. 3).

Approximately 10,000 baby boomers will retire daily from the workforce over the next 12 years (Flippin, 2017, p. 1). The general business problem was that some banking industry senior business leaders lack succession planning strategies for key leadership positions, which can lead to decreased productivity and overall loss of profits. The specific business problem was that some human resource managers in the banking industry lack succession planning strategies to fill key leadership positions.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore succession planning strategies that some human resource managers in the banking industry use to fill key leadership positions. The target population for the study consisted of six human resource managers from six different banking centers within the banking industry in the southeast region of the United States. The managers were selected based on their ability to implement succession planning strategies to produce leaders who are prepared to fill key leadership positions in their organizations. The implication for positive social change included a significant increase in the quality of well-developed leaders within the organizations and the organizations' improved sustainability to support the community.

Nature of the Study

Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method methodologies can potentially be used for a doctoral study. The chosen methodology for this study was the qualitative method. Researchers use the qualitative methodology to collect facts through interviews, surveys, observations, and questionnaires, which produce non-numerical statistics (Yin,

2018). The qualitative approach was appropriate for my doctoral study because this approach entails describing or exploring perceptions and reviews of a phenomenon. The interview was used as the primary means of gathering the data. The study's main purpose was to discover succession planning techniques and strategies that produce leaders who can meet the business organization's strategic objectives. The quantitative method is used to manage a set of variables in order to answer questions or prove/disprove a hypothesis (Brown, 2017). For this study, I did not study theories or relationships between variables. The quantitative approach was not appropriate for this study. Additionally, the mixed method was likewise inappropriate because of the quantitative aspect, which would have changed the focus of the study, which was to explore strategies for succession planning.

One design of consideration was a classic grounded theory, a qualitative research approach that guides research design, data collection, analysis, and write-up. Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, the founders of grounded theory, developed the classic grounded theory as a research method that seeks to discover, develop, or generate a theory (Moore, 2010). That made this design inappropriate for this proposed study. The goal of this study was not to develop a theory but rather to analyze an already existing theory and expand upon it. Phenomenology, the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view, was another design considered for this study (Moustakas, 1994). I did not believe this design was the best choice for this study. After further research and study, I discovered that a multiple case study would provide essential information for leaders and create opportunities for future research into leadership development best practice principles (Rekald et al., 2017).

Using a multiple case study design allowed me to conduct an in-depth evaluation of the strategies that have assisted leaders in developing effective succession planning strategies that create talent pools of certified leaders with the acquired key leadership skills. Consistent with Stavros and Westberg (2009), research that uses more than one case can add more confidence to the findings. Further, evidence from more than one case study is often considered more compelling and, therefore, more trustworthy overall. Similarly, multiple case research allows the researcher to explore, describe, and explain the findings inside each case and across all the cases being studied, which could offer the lessons learned from each case. A case study could also lead a researcher closer to creating a new model or framework.

Research Question

What succession planning strategies do human resource managers in the banking industry use to fill key leadership positions?

Interview Questions

1. What succession planning strategies do you currently use to fill key leadership positions?
2. What role do human resource managers play in the succession planning process in the organization?
3. What other leaders are involved in leadership development and succession planning?
4. How are work competencies developed for key leadership positions and how are individuals prepared to meet them?

5. What evaluation process is used to determine which individuals are selected as candidates for future leadership roles?
6. How does the evaluation process coordinate and correlate with the regular performance appraisal process?
7. How do you maintain the relevance and currency of the succession planning process?
8. What else should I know about your succession planning strategies?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is the lens through which the researcher can observe or study phenomena and gather the desired data. The framework can come from theories, models, or proof-primarily based on practices (Bordage, 2009). The conceptual framework used for this study was the seven-pointed star of succession planning and management, which William J. Rothwell developed in 2001 (Mehrabani & Mohamad, 2011). Rothwell's framework contains elements of Henri Fayol's 14 ideas of management, which can be the inspiration for Fayol's management principle (Mildred & Taneja, 2010). Rothwell's model additionally includes the principle of human capital. The human capital principle denotes the improvement of cutting-edge and future leaders' capabilities, understanding, and comparable characteristics while the contemporary leaders hold contemporary positions (Sweetland, 1996). Rothwell's seven-pointed star model of succession planning, and management strives to achieve systematic succession planning within an organization, ultimately allowing it to remain competitive in its industry market. The seven steps in this model are:

1. Make the commitment.
2. Assess the present work/people requirements.
3. Appraise individual performance.
4. Assess the future work/people requirements.
5. Assess individual potential.
6. Close the development gap; and
7. Evaluate the succession planning and management program.

Rothwell's model also can help discover replacement needs within the company as a means for targeted training, education, and development of personnel and create a pool of qualified candidates who may be promoted to key leadership positions (Mehrabani & Mohamad, 2011). The seven-pointed star model of succession planning, and management aligned with this study as it explored the strategies used by human resource managers that produce qualified leaders who have acquired the necessary key competencies to fill key leadership roles within the company. Because of recent adjustments in the workplace and the role of HR managers, Rothwell's seven-pointed star model assists companies in solving their talent management crises and permits them to focus their attention on growing their present talents. Current research has also proven that successful implementation of succession planning strategies can prevent the unnecessary losses of organizational capabilities and enhance the organization's ability to thrive (Hosseini et al., 2018).

Operational Definitions

The following terms are seen throughout the doctoral study. A working knowledge of these terms and definitions is critical to the study.

Competencies: Competencies are factors that contribute to the levels of individual performance, thereby contributing to the overall effectiveness of the organization (Chan, 2006).

Talent management: Talent management is an organizational process that incorporates cooperation and communication of managers at all levels, which attempts to attract, develop, and retain the skilled workers they need. Talent management incorporates the cooperation and communication of managers at all levels (McCauley & Wakefield, 2006).

VUCA: VUCA is a conceptual framework for leadership development that aims to address the elements of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (Worley & Jules, 2020).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are facts considered true and can shape beliefs; however, the facts are not verified (Davidson et al., 2017). One assumption of this study was that the participants would understand the interview questions and provide honest and detailed responses to the interview questions. The second assumption was that the interview questions would provide responses that would provide sufficient answers to satisfy my research question and contribute to the existing literature on succession planning

strategies human resource managers in the banking industry use to fill key leadership positions. Finally, I assumed that human resource managers in the organizations selected for the study were familiar with the seven-pointed star model of succession planning and management as a necessary tool to develop qualified leaders who are prepared to fill key leadership positions.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses of a study that can be outside the researcher's control and may impact the study findings, interpretations, and conclusions (Ross et al., 2019). A potential limitation of this qualitative multiple case study could be the use of a small population sampling of six human resource managers, which could have impacted the generalizability of findings. A second potential limitation to this study was the participants were all from the banking industry, operating in organizations inside the southeast region of the United States. A third limitation of this study was that the findings might be generalized to the banking companies within the southeast United States.

Delimitations

Delimitations are boundaries set by the researcher to define the scope of the study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The scope of the study is a qualitative exploration of the succession planning strategies used to fill key leadership positions in the banking industry. The interview questions in this study were developed to explore succession planning strategies. The study does not include any human resource managers outside of the southeast region of the United States. The scope of this qualitative multiple case study was narrowed to a small population of six participants who have developed effective

succession planning strategies to improve talent pools of qualified leaders who have achieved key competencies, thereby preparing them to fill key positions. Data from human resource managers from other industries, organizations, or other geographic locations are beyond the scope of the study.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study can potentially add value to business practices, as they may highlight the effectiveness and importance of succession planning and determine how to get the best results for producing well-prepared leaders in the future (Seidle et al., 2016). The findings in this study may identify effective succession planning strategies used by human resource managers in the banking industry to fill key leadership positions. The business value could be improved leadership continuity and preparedness. There were also implications that positive social change links to effective succession planning strategies. Organizations may function more effectively when they are prepared to combat unplanned and planned transitions of critical leaders (Clarke & Higgs, 2016).

Effective succession planning strategies and leadership development could help organizations build more robust talent pools that ultimately give them the desired competitive advantages (Ballaro & Polk, 2017). There are implications that this study can effectively contribute to the sustainability of the local economy and the environment. Further, leaders may be able to make recommendations to develop improved strategies for more effective succession planning in community-based organizations. Finally, leaders may use the results of this study to help develop the next generation of local and

global leaders to address problems of poverty, lack of healthcare, and poor cultural diversity.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The literature review consisted of current peer-reviewed research on succession planning, strategic HR management, talent management, leadership development, sustainability, and learning organization. The research question for this study addressed the strategies of succession planning that human resource managers in the banking industry use to fill key leadership positions. The review included a comprehensive search of the following professional research databases: ABI/INFORM, Business Source Complete, EbscoHost, Emerald Insight, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. The strategy used for searching the literature included the following terms: succession planning, knowledge management, succession planning/knowledge management techniques and strategies, human capital theory, seven-pointed star model of succession planning, human resource management, social capital theory, transformational leadership, future leaders, leadership development and employee retention.

The process of developing the literature review was initiated by choosing an appropriate conceptual framework which would be the lens through which the phenomenon would be studied. Sources that were researched for articles that were believed to contribute to the literature review were analyzed and evaluated for their relevance to the doctoral study. Those articles were then organized and grouped into the key themes of the study, which consist of perspectives of senior business leaders about succession planning, the process of succession planning, HR managers' role in

succession planning, the role of talent management in succession planning, identification of key competencies of new leaders, key leadership preparation, and preparing leaders for the VUCA environment.

Perspectives of Senior Business Leaders

Senior business leaders recognize how critical it is to the survival of their organizations to develop leaders who will be able to fill key leadership positions in the future appropriately. Some senior business leaders also see the necessity to implement succession planning strategies that can meet the organization's future needs as current leaders retire from the workforce (Ballaro & Polk, 2017). When it comes to developing leaders, one school of thought is that leaders learn how to lead by experience. Becker and Bish (2017) observed business executives and managers worldwide who worked in key leadership positions in different industries. The study revealed that people learn at different speeds and that an informal approach to leadership might be more effective, which also implied there is varying potential for individuals.

Organizations must evolve and make changes to achieve and maintain a competitive advantage in their respective industries. As leaders identify necessary changes and implement them into their organizations, they also recognize that the way new leaders are prepared for leadership roles must change (Singh & Hong, 2017). Haseeb et al. (2019) also discussed the need for organizational changes, stating that sustainable business performance is vital for success in a competitive environment. In generating more effective strategies for succession planning, more focus should be placed on developing leadership programs that produce the best results for their participants.

Furthermore, there also needs to be a change in the mindsets of the executives and other managers at all levels of the organization. Every organization is different; therefore, using a one-size-fits-all plan to create the appropriate succession planning strategies will likely be ineffective in meeting the organization's needs in the future. However, giving the proper amount of attention to the organization's unique needs may assist in creating LDPs that will successfully produce leaders who can fill key leadership positions in the future and meet the organization's needs (Clinton & Insch, 2018).

Maphisa et al. (2017) explored the management of a sugar manufacturing company, for example, to gain an understanding of their perceptions of succession planning. The qualitative single case study also wanted to see if succession planning significantly impacted retention. The study revealed that the company's managers were aware of succession planning but felt that there was not a large enough investment of time made in succession planning. The management also recognized that there are potential candidates in the company who could successfully replace managers in the future with proper training and development. Additionally, managers felt that current leadership development programs are ineffective. The overall feeling about succession planning was that not having effective strategies to train future leaders could cause the company to miss opportunities to train internal candidates and may force them to look outward, which would cost more money, possibly negatively impacting profits and production well.

Perrenoud and Sullivan (2017) observed 12 construction companies and determined that executive leadership is the most critical resource in the construction

industry. Careful succession planning was viewed as the one thing that can minimize or prevent the downward financial and operational spike, which could be devastating to a company. Succession planning was viewed as an ongoing system of procedures used to develop future replacements in leadership. Succession planning is a critical necessity because of the sometimes-rapid transition rate of leadership within the construction industry. However, even though the companies understood the importance of succession planning, they often were not prepared to execute their succession plan when needed. According to Schepker et al. (2018), boards of directors in corporate organizations also understood the importance of having procedures in place to select new chief executive officers (CEOs). However, they were often unprepared to do so. One barrier that members of the boards of directors face is the lack of access to necessary information.

Elkington et al. (2017) endeavored to answer how leadership is developed in various organizations. Leadership expertise has been utilized to identify critical elements necessary to develop high-quality, effective leadership development programs. Globally, business organizations have faced a future of slow growth combined with a significant demographic shift as many baby boomers have reached retirement age. The concern was that there was an increase in the shortage of leadership talent to choose from to fill vacant key leadership positions. In the banking industry, succession planning was viewed as a tool that improved overall branch operations (Ali & Mehreen, 2019). Branch banking managers use the succession planning process to identify the individuals who exhibit the potential to become the future leaders of the banks, which helps the bank management

appoint an employee to a vacant position and avoid the time and costs of hiring individuals externally.

In education, has been a growing concern about the aging of the school leadership profession. For example, in rural, high-poverty schools in the southeastern region of the United States, superintendents have engaged in the cycle of hiring new teachers, assistant principals, and principals, due to the retirement of 50% of the school leadership. The rate of turnover has been so rapid that school districts have not been able to maintain the human capital to fill the talent pipelines to replace key leadership. Incorporating succession plans and processes into all school improvements plans and processes has motivated administrators to take succession planning more seriously (Fusarelli et al., 2018). While the baby boomers continue to reach retirement age, the millennials are emerging into the nation's workforce, making up 50% of the population's workforce. They have been viewed as the future leaders of the organizations as they bring different skill sets such as adaptability to change, quickly learning new operating systems, and performing computer-based work more quickly and with more competence than the baby boomers, and members of generation X. Succession planning is a process that focuses on building talent pools of qualified candidates who will be able to fill key leadership positions in the future. Further, there has been a need for organizations to foster relationship building between the different generational groups. Building such relationships could pay huge dividends in the future of those companies (Kosterlitz & Lewis, 2017).

In family-owned businesses, some organizations have struggled with CEO succession. When CEO leadership transitions in a family-owned business, another family member often fills the position. However, sometimes a candidate outside of the family may be selected, which can bring its own set of challenges to the organization. There is often stability in the top management due to the family structure of the business. Succession planning may ensure sustainability even within the family structure; the leadership talent pool is stocked with qualified individuals prepared to fill those key leadership positions (Luan et al., 2017).

The Succession Planning Process

Succession planning is a process used by human resource managers and other organizational leaders to ensure the continuity and survivability of the organization. However, succession planning has benefits and challenges because it is a complex system. Succession planning is a structured process that organizations use in which a potential successor is identified and prepared to assume a new role in the future. Succession planning is a method used to identify critical leadership positions, starting with the project manager and supervisor, and extending up to the highest position in the organization (Tamunomiebi & Okwakpam, 2019).

Succession planning and management are similar to replacement planning but should not be used interchangeably. Although they are compatible and often overlap, there are some differences. Succession planning has evolved since its start as replacement planning. Progressively the process has extended to include a broader scope, from organizational reviews to leadership development. Organizations always prepare

candidate slates; greater emphasis is placed on the organizational context (Leibman et al., 1996).

Succession planning also identifies management positions to afford maximum flexibility in lateral moves and ensure that as individuals' seniority increases, their management skills will grow simultaneously. Another definition of succession planning is attempting to plan for the appropriate quantity and quality of managers and key employees. The identified personnel can be contingents for circumstances such as retirement, death, serious illness or promotion, and new positions that the organization may create in the future. Succession planning should not be viewed as a singular event, but rather as an ongoing system of procedures to develop future replacements (Perrenoud & Sullivan, 2017).

Cavanaugh (2017) broke down succession planning into four major categories. The first category is the reason. Although there are multiple reasons for succession planning, the most popular reasons are in cases of emergencies and in cases of planned leadership transitioning. The second category is talent development. When looking for new leaders to fill key leadership positions, it is optimal to look within the organization instead of looking externally. Further, at the core of any succession plan, critical leadership development exists at every level of the organization. The third category is going inside, going outside, and perceived legitimacy. Although looking within the organization for new leadership first may be ideal, that may not necessarily be the best option for every organization. The organization and the industry will likely dictate which option will be appropriate for the organization at the time. The fourth category is

planning for succession. Hiring leaders from within the organization is still preferred. Data show that the performances of leaders hired from within the organization are better than those hired from outside the organization, and the results are better in the long-term for the organization. However, there is not much data that reflects the results for higher learning institutions, which usually prefer to hire from the outside. Luan et al. (2017) postulated that organizations that hired leaders externally could bring fresh new leadership styles that could lead the organization towards positive transformation.

Succession is a process that is inevitable in every organization regardless of industry and is a critical component in the organizational life cycle. Davis and Dolson (2018) focused on the concept of managing organizational culture and design during succession. For the most part, succession planning involves a change of leadership. This type of transition affects an organization in two major ways. First, the culture of the organization changes as the organization members must adjust to the new leader. Second, the departments within the organization must adjust their structure or design to fit the vision of the new leader. Since culture and design are essential organizational components of the organization, the key is to implement these changes while minimizing the negative impacts they can potentially have on the organization. With such significant changes occurring in an organization during succession, the organizational leadership is the driving force that influences the organization's performance during the entire process.

Succession planning, a process used by human resource managers to assist organizations in choosing leaders to fill key positions, is critical to an organization (Johnson et al., 2018). Several events can occur in a business organization that will create

the need for personnel changes or replacements in leadership. Organizations that lack the appreciation for succession planning or neglect to plan properly for succession may find themselves in situations that could hurt the organization or even cause the organization to fold altogether. The key to the future success of an organization is determined by how it assesses and understands the value of the people it has and what resources it will need in the future (Maphisa et al., 2017). Turnover is also very costly to the organization financially. However, succession planning is a tool that can be used to minimize costs to the organization (Mehreen, 2018). Succession planning should also align with the strategic objectives of the organization. Further, organizational leadership must consider additional components to have successful and effective succession, such as the succession plan, the size of the organization, and leadership development.

Succession means ensuring the sustainability of an organization by filling all its organizational units with the most qualified and trained employees (Reichel, 2018). The process of succession is the systematic effort of an organization to ensure its continuity, maintenance, and development of new competencies. Succession planning allows organizational development based on strategic thinking for the organization's future. Succession planning and employee retention work together in a coordinated effort to achieve organizational strategic objectives (Hassan & Siddiqui, 2020). If the organization fails at employee retention, it would be impossible for them to have successful succession planning. There is a clear connection between effective succession planning strategies and retaining the best talents in the organization. Within the succession planning

paradigm, elements such as job security, promotions, positive employer engagement, rewards and recognition are related directly to employee retention.

One assumption about the succession planning process and how leadership development programs are used within it is that individuals selected for leadership development programs are selected because they have demonstrated the capacity to lead (Cavanaugh, 2017). Succession planning and management are critical parts of strategic planning for many organizations in the twenty-first century (Hall-Ellis & Greal, 2013). Companies need to ensure that qualified people with the proper prerequisite training, development, and experience are the ones who are selected to assume leadership positions. Selecting the right personnel is an essential part of succession planning. Administrators must determine skill development levels among staff to maximize human capital, so they can identify skill gaps internally, create new career ladders, identify emerging stars, and enhance evidence of values for staff contributions.

CEO succession provides an interesting example of the importance and influence of leadership during succession planning. Organization boards face the difficult task of managing CEO succession processes. They often lack in-depth knowledge of the firm and the executives and are usually forced to rely on the CEO for information about succession candidates. In several research studies, the outgoing CEO has often been conceptualized as the primary influencer during the succession process (Schepker et al., 2018); therefore, the succession process is often full of tension between the CEO and the board. Largely absent from succession research, however, is a focus on how boards perform their fiduciary duty. Formalized succession processes allow for systematic

information generation and analysis by the board to enhance decision-making effectiveness and overcome these information barriers.

Organizational environments are now more vigorous than they have been in the past. Therefore, organizations must move towards development to be more effective in the new environment (Ghayoor et al., 2020). Ghayoor et al. (2020) proposed a comprehensive framework in organizational succession management to optimize an organization's potential to enhance business results. The establishment of a succession management system contains seven main themes that take place progressively and procedurally: organizational culture promotion, establishing infrastructures to implement, committed and systematic implementation, determining policies, evaluating candidates to establish a meritocracy system, educational gaps analysis, staff development, and succession planning system evaluation. The seven dimensions or themes comprise the succession management system known as the seven-pointed star model of succession planning development. The model employs strategies used by human resource managers to implement succession planning systems that produce qualified leaders who have achieved competencies for critical leadership roles within the organization. Succession planning has evolved over the last several decades with a wave of workplace management and human resource changes. Therefore, the seven-pointed star model is often selected to assist organizations in solving their talent management crises and focus on developing existing talents. Effectively implementing succession planning strategies can prevent the waste of organizational talents and improve the organizational performance measurement processes.

A human capital framework, also described as a rate of return methodology approach, points to the benefits of leadership development programs that go beyond the individual participants (Kim & Belzer, 2021). The rate of return methodology has become popular and highly visible in educational policy and evaluation. The framework has become very well-known as innovative and has revolutionized how education is viewed. The rate of return methodology approach to an economic analysis of education has had an enormous influence in the field of comparative as well as international education, education research, and policy.

Rothwell's (2005) succession planning model for systematic succession planning and management consisted of seven steps, which were to commit, assess present work, appraise individual performance, assess future work, assess future individual potential, close the development gap, and evaluate the succession planning program. In this model, promotion from within the organization is essential. For succession planning to be effective, the organization must have a system to replace key job incumbents as their positions become available.

A recent trend is that organizations seem more likely to recruit talent from outside rather than within (Rahman et al., 2020), suggesting that a company that does not grow its successors would be forced to recruit candidates from the outside. After conducting interviews with some select chief human resources officers (CHROs), it was also suggested that administrative staff in higher education have a lower priority than faculty and students. Therefore, in higher education, the extensive use of external hiring is more prevalent than the development of the internal candidate. It is possible that external hiring

is superior to internal hiring since it provides higher education institutions a chance to achieve what they cannot through internal development. However, it is important to mention that conducting an open search to fill leadership positions also exposes the organization to the risk of disenfranchising worthy internal candidates. Again, it is important to identify which course of action creates the best situation for the organization, whether internal or external recruitment.

Another common model used by human resource managers in succession planning is the Dreyfus Model of Skill Acquisition, first proposed in 1980 by brothers Hubert and Stuart Dreyfus. The model suggests that when individuals acquire skills through external instruction, they usually progress through five stages: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. Progression through these five stages is considered a gradual transition from rigid adherence to rules to an intuitive mode of reasoning that relies on profound understanding (Kim & Belzer, 2021).

To effectively develop leaders, human resources and career development professionals need an effective method to determine leadership skill levels (Maddy & Roenbaum, 2018). Ensuring that people are being trained at the appropriate level is important. Promoting a novice leader to a position requiring expert leadership skills could be disastrous to an organization. Therefore, understanding an individual's level of development is so important. The Dreyfus model could apply to general leadership for this purpose. The Dreyfus model could be infused into or used in conjunction with an effective succession plan.

Succession planning has existed since the origin of human societies, especially within governments (Ocho et al., 2020); however, although successors were often identified, they were not always ready to take on the role when the position became available. Succession planning allows organizations to manage environmental challenges strategically and effectively and involves the identification, development, and evaluation of intellectual capital. The process will also ensure leadership continuity within an organization. Leadership development and succession planning are sometimes used interchangeably, however, the objectives and strategies of each are quite different (Phillips et al., 2017).

According to Spofford (2017), there are seven best practice strategies for succession management: (a) talent management support; (b) talent assessment and succession planning practices; (c) performance appraisal performances; (d) incentive pay practices; (e) leadership development culture; (f) role-based leadership development, selection, and on-boarding practices; and (g) talent management return on investment. Organizations today, should focus on implementing strategies that will address the wave of retirement across every level within the organization, including critical leadership roles. The implemented succession planning strategies must strive to meet the needs of the entire organization.

Retaining top-performing talent is a chief concern to organizations today. Therefore, organizations are prompted to seek talent management practices such as succession planning to achieve this. Shaping the future leadership structure of an organization will ensure the right people with the right skills are in the right positions.

This type of talent management objective can be the foundation for long-term organizational success. Originally, succession planning originated from human resource planning (HRP), which organizations adopted to guarantee that the correct number of people with the right skill could deliver the desired level of service (Tamunomiebi & Okwakpam, 2019).

Although succession planning is part of human resources management, it is not initiated by the human resources department. It is the primary responsibility of the CEO and the senior management team to be fully engaged in the process with commitment and identify the criteria for successors. Succession planning and management are important for the organization's continued survival and depend on having the right people in the right places at the right times. The organization's priorities need to be given the appropriate attention for the succession planning to succeed (Gehrke, 2019).

HR Managers' Role in Succession Planning

Human resource managers are crucial to an organization's strategic planning and can assist in achieving organizational objectives. The HRM field has shifted in recent years, and HR managers are now partnering with their organizations. Researchers are now exploring the evolving role of HRM and the relationship between HRM strategies and the overall success of the organization. It is important to gain an understanding of strategic partnerships and alliances from an HR perspective as well as strategies for organizational capacity.

Human resource managers may be able to increase HR department responsibilities through reliable performance and competent HR managers. Business leaders must create

reliability within the HR department structure and the competency of its administrative and operational resources (Chams & García-Blandón, 2019).

Human resource structures can produce internal organizational credibility and legitimacy on future strategic HR projects through continuous delivery of operational objectives. An HR setup that cannot deliver basic activities consistently would not develop the necessary competencies or HR strategies and measures (Kuipers & Giurge, 2017). The realignment of HR operating plans, competencies, policies, and goals to strategic HRM trends is mandatory to remain in business and thereby remain an asset to the organizations they support.

How strategic HRM initiatives linked to talent management can positively affect HR policies to accommodate the growing demand for future leaders through proper succession planning programs is no longer uncertain (Gupta et al., 2020).

Market dynamics and emerging HR trends demand business leaders develop new HR strategies to support talent management and talent development initiatives. Innovative work as well as job performance are directly affected by an organization's ability to incorporate shared leadership as well as organizational capacity (Svensson et al., 2019). Organizational capacity is defined as the incorporation of human resources (HR), finance, external partnerships, infrastructure, planning, and development. This leads organization leaders to achieve their mission, create sustainability, and achieve a competitive advantage. HR leaders are also key in developing all the other capacity elements. Svensson et al. (2019) defined critical elements needed for successful strategic

partnerships and organizational capacity and provided strength to the argument that strategic partnerships influence the sustainability of an organization.

Halladay and Clay (2018) examined the relationship between HR and change management. HR managers are viewed as the caretakers for organizational change management, especially during succession planning and leadership development. Due to the essential role that HR plays in change management and succession planning; they should be considered part of the change management team. While leaders should be fully supportive during the succession planning process, HR provides an avenue for employees to have a voice in change and development. From an HR perspective, it is vital to understand the corporate culture when trying to implement change. HR seems to be in the best position to provide this type of feedback to change leaders. HR can assist in identifying change champions, helping leaders communicate effectively during the succession planning process, and providing leadership development training to support the process. Having HR managers involved directly in succession planning and change management probably does not happen as often as it should, especially since their involvement is useful in terms of communication and training. HR is designed to work specifically in these areas, so organizations that do not take advantage of this asset could potentially miss the benefits of having them. HR are the change leaders, planners, educators, and advisors and should be treated as active participants in the succession planning process (Hallady & Clay, 2018).

Culture is fundamental to implementing change within an organization and in succession planning (Rahman & Kholidi Hadi, 2019). Culture is a distinct characteristic

that defines an organization. Culture is a core concept since organizational culture differences can influence employees' perceptions of change implementation. Culture is crucial as organizations can be distinguished based on their culture and values. An organization's culture can give it a competitive advantage since it is a core competency that cannot be replicated in other organizations. Culture can be defined broadly as the values, attitudes, beliefs, practices, and behaviors that define people in an organization. Organizational culture should place a high value on developing human and social capital throughout the organization by utilizing formal employee recognition programs, modelling constant improvement, and nurturing open communication within and outside the organization (Crane & Hartwell, 2019).

The organization's leadership is an integral part of implementing change. The leadership strategy can determine the outcomes of the change implementation. Transformational leadership is defined by four main dimensions: charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Rahman & Hadi, 2019). Change management and change leadership are indeed associated with positive organizational change outcomes. Organizational culture is displayed in the employees since it is manifested in their behaviors and attitudes. Further, organizational culture is also manifested in the organization as a system, implying that a constructive culture allows the organization to thrive and have a competitive advantage (Holten et al., 2019).

An inclusive workplace culture that nurtures leaders of color is necessary (Sellers et al., 2019). Organizations that neglect to assess potential leaders fairly will miss opportunities to leverage their best talent. Organizations engaging in practices that

reinforce systemic oppression of people of color suffer financially, are less competitive, and are at a high risk of becoming insignificant in the current economic ecosystem. The most successful organizations with the best talent pools will be those with an inclusive corporate culture strategically curated by blending talent development, organizational systems, and organizational culture interventions.

A strong culture of change must be relevant to the existing business conditions and should be expressed legitimately and explicitly. Further, a culture of change must include a change at the individual employee level and the leader who must exemplify this change. More importantly, the followers must buy into the idea of the culture and uphold its tenets. Transformational leadership can be exemplary, and it can help with articulating an organizational vision to build the organizational culture that can become an organizational characteristic. HR managers are instrumental in this process and can prove valuable to an organization (Rahman & Hadi, 2019).

The role human resources managers play in the succession planning for an organization involves effectively developing and communicating the plan to the organization, especially the leaders (Ballaro & Polk, 2017). This also includes assisting in developing the criteria for choosing the right people to fill certain positions. The organization must develop two aspects of the succession plan: the positions that need to be filled and the appropriate person who will be trained to fill those positions. HR managers also can aid in filling gaps in the criteria that are used to select the personnel that will fill specific positions. Further, the planned behavior theory supports succession planning. The theory of planned behavior states that an individual's personal beliefs,

actions, and behaviors are linked. Therefore, individuals can be selected for specific positions based on this theory.

Kotlyar (2018) recognized implicit criteria used for selecting employees with high-level potential in recruitment and development settings in the pharmaceutical industry; for example, HR managers have been known to use different criteria in practice than they articulate. Some organizations may find themselves with personnel in crucial leadership positions not qualified to fill them (Ballaro & Polk, 2017). However, Kotlyar (2018) suggested that the output of HR management practices is related to a company's performance through organizational learning capability. Organizational learning capability can be achieved through retention, development, and recruitment.

A shortage of leadership talent is one of the most significant concerns for organizations today. To combat the growing leadership gaps, HR managers support companies in implementing high-potential employee (HIPO) programs. These programs help organizations identify the most talented leadership candidates among their peers and develop them into effective leaders. Many organizations consider HIPO initiatives their highest strategic priority and regard them as an essential resource that aids in gaining a competitive advantage and sustainability (Kotlyar, 2018).

Strategies HR managers use for initiating succession planning in professional business organizations play an integral role in helping succession candidates become better prepared when it is time to take on their new leadership roles. HR managers often focus on hiring or training but neglect succession planning. However, this is a critical component of sustaining organizational success and achieving the organizational strategic

goals. Further, HR managers must remember that succession planning requires a successor who is competent and skilled in the organization's leadership needs and can ensure that the company is stable and sustainable in current markets (Johnson et al., 2018).

Hamid (2019) analyzed the strategic role of HR managers play in generating and maintaining a sustainable competitive advantage for their organization in the VUCA world. HR managers can be instrumental in helping an organization reach its strategic goals by shifting to practices that lead employees to achieve these goals sustainably. It may provide another perspective on how the HRM can assist the organization in preparing leaders and employees for the VUCA environment. An example of such a strategy is described by Hepner (2019) in which reward management is used as a key aspect. The compensation model is another example of the promotion of an innovation culture and an incentive for effective leadership development. There is also a method described as thinking outside the box, which can be promoted amongst employees through reward systems to contribute to a competitive advantage in VUCA environment.

There must be a set of existing core beliefs that underpin talent management practice. Alziari (2017) identified five core beliefs that structure a discussion around the practice of talent management: notions of human capital management; questions about whether talent is generic or not; distinctions between talent management and human resource management; decisions about who makes decisions concerning talent management; and moments of truth. HR managers can help organizations distinguish between the different levels of the quality of personnel and potential leaders who can

drive true competitive advantage. HR managers need to be intellectually curious and healthy skeptics at the same time when it comes to talent management. This is critical when assisting senior leaders in distinguishing between viable talent and those who only look good on paper. Entrepreneurial Culture

An entrepreneurial culture is evident in the appreciation for the value of opportunities, a propensity for recognition and seizure of opportunities supported by a climate of innovation and risk-taking (Cooper et al., 2016). Culture is multi-dimensional and comprises fundamental values, norms, motivations, perceptions, skills, practical knowledge, and daily routines. It is not easily identifiable in SEs where culture is blended with the individual practices and habits of the entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship is embedded in and fundamentally shaped by the organizational culture evident in values, informal norms, and cognitive frameworks. These shape the capacity to act and establish linkages with key external actors, serving as barriers or enablers of innovation. The impact and influence of culture on knowledge generation capacity and resource exchange are more significant in SMEs than in large firms (Fernandez-Esquinas et al., 2017).

Aksoy (2017) asserted that an innovative culture could improve firm performance, enabling new product development fostered by creativity, teamwork, open communication, and good employee relationships. Continuous pursuit of innovation is facilitated by an enabling, shared culture of innovation, proactivity, risk-taking, and understanding of the importance of innovation (Mazzei, 2018). The owner's philosophy, business origin, and employee learning experiences shape the values and beliefs of employees and managers and organizational culture (Schein & Schein, 2016).

Organizational and managerial attributes jointly influence confidence to innovate in SEs. Innovation efficacy in SEs is varied depending on whether the SE is founder-led or not (Cooper et al., 2016).

Entrepreneurial Orientation

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) is a strategic orientation that drives entrepreneurial success. It is evidence of the entrepreneurial nature of an organization manifest in the: top management style, configuration of assets, and how it innovates (Wales et al., 2020), the recurrent pursuit of new opportunities, and bold, consistent entrepreneur decision-making to exploit identified opportunities regardless of resource constraint (Cooper et al., 2016) often amidst market uncertainty (Foss & Klein, 2020).

A strong EO is evident in support of innovation through resource allocation, high risk for competitive market advantage, and embracing change. The culture of a high EO enterprise supports employee acquisition of knowledge, experimentation, and development. EO impacts SME strategic approach. Innovativeness is evident in the process of generating new ideas, innovative products or services, and experimentation achieved through proactiveness in the anticipation and response to future market demands to enjoy a first-mover competitive advantage. Innovation in an entrepreneurial organization is supported by risk-taking and adequate investment in new ideas or ventures (Singh et al., 2021).

Risk-taking firms are bold and involved in risky activities, accepting occasional failure to achieve firm objectives. They innovate more and sometimes radically. Risk is central to entrepreneurial performance (Lopez-Fernandez et al., 2016). However, risk

should be calculated, and entrepreneurs in the pursuit of opportunity should avoid overexposure. Risk-taking should be smart, not impulsive, with some likelihood of gain. Entrepreneurs should consider present and future impact, resource requirements, and availability (Leitch & Volery, 2017).

Strategic orientation is evident in the extent to which opportunities in a firm's environment drive its strategy, and firms are distinguished by the extent to which strategic decisions are driven by opportunity rather than resource constraint (Cooper et al., 2016). Hernandez-Linares et al. (2018) found that not all EOs were equally important in Spanish SMEs. Proactiveness, competitive aggressiveness, and autonomy were more significant to risk-taking, while innovativeness and higher orientation to learning in family businesses.

Lopez-Fernandez et al. (2016), in their study into the determinants of innovation decisions in Spanish SME family enterprises, found that strategic orientation influenced innovation decisions. Prospectors, often market leaders and willing investors, were the most innovative, while defenders focused on market niching through improved efficiency and effectiveness. Analyzers, often middle-market occupants, acted cautiously, benchmarking competitors for new ideas, while reactors did not develop any functional capability to achieve competitive advantage. They attributed their findings to the long-term nature of innovation decisions, the need for stability, and customer indifference to innovation. They found that external strategic focus is associated with higher performance for younger firms and internal strategic focus with higher performance for

more mature firms. Planning is critical for the prospector, defender, and analyzer SEs (Grimmer et al., 2018).

O'Dwyer and Gilmore (2019) emphasized the centrality of market orientation for successful SME innovation and the need for a customer and competitor-centric approach, including appreciation of the impact of the networks, competencies, and experiential learning of competitor SMEs. Customer focus is positively related to innovation performance. It informs product development or services to meet customer demands and expectations, resulting in superior value (Ha et al., 2018). Creating and sharing knowledge, innovation, and adaptability to customer needs are central to SEs (Shibia & Barako, 2017). Opportunity exploitation co-evolves from the close interaction between employees and customers in a collaborative learning network improving resource combination (Kuckertz et al., 2017).

Koryak et al. (2018) emphasized the criticality of Top management for SE strategic decision-making. He echoed Barney's (1991) emphasis on the criticality of managerial capability for strategic management of resources, including optimization and leveraging them for competitive advantage. In SEs, management rather than technical skills and founder capabilities are critical growth and survival factors (Mabhungu & van der Poll, 2017). Managers should focus on promoting innovation through proper HR management backed by policies that promote productivity, collaboration, and creativity, lower turnover, and increase morale (Mazzei, 2018). SME managers should adopt and embed daily routines and work practices that encourage innovation to embed an

enterprise innovation spirit in the firm. These include focusing on employee learning and the ability to transform and apply new knowledge and technologies (Zhai et al., 2018).

Padilha and Gomes (2016) found that the impact of innovation culture on SMEs was similar regardless of size. Structure and behaviors fostered innovation, particularly decision-making process formalization, the flexibility of working structure, working in teams, appreciation of ideas, and updating knowledge on product innovation performance. Given the competitive environment, they determined that freedom to be creative and teamwork were essential for organizational innovation in SMEs in the Italian textile industry. The German Mittelstand SMEs adopted an inclusive employee culture in decision-making with flatter structures resulting in employees' strong commitment and tacit know-how retention (De Massis et al., 2017).

Flexibility is central to disruptive innovation aided by a flexible structure, dynamic organizational culture in adapting structures and processes, exploratory, experiential rules, transformational leadership, horizontal communication and empowerment, disruptive learning, and relational skills and capabilities. On the other hand, incremental innovation is operationalized by standardization and routine aided by a centralized structure, organizational culture of stable structures and processes, routinized rules, transactional leadership, vertical communication, hierarchical relations, culture, and accountability (Felicio et al., 2019).

Role of Talent Management in Succession Planning

Talent management practices are the most valuable means that influence leadership performance and overall leadership development in any organization.

Research suggests that potential identification, employee retention, and rewards contribute significantly to leadership development. Talent management helps in the process of identifying factors that can have a significant impact on leadership development. There is also a positive connection between talent management and leadership development, which can positively affect effective succession planning (Sanjeev & Singh, 2017). In the process of developing leaders, it is vital to determine what the primary source of leadership development is. The best way for leaders to learn how to lead is to hold a leadership position; experience can be the best teacher (McCall, 2004).

McCall (2004) postulated that not all experiences are good ones, but many of the experiences deemed developmental are frequently the ones that deal with adversity, or an unfamiliar situation. Leadership development should be viewed as a career-long process, not one that will automatically happen instantly. Those who are challenged during their careers are much more seasoned than their counterparts who are not. Therefore, the best way for leaders to learn how to lead is to hold a leadership position; experience can be the best teacher.

Oasis (2018) examined the impact of effective recruitment and selection and succession planning on employee retention, leadership development, and talent management. Succession planning can mediate the relationship between effective recruitment/selection and employee retention, leadership development, and talent management. Several factors play a vital role in the success of the selection process and succession planning. Therefore, top-level leadership must own the responsibility of

entrusting this culture from top to bottom and ensuring that organizations have the appropriate candidates for all available spots. An organization's senior management should share vital resources and essentially display strong consideration in the direction of the development of succession planning within the organization.

Another facet of talent management is replacement planning, which is a process of identifying short or long-term backups so organizations will have people who can assume responsibility for critical positions during emergencies. Unlike succession planning, individuals identified as replacements are not promised promotions in replacement planning. They are prepared to assume critical positions while the organization searches for permanent replacements. Succession planning includes growing a talent pool of qualified candidates who have been groomed to move into leadership positions when they become vacant. It also focuses on talent management, which specializes in attracting, developing, deploying, and retaining the best of the best (Rothwell, 2011).

Talent management describes an organization's identification of critical positions and the development and retention of a talent pool to fill those positions (Crowley et al., 2019). To better understand the domain of talent management and employee engagement, a set of various drivers can be responsible for engaging and retaining talent (Deepika & Sampurna, 2018). Analyzing existing literature on talent management revealed that talent retention and engagement practices may aid and assist industry practitioners and policy makers in designing and implementing successful talent management initiatives.

Talent management is one of the most effective tools in ensuring that employees stay engaged and committed to their work (Deepika & Sampurna, 2018). A strong sense of engagement or commitment toward their work ensures that employees stay with the organization for the long run. Also, after analyzing the costs associated with recruitment, selection, and the opportunity costs related to attrition, organizations have focused more earnestly on their talent management efforts in the direction of retention. Further, synchronizing talent management practices and employee engagement initiatives can lead to improved talent retention.

Identification of Key Competencies

In today's workforce, leaders have to deal with various challenges that are caused by constantly shifting organizational environments. Also, there are constant fluctuations in the expectations of the responsibilities within the organizational leadership roles. Therefore, the identification of key competencies is a critical step in the leadership development process, which could significantly contribute to succession planning efforts. When a company can identify a small number of leadership competencies essential for success in its business, it can achieve far better outcomes. Couch and Citrin (2018) state that leaders will be equipped with a specific number of competencies that will make a significant difference to their performance.

Companies that struggle the most and achieve the worst results usually lack effective leaders who are dedicated to the organization's success. Poor leadership has often been the primary cause of the failures of organizations large and small. There are several factors that can contribute to the motivation for organizations to be more

intentional about developing leaders. Leaders are majorly concerned about getting the best talents to fill leadership positions. Organizations are also concerned with the potential for colossal failures due to having the wrong people in the wrong positions. Additionally, leaders are also concerned with constantly changing demographics as well as the transitioning of the different generations. Therefore, organizations have a vested interest in increasing the quality and effectiveness of their employees with the expectation that they will become effective leaders. (Holt et al., 2018).

Scholars have been attempting to build on some of the earlier work on leadership competencies to identify the knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors that would constitute effective global leadership (Mau, 2017). Competencies could contribute to identifying the right principal for a school during the selection process and could inform high leverage development foci. Competencies refer to characteristics of a person demonstrated through certain types of behavior, which relates to performance in a specific job or role. Competencies resemble the construct of personal internal characteristics from which leaders draw their abilities to lead effectively. Businesses generally use the competency concept for the selection and development of leadership competencies (Hitt et al., 2018).

Competence is an individual's ability to use and connect acquired knowledge and experience in complex, varied, and unpredictable situations. The meaning of competencies has a broader meaning than just skill. Competence is the ability to use knowledge, skills, and personal characteristics. At work, it is an individual's ability to mobilize and combine knowledge, skills, and attitudes to implement an activity in a

situation. A competent individual has the suitable personal characteristics, knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to work well or successfully achieve planned goals (Gruden & Stare, 2018).

Biberhofer et al. (2019) argued that competencies and deeper levels of knowledge regarding values and worldviews are critical dimensions of sustainability. The key competencies of sustainability-driven leaders are crucial to initiating and sustaining innovation in an organization. Values and beliefs make up the constructs that drive motivation, and, as initiators of action, are crucial in the context of competencies as knowledge and skills do not automatically lead to sustainable action. Therefore, for implementing sustainable action strategies, strong motivational drivers and opportunities are needed to facilitate work performance. Developing effective leaders is a complex process that first requires an assessment of the organization to determine the key leadership competencies necessary for its success (Holt et al., 2018).

Preparing Leaders for the VUCA Environment

Elkington (2018) described the acronym VUCA, which was coined by the U.S. Army War College to describe the new theatre of war, as Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous. Business organizations and researchers around the globe use the acronym to describe the environment for the modern business world. Researchers have since developed the concept of VUCA prime, including Vision, Understanding, Clarity, and Agility, as a model to address VUCA. Leadership is viewed as social capital across various sectors, using two components in VUCA prime, understanding and clarity through the mechanism of big data to support effective and rapid decision-making, or

agility, which aligns with the organization's vision. The 4th Industrial Revolution offers great global opportunities and challenges for organizations. Three distinctive themes: physical, digital, and biological, characterize the 4th Industrial Revolution. The 21st-century VUCA world calls upon leadership to make effective, meaningful, nonharmful decisions in the face of the various complexities of VUCA by leveraging VUCA prime.

Rimita et al. (2020) described a world of business that can be observed through two lenses. VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) and SMAC (Social, Mobile Analytics, and Cloud). The work environment is based on the culture that organizations follow, their attitudes, and their values systems. SMAC, which suitably combines several types of technologies which drives the industry and its strategic objectives. SMAC and VUCA present significant challenges to HR managers. HR Managers also have a great opportunity to help organizations improve their ability to function at higher efficiency and productivity rates. For organizations to better leverage VUCA and SMAC, managers understand that they can no longer do things the old way. They need to create new strategies that meet all of the requirements to be able to function during the turbulent times of VUCA and SMAC. One way they can do this is by developing and utilizing the VUCA framework for leadership development, which will develop creative, innovative leaders who can reach the finishing line in the VUCA and SMAC business environment.

Leadership is increasingly seen as a source of competitive advantage or a component of strategy (Holt et al., 2018); some organizations lack employees who have been thoroughly equipped to take on the responsibilities of leadership. Leadership

development programs (LDPs) have gained traction in recent years; however, the challenges in developing personnel with the necessary leadership competencies and skills which will prepare them for promotion to leadership positions in the organization are also understood. Elsbach and Stigliani (2021) also highlighted the way leaders attempt to focus all members of the organization on the changing environment and remain ready to maneuverer with the changes. Agility is the element that would allow for the effective management of VUCA. This agility involves what is known as adaptive performance, which includes competencies such as crisis management, learning new technology, coping with stress, and sensing weak threats or opportunities.

Cousins (2018) observed how VUCA defines the digital economy's competitive environment and how organizations should adopt structures to match the rapidly changing and more complex landscapes they must maneuverer. Recently, there has been a significant increase in the disruption of VUCA environments. Therefore, design thinking is a concept that has become popular and widely accepted as a method to facilitate the speed and frequency of organizational learning. This study approached design thinking from an absorptive capacity perspective to describe the perspectives of subject matter experts (SMEs) on how design thinking encourages organizational learning in VUCA environments. In a VUCA world, organizations can no longer continue to focus on internal learning only. They must also focus their attention outside the normal boundaries. Organizations can do this by continually exploring the VUCA environments to gain situational awareness and understanding to seize opportunities and threats.

Models of Succession Planning

The conceptual framework used for this study is the seven-pointed star model of succession planning and management, which William J. Rothwell developed in 2001 (Mehrabani & Mohamad, 2011). Rothwell's seven-pointed star model aims to achieve systematic succession planning and management in an organization. The seven steps in this model are: Make the commitment, assess the present work/people requirements, appraise individual performance, assess the future work/people requirements, assess individual potential, close the development gap, and evaluate the succession planning and management program. Rothwell's model can also help identify replacement needs as a tool for targeted training, training, and development of employees and create a source of talented employees who can be elevated to key leadership positions (Mehrabani & Mohamad, 2011).

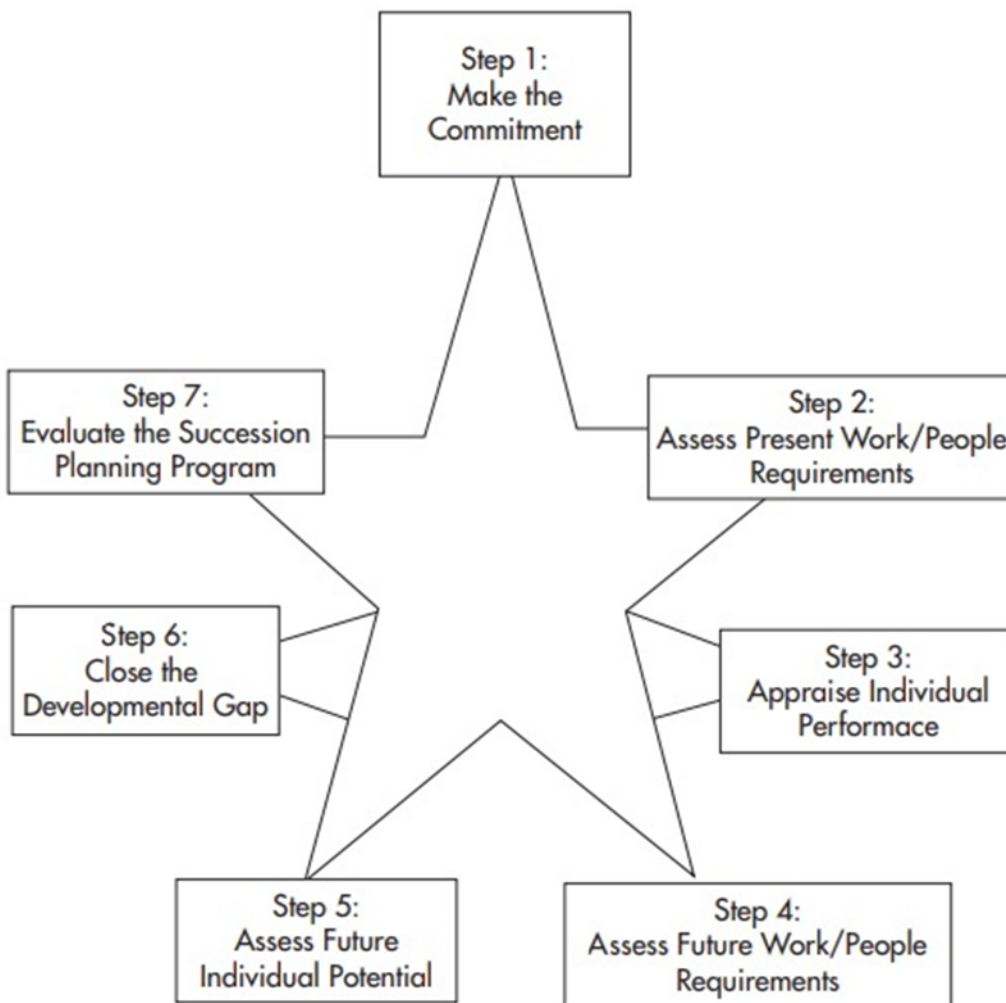
Rothwell's model incorporates elements of Henri Fayol's 14 principles of management, which are the foundation of Fayol's management theory (Mildred & Taneja, 2010). Rothwell's model also incorporates elements of the theory of human capital. Human capital theory (HCM) denotes the development of current and future leaders' skills, knowledge, and comparable characteristics while the current leaders maintain current operations. Rothwell (2005) posited that human capital management theory is about individuals and their economic value. In addition to economic value, human beings are creative, implying that creativity is also valuable.

One way to ensure the succession planning process will be executed properly and smoothly is to follow the seven-pointed star model (see Figure 1) for systematic

succession planning and management (Rahman et al., 2020). Having the leadership of an organization fully committed to succession planning and management is also vitally important to the organization’s success. The executives, top managers, and staff should be committed to the concept of succession planning and must support the plan's implementation.

Figure 1

Rothwell’s Seven-Pointed Star Model for Systematic Succession Planning and Management (Adapted from Rothwell, 2005).



Word and Sowa (2017) presented succession planning and management models an organization could use for succession planning efforts. It is critical for an organization's planning to be valuable; it must first give considerable thought to its specific needs. While there are several models for succession planning, there are three widely used across different sectors: The Leadership Pipeline Model, The Acceleration Pools Model, and the Seven-Pointed Star Model. They can be used independently or in any combination based on the organization's needs.

Walt Mahler, a highly acclaimed HR consultant, developed the leadership pipeline model, which suggested specific leadership juncture in every organization. The leadership pipeline model approaches leadership development overall and does not serve as a guide to a succession planning program. It is the conceptual basis for how several organizations implement selection and development systems and to frame the developmental challenge facing newly promoted leaders. The leadership pipeline model consists of six levels: manage others, manage manager, functional manager, business manager, group manager, and enterprise manager. The model describes the fundamental skills, work values and time priorities necessary to perform the required leadership tasks at each level (Nielsen et al., 2019). Although the leadership pipeline model has proven to be effective, the empirical studies for the pipeline are too few to create a formal theory that support it (Kaiser, 2011).

The acceleration pools model is an approach to grooming executive-level talent, which emphasizes the development of a pool of high-potential candidates who could potentially fill executive positions. The development of the individual pool members is

accelerated through a process that consists of stretching and taskforce assignments which serve as learning experiences for the candidates. Other development opportunities involve training, mentoring, coaching, special programs, and other highly visible assignments. The model is made up of five phases: identifying high potentials, diagnosing development opportunities, prescribing solutions to development opportunities, ensuring that development takes place/documenting development, and reviewing progress and new assignments (Kim, 2017).

The dynamic leadership succession (DLS) model speaks to several elements of succession planning. Most current research on school leadership succession is fragmented and mostly reactive only, focusing on one element of succession planning (Peter-Hawkins et al., 2018). The DLS model is made up of three components: forecasting, sustaining leadership and planning, which are all interrelated and dynamic. The DLS model is also designed to combat the non-linear nature of succession planning overall.

Transition

In Section 1, I presented the Foundation of the Study, which consisted of these succeeding components: (a) background of the problem; (b) problem statement; (c) purpose statement; (d) nature of the study; (e) research question; (f) interview questions; (g) conceptual framework; (h) operational definitions; (i) assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study; and (j) significance of the study, which also incorporates the contributions to business practices as well as implications for social change. Section 1 finished with a literature review of professional and academic sources, highlighting Rothwell's seven-pointed star model and the need for leaders to build talent pools of

qualified leaders who have achieved the critical leadership competencies that will allow them to make the organization sustainable as well as gain a competitive advantage.

In Section 2, the purpose of the study was restated. I then proceeded to present the succeeding components: (a) purpose statement, (b) role of the researcher, (c) participants in the study, (d) research method and design of the study, (e) population and sampling, (f) ethical research, (g) data collection, (h) data organization, and (i) data analysis. Section 2 ended with an explanation of how the reliability and validity of my research was ensured. In Section 3, I will present the findings of my study. There also be a discussion in this section concerning applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action, and recommendations for further research. I ended Section 3 with reflections on my DBA journey.

Section 2: The Project

In Section 2, I explain how I used this qualitative multiple case study to gather the desired data. The purpose of the study is restated, and there is an explanation of how succession planning strategies are used to fill key leadership positions. There is also a discussion concerning the following components: (a) purpose statement, (b) role of the researcher, (c) participants in the study, (d) research method and design of the study, (e) population and sampling, (f) ethical research, (g) data collection, (h) data organization, (i) data analysis, and (j) reliability and validity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore succession planning strategies that some human resource managers in the banking industry use to fill key leadership positions. The target population for the study consisted of six human resource managers from six different banking centers within the banking industry in the southeast region of the United States. The participants for this study were human resource managers who have worked in the banking industry for at least 5 years. The human resource managers also had experience in recruitment and selection. The chosen participants also possessed performance management experience and at least 3 years of experience in succession planning. The implication for positive social change included a significant increase in the quality of well-developed leaders within the organizations and the organizations' improved sustainability to support the community.

Role of the Researcher

The methodology adopted for this research was qualitative. The role of the qualitative researcher was to explore a phenomenon through applied research. Using applied research to study a phenomenon includes selecting the proper study method and design (Karagiozis, 2018). I collected data from study participants using interviews. Data could also be gathered through other sources such as documents, direct observation, and physical artefacts (Yin, 2018). The role of the researcher was to be an instrument of data collection. Consequently, I dedicated significant time and effort to become familiarized with the phenomenon being studied as well as the process of proper data collection and data analysis. (Cumyn et al., 2019). I have personally achieved 25 years of military experience combined with leadership development and training. Although I understand developing leaders in a context of transitioning leadership, I chose my topic of study to gain a better understanding of succession planning and how leaders use it to plan for the future of an organization within an unfamiliar industry – the banking industry.

During this study, I was able to ascertain rigor by compiling and analyzing the data from the selected participants through semi-structured interviews. I attempted to remain transparent about any previous knowledge of the study topic and any knowledge gained from the literature review. However, I used the literature review to gain valuable information regarding methods used in previous studies that could potentially influence the approach to this current study (Fry et al., 2017). While conducting the study, I made every effort to avoid any researcher bias. I also tried to avoid participant and instrumentation bias. In a study, these types of biases are key concerns in research.

Therefore, I followed the guidelines as they were prescribed in the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Belmont document protocol of moral standards of respecting and protecting participants (Leadbeater et al., 2018). When researchers adhere to the IRB and Belmont document protocols, they are much more likely to conduct ethical research that will also ensure the security of their participants. As the researcher, I understood the importance of protecting my participants from any harm that could come from this study. I successfully acquired informed consent from each one and developed an effective process that allowed me to remain in compliance with data management control (Clark, 2019). I also crafted the interview questions that aligned with the research question and that would allow participants to give full and rich answers without feeling coerced in any way.

To ensure quality research and mitigate biases in my study, I included member checking in my study to validate my interpretations of the participant data and ensure that none of my own biases are included in the interpretations. I also made sure to interview enough participants to meet the requirements of data saturation. During the interviews, I made efforts to build rapport with each participant. This was done so the participants would feel comfortable enough to answer each interview question openly. For this study, I used the Zoom platform to conduct the interviews. This gave participants more freedom and flexibility. Studies have proven that when participants are interviewed in a more comfortable environment, they often feel more comfortable discussing delicate topics. Developing the appropriate interview protocol, incorporating member checking into the

study, and achieving data saturation allowed me to mitigate potential biases that could negatively impact my research (Mirick et al., 2019).

Participants

The members of an organization are the greatest assets that will permit leaders to perform all business strategies. Therefore, the success of an organization depends on the welfare and development of the employees and managers of the organization (Edwards & Marcus, 2018). There has been a need for leaders, including human resource managers, to implement strategies within a succession plan to create effective LPDs to provide qualified leaders with key leadership competencies in the banking industry. The participants of this qualitative multiple case study consisted of human resource managers at six different banking centers within the banking industry in the southeast region of the United States. The eligibility criteria used to select the participants for the study included human resource managers who have worked in the banking industry for at least 5 years. The human resource managers must have experience in recruitment and selection. The chosen participants also possessed experience in performance management and at least 3 years of experience in succession planning.

The human resource managers came from six different banking centers within the banking industry in the southeast region of the United States. The human resource managers were also selected based on their ability to implement succession planning strategies to produce leaders who are prepared to fill key leadership positions in their organizations.

I used one of my professional networks, Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), to recruit participants for my study. Interested prospects were provided with a detailed outline of my doctoral study along with eligibility criteria to participate in my study. The prospects also received the study's expectations and the potential for the positive social impact of their participation in the study. I was able to gain consent through informed consent forms and conduct the interviews using the Zoom virtual meeting platform.

A critical aspect of acquiring meaningful responses to interview questions is by building rapport with the participants. This is essential to the establishment of strong working relationships with participants. Building rapport with study participants helps a researcher to get more robust and data rich information. Building rapport can be done in different ways, such as by showing empathy, creating a comfortable environment, and demonstrating a genuine interest in what the participants have to say (Glazier et al., 2020). Building this type of rapport helps the participant to feel comfortable enough to speak openly about topics related to the study and honestly answer the interview questions (Fritz & Vandermause, 2018). Some ways I built rapport with my participants included opening the interview with a short discussion about them, asking questions about their background, experiences, finding common ground, etc. As we progressed through the interviews, I would ask questions then use long pauses in the hopes that they we feel freer to expound on their answers. I also asked follow up questions when relevant points came up in the participants' answers during the interview and showed a genuine interest in their responses.

Research Method and Design

Research is a tool used by researchers to gain a greater understanding of a phenomenon. This can be achieved through interviews, observation, data collection, and the analysis of current issues occurring in real time. Choosing the correct research method and design that aligns with the chosen business problem, conceptual framework, and research question is critical. Therefore, in order to choose the correct method and design for a study, a researcher must have a thorough understanding of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method methods. Having such an understanding of the different research methodologies ensures that the appropriate method and design is chosen according to the nature of the study. (Saunders et al., 2015).

Research Method

For this study, the qualitative method was selected. According to Yin (2018), qualitative research attempts to establish a connection between the research question, the observed data, and the conclusions. I chose the qualitative research method to gain a deeper understanding of the leadership development aspect of succession planning that currently exists and add to the literature on succession planning strategies to increase talent pools to fill key leadership positions in the organization. The participants' experience and expertise in the phenomenon were key to this study (Boddy, 2019).

The qualitative approach is an exploratory method used by researchers to seek the maximum variation of data without the constraints of control variables or cause-and-effect relationships (Levitt et al., 2018). Using the qualitative method of research led to the use of semi-structured interviews, which allowed me to use open-ended questions to

acquire the information-rich data that I needed for my study. In contrast, a quantitative researcher acquires objective numerical data through experiments or surveys that measure or manipulate a set of variables to answer theory-guided research questions or hypotheses (Brown, 2017). The quantitative researcher also uses larger sample sizes for their research. The quantitative researcher desires to gain a deeper understanding of large populations, predict the outcomes of phenomena, and study hypotheses (Jiménez-Barbero et al., 2019). When a researcher is interested in testing the relationships between variables or determining the cause-and-effect relationship among variables, the quantitative method would then be appropriate for the study. The mixed-methods approach uses both the qualitative and quantitative methods to study complex and difficult research questions using interviews and surveys (Jiménez-Barbero et al., 2019). To explore the succession planning strategies that human resource managers use to fill key leadership, I did not test any hypotheses or try to predict an outcome, making the qualitative method the most appropriate for this study.

Research Design

The research design is a tool that helps researchers make the connection between collected data and data analysis to the stated research question study (Yin, 2018). There are several qualitative research designs from which a researcher can choose: phenomenological, ethnographic, narrative, grounded theory, and case study designs. I chose to use the multiple case study design to enable a qualitative inquiry into human resource managers' strategies to increase talent pools of well-developed, highly qualified leaders who can successfully fill key leadership positions. The multiple case study design

is appropriate if the researcher intends to study multiple cases to conduct a deeper exploration of a phenomenon (Yin, 2018). The use of the multiple case study is a common research design used by qualitative researchers who desire to be exposed to a more in-depth observation of the challenges that are caused by the phenomenon of study (Kazdin, 2019). There are three categories of qualitative case studies: exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory. A descriptive case study defines a phenomenon and puts into context, while the explanatory design describes the links of the phenomenon (Bradshaw et al., 2017). For this study, I used an exploratory case study in order to attain a greater in-depth understanding of succession planning strategies.

In the preparation stages of this study, I narrowed my design choices to the following designs: ethnographic, narrative, and case study. The ethnographic design concentrates on patterns that may exist within the culture of an organization, which was not the focus of my study and would not answer my research question (Comi & Whyte, 2018). The narrative design uses data that concentrates on exploring the perceptions and interpretations of the participants' lived experiences which helps to develop a narrative (Alfakhri et al., 2018). I did not create any narratives in my study, which rendered the narrative design inappropriate for my study. During the review of these designs, I realized that the case study design was the most appropriate design for my study as it provided an in-depth exploration of the succession planning strategies that human resource managers use to fill key leadership positions and contribute to discussions on this phenomenon.

In addition to interviews, researchers can also use archives, direct observations, artifacts, and documentation in the data collection and analysis process, which can ultimately enhance the strength of their data collection and analysis method (Morgan et al., 2017). Also, to increase the richness of a study, a researcher uses data triangulation, which is a concept used to explain the correlation between participants' interpretations and project time and space across multiple sources of data. In addition to the interview transcripts, researchers can also make use of project documents and participant observation during the interview (Ospina et al., 2018). For this study, I used data triangulation which allowed me to employ the data gathered from the interviews with the human resource managers. Using data triangulation helped me to explain the rich and descriptive data sources from which I was also able to derive a meaningful explanation of my study's rigor and data saturation.

Population and Sampling

The population of my study consisted of human resources managers at financial banking companies in the southeast region of the United States. I believed recruiting six participants as the sample size of my chosen population within this region would be highly achievable. The selected human resource managers had at least 5 years of human resources experience in the banking industry. I also chose participants based on their knowledge and familiarity with the research topic and their proven ability to develop succession planning strategies to fill key leadership roles in their organizations. Participants with knowledge and experience in the field of study can provide valuable data during the interview process (Farmaki, 2019).

The purpose of population sampling in a qualitative study is to find a complete range of perceptions with a subset of participants from the target population (Tomaselli et al., 2021). For this study, purposeful sampling was used to select the best qualified participants for my study. Purposeful sampling allows a researcher to choose the appropriate participants for data collection to ensure a greater understanding of the research problem as well as the phenomenon that is under study. Using purposeful sampling allowed me to choose the appropriate participants who then offered information-rich data that enabled me to answer the stated business problem. Additionally, choosing the appropriate human resource managers for participation in this study allowed me to explore the succession planning strategies that help organizations fill key leadership positions and gain a better understanding of business practices and strategic techniques used in the banking industry (Luciani et al., 2019).

In a qualitative study, a major element of the validity of the study is when the researcher reaches data saturation. According to Ames et al. (2019), an excessive amount of data in a qualitative study could potentially weaken a researcher's ability to perform a thorough analysis to achieve validity. A sample size of three to six participants could deliver adequate data in a qualitative study (Yin, 2018). Sometimes the researcher may need to recruit as many as 16 participants to provide sufficient data (Farmaki, 2019). The sample size should comprise participants with diverse knowledge and expertise in their field (Chan, 2019). There is no conclusive answer to what makes a perfect sample size. However, the researcher must decide on using the number participants they believe will

generate the quality and depth of data (Rezaei & Caulfield, 2021). The sample size for this study consisted of six human research managers in the banking industry.

Data saturation is a vital component of rigor. This form of rigor can only be reached when the researcher begins to see the same themes being repeated in the interviews and there is no longer any new data that emerges from subsequent questions (Tran et al., 2017). Keeping data saturation in mind while conducting this study, I interviewed six human resource managers in the banking industry with experience in developing succession planning strategies that help fill key leadership positions within their organizations (Guest et al., 2020). I conducted my interviews on a virtual platform which allowed the participants to choose an environment where they felt comfortable. This also allowed participants to provide accurate and detailed answers without any distractions or interruptions (Yeong et al., 2018).

Reviewing a company's archival documentation like training handouts, employee handbooks, and leadership meeting notes is also an option the researcher has. Moreover, member checking was an additional and crucial step that allowed participants to verify the accuracy of my interpretations of the responses they gave during the interviews once they were transcribed and summarized. Participants were also given the chance to add information if they chose to do so (Saunders et al., 2017).

Ethical Research

Demonstrating ethical integrity during scholarly research is an essential part of any research study. It is essential for a researcher who is actively conducting scholarly research to give the proper amount of focus and attention to ethical integrity. Practitioners

and scholars alike have explained the critical nature of ethics in decision-making as well as business research. They also explained the value of the qualitative research has in the ethical decision-making literature (Morina, 2020). During any stage of a researcher's study, if there are ever any developing concerns about the ethical integrity of the researcher, it can certainly raise issues (Walczak-Duraj, 2020).

The IRB ensures that scholars follow ethical research guidelines while assisting the researcher in avoiding any issues concerning ethics (Greenwood, 2016). A researcher is not permitted to commence the data collection process until IRB has given its formal approval. Another aspect of consideration is that of the participants' privacy and safety. This is also a necessary part of the research process that cannot be forgotten. The security and privacy measures that are implemented into the research process can offer protection for the participants from any form of harm. Every participant was required to give informed consent to participate in the study. The participants also had a thorough understanding of my role in the compliance to the system of data management (Clark, 2019). I demonstrated the highest possible levels of ethical integrity while incorporating the Walden University IRB's interview protocol throughout the study.

The informed consent form was created by Walden University. The informed consent form allowed me to outline for potential participants the purpose and nature of my study. The form also provided every participant with a comprehensive explanation of any potential risks along with any possible benefits of participating in the research study. The participants in this study signed the informed consent form before participating in the study (see Appendix A). Every potential participant received a copy of the interview

protocol (see Appendix B), which provided the participants with an outline of what to expect during the interview process. The informed consent form also included a clarification of the confidentiality that every participant was offered. The form also informed participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time with no penalties. The informed consent process enforces and ensures high ethical standards (Cumyn et al., 2019).

Researchers can offer incentives to attract potential participants to participate in their study, however, I did not use this strategy to recruit participants. After embedding ethical integrity in my study, I believed that I would be able to recruit participants who would genuinely want to participate in the study. I also believed I had successfully built a higher level of trust with the participants who volunteered. The participants felt more secure because of the explanations of the safety measures that were put in place to protect them (Ferguson & Clark, 2018). Additionally, I created a unique set of codes in effort to further protect the identities of the participants as well as the privacy of the banking organizations. The identities of the participating organizations and the participants in this study have been secured and protected. Furthermore, I secured all collected data, the organizations' and participants' information and electronic research data for 5 years in password-protected computer files to kept for 5 years.

Data Collection Instruments

As the researcher of a qualitative study, I was the primary data collection instrument which meant that I was overall responsible for the analysis of all the data once it had been collected (Yin, 2018). In qualitative studies, the researcher also has access to

other data collection instruments such as interviews, organizational documents, artifacts, and archived records (Morgan et al., 2017). After reviewing the available options, I decided to utilize interviews to gather the desired data. I used semi structured interviews, which allowed me to ask open ended questions. This invited participants to give more open, detailed responses. Among the several data collection instruments that are available to researchers, semi structured interviews are one of the most popular in qualitative research (Hartwell et al., 2019). In my qualitative multiple case study, I used eight open-ended questions during the semi structured interview, which aligned with the research question and the chosen conceptual framework (see Appendix B).

The interview protocol is another critical component of qualitative research that must be considered (Saunders et al., 2017). The interview protocol allows researchers to craft and list their questions in a logical flow that assist in gaining data that aligns with the research question. The interview protocol also ensures that the interview process is the same for each participant (Stange et al., 2018). The interview protocol should be structured in a way that asks challenging questions (Cascio & Racine, 2018). I used an interview protocol that consisted of eight open-ended questions. Participants also received a copy of the interview protocol before the interview, so they would be prepared (see Appendix B).

When conducting qualitative research, the use of multiple data sources is a must for the researcher (Bottega & Palese, 2020). Using multiple sources of data collection assists the researcher in meeting the requirements of generating an in-depth study (Yin, 2018). The use of multiple sources of data collection also aids in producing data

saturation (Pascaris et al., 2021). After conducting the semi-structured interviews, I began the transcription process followed by reviewing the transcripts.

The quality of a study is determined by the researcher's ability to develop a study that is reliable and valid (Devgun & Seshadri, 2021). Methodological triangulation, or using multiple sources of data, can help the researcher to enhance the reliability and validity of a qualitative study (Gibson, 2017). The element of triangulation is crucial in the accuracy of the findings from the study (Yin, 2018). For this study, I used the interviews to develop themes that could then be identified during the data analysis. The identified themes can be used to create interview triangulation and promote the reliability and validity of the instruments.

Researchers are also responsible for recording and transcribing the responses of every study participant with accuracy and precision to ensure the reliability and validity of their study (Rezvani & Hudson, 2021). Next, the researcher must summarize each interview transcript. Then, the researcher must conduct member checking which gives each participant an opportunity to review the researcher's interpretations of their responses. Member checking gives the researcher the chance to confirm with each participant that their interpretations of the participants' responses are precise (Amin et al., 2020). Consequently, when the interview process was complete, I followed each of the steps above to ensure that I accurately captured the participants' responses, thereby allowing me to gather the rich data necessary to complete my study.

Data Collection Technique

This study attempted to explore the succession planning strategies used by human resources managers in the banking industry to fill key leadership positions. My chosen data collection technique was the semi structured interview to answer the research question. There are several forms of interviews available for use by a researcher. Some forms of interviews are focus groups, email, telephonic, video conference, and face-to-face (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). According to Yin (2018), in qualitative research, face-to-face interviews are popular among researchers. Face-to-face interviews provide the researcher with the ability to observe the participants' verbal and nonverbal signals while progressing through the interview protocol. For my study, I chose to conduct video conference interviews on the Zoom platform. Each interview consisted of eight open-ended questions and lasted approximately 30 minutes. Although the Zoom platform automatically recorded the interviews, I also used a recording device as a backup to record each interview which were later transcribed and summarized.

After the interviews were completed, I transcribed each recorded interview into a transcript in a Microsoft Word document. After transcribing each interview, I created a summary of my interpretation of the participant's responses to the interview questions. Member checking is an element in the research study process that allows researchers to enhance the integrity of their studies. This part of the process allows the researcher and participants to review emerging themes and identify inconsistencies that may detract from the credibility of the data (Quan-Haase et al., 2018). Member checking allows the researcher to ensure the accurate representation of participant responses. Member

checking also allows the participants to confirm or deny the accuracy and interpretations of their responses, which adds credibility to the qualitative study (Candela, 2019).

Data Organization Technique

For this study, I employed a qualitative interview protocol to explore the succession planning strategies human resource managers use to fill key leadership positions in an organization. Therefore, data organization was essential during the research study, which assisted me in developing an effective system to organize their data. While conducting this study, maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of information shared by participants was the primary focus. Further, there are several labelling systems a researcher can choose from to organize the data (Rose & Johnson, 2020). For my study, I created a distinctive coding system using the Nvivo 12 computer software. The Nvivo software enabled me to quickly identify each participant while maintaining their privacy and security. I recruited six participants for my study. Therefore, I used codes that ranged from P1-P6 to identify each participant. The Nvivo 12 software also assisted with organizing the collected data. The computer software also helped to generate themes that developed from the interview transcripts and summaries. All transcript documents and audio files were coded into Nvivo as well and saved into a password-protected file. After a period of 5 years, all files will be completely erased and shredded.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process is what assists the researcher in developing accurate conclusions based on the raw data that was collected from the interviews as well as other

sources (Gregory et al., 2020). Compiling data, disassembling data, reassembling data, interpreting data, and concluding are the stages that comprise the data analysis process (Yin, 2018). Another necessary element of the study is triangulation. There are four categories of triangulation a researcher has to review to determine which category would be appropriate for their study. (Moon, 2019). In scholarly research, data triangulation allows researchers to identify emerging themes and develop the conclusions for the study. Also, triangulation allows researchers to observe connections between factors such as the views of the participants, project times, and space across several data sources. (Donnelly et al., 2021).

In scholarly qualitative research, alignment throughout the study is essential. In order to illustrate such alignment, the researcher must successfully link thematic analysis to existing literature along with the conceptual framework (Maguire et al., 2017). For this study, I coded themes consistent with the literature review and Rothwell's seven-pointed star model, which was my chosen conceptual framework. Additionally, I focused intently on the themes that surfaced in the data that was related to the steps of the study's conceptual framework (Yin, 2018). Furthermore, I was able to offer conclusions that were appropriate and met the goal of this research study, which was to explore the succession planning strategies that human resource managers in the banking industry use to fill key leadership positions.

Reliability and Validity

In any scholarly research, the reliability and validity of the study is critical because it enhances the quality of the study. If another researcher can replicate the

research design and produce the same findings, the study's reliability is validated (Rezaei & Caulfield, 2021). In the research process, the validity of a study is determined by the accuracy and appropriateness of the measurement being measured in the study. The value of the scholarly research is derived from the following elements: dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Gerster et al., 2020).

Reliability

A qualitative researcher has the responsibility of ensuring that their study research is dependable. Therefore, business leaders who read the study will be able to trust the findings of the study to make necessary decisions for the organization. Dependability denotes the stability and repeatability of data (Assarroudi, 2018). While conducting the study, investing substantial time into appropriate coding, analyzing, and interpreting data assists the researcher in raising the level of dependability of their study (Saunders et al., 2015). Therefore, in my study, I was sure to focus on those items as well as maintain transparency throughout and evade any of the biases that could possibly affect it (Yin, 2018). I utilized semi structured interviews which consisted of eight questions that were open-ended in nature. The interview questions were in alignment with the study research question and chosen conceptual framework. During the data analysis process, using elements such as triangulation, member checking and the Nvivo 12 computer software also assisted in elevating the dependability for the study. Additionally, Nvivo helped me to find themes and patterns that were pertinent to the study (Madill & Sullivan, 2018).

Validity

In scholarly research, a study can only be considered credible when the researcher's findings align with the purpose of the study (Thomas, 2018). A researcher should not underestimate the value of the member checking and triangulation aspects of the data analysis process. Since participants of the study were able to review my interpretations of their responses, the opportunity for them to dispute my credibility as a researcher was eliminated (Iivari, 2018). Developing trust and rapport with participants is also an important factor that researchers must consider in an attempt to establish credibility. Therefore, I fully understood the value of building rapport with the study participants. Building rapport was beneficial to the study because it allowed the participants to feel more comfortable and relaxed (Brimbal et al., 2019). Therefore, they were able to provide honest, open answers in greater detail. Then I used the Nvivo 12 computer software system to help organize the collected data. The software system also allowed me to significantly limit the human errors that can take place when thematic analysis is conducted manually (Dalkin et al., 2021).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the researchers' ability to replicate the study's findings (Maxwell, 2021). In order for researchers to duplicate findings of a study in the future, there must be a detailed explanation of how the study was designed and performed (Saunders et al., 2015). Failing to provide enough data or sufficient detail could create an issue for the transferability of the study's findings. Therefore, as the researcher, it was my responsibility to ensure sufficient detail was provided about the context of the study.

Providing this quality of detail will enable others to compare and determine if the environment in which my research is conducted is similar to other settings (Daniel, 2018). For a research study to achieve transferability, it is crucial for a researcher to develop an effective interview protocol, utilize effective thematic analysis techniques, and use multiple data sources to achieve triangulation (Muthe-Kaas et al., 2020). To guarantee transferability in my study, I presented exhaustive data about my chosen topic of study, the research method and design, population, and study limits. I also crafted an effective interview protocol, transcribed each interview, conducted member checking and thematic analysis. Ensuring this study achieved transferability will ultimately permit business leaders to use the discovered succession planning strategies to develop organizational leaders in the future.

A study achieves confirmability when it contains accurate and dependable data (Turner et al., 2020). Overall, taking the time to build rapport with the participants significantly improved the data collection process. Even during the member checking process, I was able to gain more useful information from the participants if they wanted to add more information since our initial interview (Yoosefi Lebni et al., 2020). Good rapport helped increase the level of comfort of the participants as they felt more inclined to provide robust, honest responses and feedback during the interview and member checking processes, respectively. This ensures the researcher has made accurate interpretations of each interview. In addition to the prescribed interview questions, I also asked more probing questions to ensure that I was accurately interpreting the views of the participants and not trying to insert my own (Hwang et al., 2020). Additionally, I was

able to verify the accuracy of the collected data by using triangulation between the interviews compared to other sources of data.

Data Saturation

Data saturation occurs when the researcher is unable to acquire new information, codes, or themes from the interviews (Saunders et al., 2015). Data saturation is also referred to as information redundancy. Therefore, once I reached the point in the interview process when the information collected from the participants was repeated, I realized I had reached data saturation. When I reached the point that I was no longer receiving new information, I then transitioned from conducting interviews to conducting the member checking process. I also started data analysis and continued until I had exhausted all themes and codes. Thematic analysis is a foundational method to qualitative analysis in which a researcher can identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within the collected data (Braun & Clark, 2019). Subsequently, I was able to successfully achieve triangulation as well as data saturation by using the steps list above.

Transition and Summary

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the succession planning strategies that human resource managers use to fill key leadership positions in the banking industry. In Section 2, I provided a more detailed explanation of the listed components: (a) purpose statement, (b) role of the researcher, (c) participants in the study, (d) research method and design of the study, (e) population and sampling, (f) ethical research, (g) data collection, (h) data organization, and (i) data analysis. Section 2

ended with a description of the steps I used to guarantee the reliability and validity of my qualitative research.

In Section 3, I will present the study findings which align with my declared research question. I will also give further explanation of how this study will include applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action, as well as recommendations for further research. Finally, I ended Section 3 with reflections and my conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that human resource managers in the banking industry use to fill key leadership positions. The data were gathered from human resource managers in the banking industry located in the southeast region of the United States. Additionally, for the secondary data collection process, organizational documents such as evaluation forms, employee handbooks, event flyers, succession planning charts were collected from the participants to serve as supporting documentation which confirmed the data that was gained during the participants themselves. The findings revealed strategies that human resource managers used to identify, develop, train, and properly place new leaders in the appropriate roles.

Presentation of the Findings

The principal research question for this qualitative multiple case study was What strategies do human resource managers in the banking industry use to fill key leadership positions? For this study, I chose to use semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions that aligned with my stated research question. This was done to ensure the collection of information-rich data that was later analyzed. The collected data were gathered from six participants who are experts in their field with decades of experience in the phenomenon related to this study along with supporting organizational documents that were used to confirm the data that was initially gathered through the interviews. In this study, I used a purposeful sampling strategy that would allow me to identify the information-rich cases related to the phenomenon being studied (Farmaki, 2019). I was

intentional about gathering secondary data from the participants as part of the study. Although a sample size of three to five participants would probably offer the rich data necessary to complete the study, I chose to interview six participants. I chose a sample size of six because I wanted to ensure that I had a diverse group of experts in the field. Additionally, I wanted to ensure that I had a sample large enough to provide enough data to support credible analysis and achieve data saturation (Vasileiou et al., 2018).

According to Yin (2018), the researcher's job is to fulfil the qualitative purpose by producing an in-depth study. Using multiple sources of data collection in the study ensures that the study is, in fact, in-depth. The data that were gathered from the interviews were supplemented by secondary data that included the researcher's notes from the interviews and additional documentary material such as web page items, brochures, flyers, news articles, and other organizational documents. These secondary data were used to complement the interviews, therefore expanding the scope and depth of data available for analysis. When the data collection process was completed, I had to organize and analyze the data by creating codes and themes that would validate the findings (Raddats et al., 2022). All the codes assigned to each of the themes and sub-themes identified in the summaries of the interview transcripts provide meaning to the data.

After gathering the data from the interviews, I began to conduct extensive analysis of the data. I strategically used the organizational documents collected as secondary data to either confirm or add richer meaning to the primary data collected during the interviews. Also, using secondary data can allow the researcher to achieve

triangulation in the study, which enhances the credibility of research findings.

Additionally, the study of the academic literature associated with this study assisted as a tool that guided the research. The process of developing the literature review was initiated by choosing the seven-pointed star of succession planning and management as the chosen conceptual framework, which functioned as the lens through which the phenomenon was studied. Choosing this model allowed me the opportunity to identify four themes that guided the research. The data collected from human resource managers were coded, organized into themes, and interpreted to provide an understanding of the succession planning phenomenon. To complete the analysis process, I selected Nvivo 12 to use as my chosen computer software system which assisted in organizing the collected data. Nvivo also aided in identifying themes and patterns that emerged in the interview transcripts (Rose & Johnson, 2020).

From the coding process, 12 codes were created, in which four themes were developed. Those four themes were (1) succession planning, (2) leadership, (3) development and training, and (4) evaluation. In an effort to protect my study participants, I used NVivo 12 to create the codes of P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6.

Theme 1: Succession Planning

During the analysis, the first theme that developed was succession planning. While reviewing the academic literature for this study, it became clear that succession planning is critical for any organization to survive. In recent studies such as Mehreen and Ali (2022), it has been highlighted that human resource managers also help organizational leaders identify the right candidates who will be trained and developed for

future leadership positions in the organization, which is also critical to its survivability and is consistent with what the study participants shared during the interviews. Also, when it comes to succession planning in an organization, there must be a commitment made by every member of the organization. The first point on Rothwell's seven-pointed star of succession planning which is the conceptual framework for this study, is making the commitment. Organizations that are committed to the success of the process of succession planning, usually experience a smoother and more productive process (Rahman et al., 2020). Further, when looking for new leaders to fill key leadership positions, it is optimal to look within the organization first; however, looking externally sometimes is inevitable and offers benefits also. Furthermore, at the core of any succession plan, there should exist key leadership development at every level of the organization (Cavanaugh, 2017). P4 stated:

This organization strategically plans for succession over a 6 to 12-month period as the organization intentionally partners with the employees in their professional development.

To find high-performing individuals in the organization, effort is made in search for better opportunities. While we do look within the organization first for qualified candidates, we are not opposed to pulling externally, but there is a psychological advantage to promoting from within.

Succession is a process that is inevitable in every organization regardless of industry and is a key component in the organizational life cycle. For the most part, succession planning involves a change of leadership (Davis & Dolson, 2018). P5 stated:

When it comes to succession planning and what the overall objectives are, companies conduct succession planning in order to retain their top talent. When a key leader leaves, it is effective and productive to be able to fill that slot with someone internally. Companies also do succession planning to be proactive about their talent in situations when someone leaves who holds a key role. This keeps a company from scrambling to find a replacement for that person.

P4 added,

Succession planning, in all honesty, is just like hiring. You are hiring. It's internal turnover. Being an HR manager who focuses on forecasting for the future has become a value added for the organization. We also use a high potential employee program for all levels in the organization, not just for identifying the next executive. And we always look internally first.

P3 also added, "There are so many times we found out the people in our organization have knowledge, experience, or background in something that we never saw."

According to Tamunomiebi and Okwakpam (2019), succession planning is a structured process that organizations use to identify and prepare potential successors to assume a new role in the future. P1 added, "The succession planning process doesn't have to be carved into stone. It can be changed. It is an evolving conversation, not a binding contract." Succession planning is a process in which human resource managers, in partnership with other organizational leaders, ensure the continuity and survivability of the organization. However, succession planning has its benefits and challenges because it is a complex system. P2 acknowledged,

We are looking at tweaking our succession planning process and fine tuning it a little more. We don't know what that's going to look like just yet, but we're looking at tweaking it and defining it in order to ensure that we give more focus to diversity, equality, and inclusion (DE and I).

Secondary data confirmed P2's comment as there was a statement found on the company's website by its chief diversity officer, who expressed that diversity is an imperative for the company and should be treated as another business strategy. This is an example of how organizations are making the commitment to the process. This also shows that organizations understand the importance of developing and training the right individuals, which will strengthen the succession planning process. Additionally, this is also where the human resource managers are of great help to the organization. P3 added:

The first thing we do is look at the job description concept. We identify the three or four major requirements for each job. Next, we identify who may be a good fit. It is important to remember that the human resource manager serves as a guide during the succession planning process. We are there to remind the leaders that they own the process.

Succession planning is part of the human resource management function, but it is not initiated by the human resources department or a human resource manager. The primary responsibility of succession planning rests with the CEO and the senior management team of the organization. The success of the process also heavily relies on the full commitment of the executive leadership team to be engaged in the process. Succession planning and management is vital for the continued survival of the

organization and depends on having the right people in the right places at the right times (Gehrke, 2019). P1 indicated,

The succession planning process is maintained in relevancy by the preparation and the understanding of accountability on the part of the HR manager. There must also be a lot of open conversations with the leadership team in order to share the dynamics of our own observations that we see in the changing work culture in our organization or our business. Human resources help with this by running the stats for items that encompass such changes, so we can prepare for the opportunities for development.

All the participants agreed that communication is a key component of the succession planning process that should take place before, during, and even after the process. This greatly contributes to ensuring that qualified people with the proper prerequisite training, development, and experience are the ones who are selected to assume leadership positions. Selecting the right personnel is an essential part of succession planning. Therefore, this perspective suggests that the relevancy of an organization's succession planning is connected to its resilience. This connection can be cultivated by developing the resilience of its workforce through specific human resource management interventions, such as training and development, to elicit positive employee and organizational outcomes (Lee et al., 2022). P5 stated,

We evaluate our talent, and update our succession planning continuously, trying to keep it relevant and maintain it. Then when the time comes, when there is an

opportunity, there's an opening, they're able to call upon the information they've collected in the succession planning to select the right candidate.

P6 added,

Over the years, there have been an awareness of the necessity for succession planning, but it's only been within the last 3 years that there has been an intentional effort to develop a more structured process for it. More recently, there has been a recognition that more emphasis should be given to identifying high potential candidates and creating plans to develop them. Therefore, we have created a talent management system that allows us to automate a lot of what we do related to succession planning.

Over time, succession planning has evolved with a wave of workplace management and human resource changes. Therefore, effectively implementing succession planning strategies can prevent the waste of organizational talents and improve the organizational processes for which performance measurements are used. Succession planning should not be viewed as a singular event, but rather an ongoing system of procedures to develop future replacements (Perrenoud & Sullivan, 2017)

As an organization approaches the succession planning process there must be an understanding of how important it is that everyone involved in the process is fully engaged and committed. According to LeCounte (2020), the greater the commitment by the organizational members, especially the leadership, the greater the chances of continued engagement with the company even after the process has ended. Commitment to the process also offers the opportunity for organizations to experience all the benefits

of succession planning. According to company documents, some of the desired benefits of an effective succession planning process include aligning staff development with strategic vision, building leadership capacity of the staff, engaging and ensuring the board, and giving confidence to stakeholders. This aligns with the conceptual framework and illustrates how succession planning should be approached in order to reach the desired results.

Theme 2: Leadership

The second theme that emerged during the study was leadership, and the role leaders play in the initiation, facilitation, and accomplishment of succession planning strategies. For an organization to attain and preserve a competitive advantage in its industry, it must evolve when the time comes for changes to be made. Points 2 through 5 of Rothwell's seven-pointed star model mostly deal with the assessments of present work, performance appraisals, assess future work, and assess future individual potential (Rothwell, 2005). The points of the conceptual framework are often where leaders are the most actively engaged in the process. After identifying necessary changes that must take place, leaders can then develop plans to implement those changes into their organizations. While adapting to change, those leaders must take an active role in the way new leaders are being prepared for leadership roles in the future as well (Singh & Hong, 2017). The study participants agreed on the importance of leadership's involvement throughout the entire succession planning process. P1 stated,

Leadership should be prepared to update succession plans regularly as circumstances change with the workforce as well as the culture of the

environment. Both the business and the individual should be flexible to the unexpected things that can occur. The plan should also be developed within a clear strategy, the organization's strategic objectives.

P2 added:

Besides the executive team, the direct supervisors, and the reporting managers are involved, the chief operating officer is involved. We also have our own inhouse council of staff attorneys that are involved, and our director of recruitment is involved. The director of recruitment sits at the table because she is assessing along with me as the human resource manager.

In recent years, leaders have realized that committing the proper amount of attention to the unique needs of the organization may enhance the progress of LDPs that will successfully produce leaders who can fill key leadership positions in the future and meet the needs of the organization (Clinton & Insch, 2018). P3 and P6 mentioned that having the top leadership involved in this process is necessary. P4 added: "In our organization, we believe that all leadership from the CEO down to at least the directors should be involved in the succession planning of the organization." Succession planning is usually spearheaded or led by the human resource manager. Therefore, the human resource manager usually falls under the talent development function within HR. P6 also added,

There have been times when we've had designated people or a designated person whose job it is to manage the succession planning process. So, they would be

responsible for putting together the tools, the resources, and mapping out the process with the overall supervision of the executive leadership team.

In the past, there have been too many episodes of key leaders suddenly leaving, putting the organization in a stressful situation, trying to find a good replacement for them. In recent years, leaders have realized that careful succession planning is one thing that can help minimize or prevent being at a loss of a key leader, or experiencing a downward financial or operational spike, which could be devastating to a company (Perrenoud & Sullivan, 2017). P6 stated,

Human resource managers are the administrators and the facilitators of the program. We also manage the metrics for the program. HR managers also engage with business partners. This is done by meeting with them prior to having a talent review. This helps keep everyone in the loop as the process progresses through its steps. We have also developed a score card for our succession planning process looking at things like number of internal promotions and critical job roles. In addition to the HR business partners and leaders, our participating council of leaders include the bank president, the director of talent acquisition, and the chief human resource officer (CHRO).

It is ultimately the responsibility of the leadership within the organization to identify critical elements that are necessary to develop high-quality, effective leadership development programs. Business organizations around the world are facing the possibility of a future of slow growth in combination with a significant demographic shift as many baby boomers who are still in the workforce reach retirement age. Consequently,

leaders in the banking industry use the succession planning process to identify the individuals that exhibit the potential to become the future leaders of the banks, which allows bank management to appoint an employee to a vacant position and avoid the time and costs of hiring individuals externally (Hitt et al., 2018). P3 stated, “The human resource manager’s job is to get out there and help the organizational leaders understand how to properly hire, develop, train the right people, and identify the key responsibilities.” P2 said, “As much as we like that our process is very black and white, it’s very telling when you look at the numbers and look at the picture from an executive leadership standpoint.”

In the banking industry, succession planning is viewed as a tool that improves overall branch operations (Ali & Mehreen, 2019). Additionally, organizations must become more intentional in fostering relationship building between the different generational groups. This will pay huge dividends in the future of those companies (Kosterlitz & Lewis, 2017). P1 stated,

One of the challenges for this organization is that they're currently staffed with four generations of workforce aged people. It definitely takes a lot of diversity and creativity on the part of the leadership to make things work. Therefore, consideration should be given to factors such as age, experience, the skill set of the employees, health, and job satisfaction, among other factors, which are all important.

According to Umans et al (2021), there is a relationship and a mindset that exists between leadership in an organization, which include the HR managers as well. This is

the type of relationship and collaboration in which all parties are willing to solve conflicts together during the succession planning process. It also sets the tone for the rest of the organization and gives a greater sense of cohesion and, therefore, increases loyalty to the organization and its members. HR managers partner with banking leadership to develop and train the individuals who have been identified as high potential candidates or strong candidates who can fill leadership roles in the future. Collected secondary data showed that banking leaders conduct regularly scheduled meetings specifically to discuss succession planning, identify candidates, identify critical competencies for leadership roles, evaluate the process of succession planning, and evaluating the individuals. Also, it is very effective for the leadership of these banking organizations provide succession planning handbooks to the designated members who then disseminate the information down to the lowest levels which helps with the following of the process as well as communication. This was also shown in the notes from some of those meetings.

Theme 3: Training and Development

The third theme to emerge during this study was the development and training of identified candidates and how the organizations intend to prepare them for future leadership roles within the organization. According to Rothwell's seven-pointed star model, point six is close the developmental gap (Rahman et al., 2020). Once qualified candidates are identified, there are leadership training programs developed to train the candidates to achieve the necessary competencies. Closing the gap between where the candidates are currently and where the leadership position requires them to be is critical to the process. To effectively develop individuals for future leadership roles,

organizational leaders need an effective method to determine leadership skill levels

(Maddy & Roenbaum, 2018). P1 stated:

Human resource managers partner with organizational leaders and are involved in the process of identifying internal employees who merit the opportunity for career advancement. The human resource managers then develop training plans that will help them to become very competitive for the job opportunities that may be soon to come. The next thing that needs to be done is to identify all of the major functions within the organization. Then the needs must be identified. This helps to identify the location where the right people can be found.

P6 stated,

An executive of commercial banking, for example, might have to look down the stream of direct reports for the next head of a particular division. And we're trying to move that to be more across the organization process so that we may pull talent out of other areas so they can gain more broad-based experience.

Talent management is a function that can be helpful in the process of exposing factors that can positively impact leadership development. Research proposes that high potential identification, employee retention and rewards contribute significantly to leadership development (Sanjeev & Singh, 2017). P6 stated: "More recently, there has been a recognition that more emphasis should be given to identifying high potential and creating plans to develop them."

One of the functions of succession planning is that it focuses on developing a talent pool of individuals who will be considered for future promotions. Another function

of succession planning focuses on talent management, which focuses on attracting, developing, deploying, and retaining the best people (Rothwell, 2011). Talent management describes an organization's identification of key positions and, later, the development and retention of a talent pool to fill those positions (Crowley et al., 2019).

P6 stated:

We have created a talent management system that allows us to automate a lot of what we do related to succession planning. In this system, managers go through an annual process where they assess their talent, their direct reports, and provide a talent rating to that individual, which consists of three ratings: high potential, strong performer, and well-placed person.

P5 added:

We focus a lot of attention on leadership development. It's important for us to define what it means to be a leader in this organization. We are also concerned with the skills and competencies we expect of our leaders. Then we will be able to define that document so that it will translate into what is actually on their job profile in terms of competencies. There might even be a broader leadership type framework where you articulate that.

P3 also added, "The first thing that needs to be done is to identify all of the major functions within the organization. Then the needs must be identified. This helps to identify the location where the right people can be found."

Studies show that when a company can identify a small number of leadership competencies essential for success in its business, they are able to achieve far better

outcomes. Leaders will be equipped with a specific number of competencies that will make a significant difference to their performance (Couch & Citrin, 2018). P5 said,

Companies that invest a lot of time and energy in leadership development probably go through various ways to prepare their leaders for those types of skills. People that are doing this kind of succession planning and talent review are looking at talent within the organization and identifying this pool of people that we have designated as potential for moving into some of these leadership positions, so what are the competencies that we need to develop?

Competencies are those attributes of an individual shown through certain types of behavior, which relates to performance in a specific job or position. These types of attributes resemble the structure of personal internal characteristics that leaders are able to pull from effectively. Oftentimes, organizations largely use the competency concept for selection and development of leadership competencies (Hitt et al., 2018). P1 confirmed,

Work competencies are developed for key leadership positions by being specific with qualities and characteristics of the leadership that we've agreed upon, that we feel is required to perform in the particular areas that we have identified. We want people that are confident in decision-making, individuals who can demonstrate that they know how to handle situations with conflict management, interpersonal skills. I think one of the greater things is emotional intelligence and, the positivity in building relationships and being team minded.

P2 stated, “The competencies are developed based on what we feel are the core competencies of leadership within banking operations.” P3 also added,

We look at the fact that there are specific rules and specific types of training that individuals would either have to have come to the table with or would have to go to school to obtain to take that next step.

P6 also remarked, “We are an organization that is looking to grow pretty substantially in the next 5 years and what are the competencies tomorrow’s leadership will need in order to move us forward.”

An assessment of the organization should be conducted first to determine the key leadership competencies that are necessary for its success (Holt et al., 2018). Biberhofer et al. (2019) argued that competencies along with deeper levels of knowledge regarding values and worldviews are key dimensions of sustainability. Sustainability-driven leaders often possess key competencies that are critical to initiating and sustaining innovation in an organization. Therefore, the implementation of sustainable action strategies, strong motivational drivers, and opportunities are needed to facilitate work performance. P6 stated,

It is important to note that it is imperative to have the support of the president of the bank, who is the sponsor for the process, to give guidance as well as authority to the process. Also, the process has to be in alignment with the whole annual performance appraisal cycle; in alignment with the kind of opportunities that you have, the kind of resources that you’re willing to spend, and even how you recruit and retain people.

Recently, leaders have become more aware of competency-based models to use for assessing their personnel. Therefore, in many cases, HR management concentrates on the person first, then on the output or outcome; enduring competence while certain work activities and job tasks are temporary. Competency models can match traditional job descriptions and form the basis for the organization's whole system. This process contributes to the overall identification and selection of the right people for those key roles (Agusinta & Fachrial, 2022). When it comes to closing the developmental gap as prescribed by the conceptual framework, creating the appropriate training will be dictated by the identified competencies that are necessary for each of the identified critical roles in the organization. Additionally, the secondary data confirms this notion with several examples of identified personnel who were identified as high potential candidates and then nominated or selected for leadership training. Some of the training was conducted in-house, while there were several training opportunities externally as well. HR managers help organizational leaders find the right opportunities to meet their needs. Some of the companies conduct their own leadership training whether its annual or semi-annual training. This form of ongoing training is crucial in preparing leaders to be ready when the time comes for them to move into those key leadership positions.

Theme 4: Evaluations

The fourth theme to emerge during the study was that of evaluations and how those evaluations help leaders to make the right choices when it comes to selecting the right personnel for the right positions. The final point on Rothwell's seven-pointed star model is evaluation. When leaders want to get a true picture of how the process is going,

they must conduct evaluations. Evaluations must be conducted during every phase in the succession planning process. From these evaluations, leaders are informed of the areas that are progressing well as well as the areas that require adjustments (Bano, 2022).

Recent research has suggested that career development is an integral part of talent management and succession planning. Additionally, talent management is largely focused on recruitment, succession planning, staffing, retention, and training and development. Further, in a business organization, talent is comprised of skills, experience, knowledge, attitude, judgment, character, intelligence, drive, and intuition. Organizational leadership is responsible for finding the right tools to use in order to measure those traits (Ramola & Rangnekar, 2021). All of the participants confirmed that their organizations used some form of an annual review as well as a performance review to make up their evaluation process. P6 stated,

We use a process that is called the annual cycle, which starts with goal setting for the coming year. Then it goes into the annual performance review process for the previous year and there is a calendar year cycle. Then that goes into the talent rating, which starts the talent reviews and succession process and the development process.

P4 added,

We use an interview process with a scorecard. It actually starts with nominations from the director level, and just for the sake of impartiality, we set up interviews with neutral division leaders, and they go through a panel process, and they get scored. We also use high-potential panel interviews. We can conduct those at any

time, this process is independent of our annual review process. Where the annual review process is fixed, the high potential interviews can happen at any time during the year.

P3 also added,

We conduct annual reviews. For the first time recently, associates were asked to review themselves first. Documentation is also very crucial. Observations, understanding the backgrounds and experiences, and having conversations are also very important. We conduct regular performance processes, which goes beyond annual. It has to be an ongoing performance and feedback and goal-setting process. And that's usually where you find some powerful candidates; not just because they have experience in something, but maybe they have the potential to do it.

Most employees desire advancement and promotion. Studies indicate that individuals who are driven by growth and development needs, motivated by the ideal self is sensitive to the presence of positive outcomes. When individuals with a promotion focus are exposed to situations that may lead to future gains, they experience a state of regulatory fit (Hetland et al., 2018). P1 stated,

There is also an emphasis placed on the evaluation of divisional plans for growth. The processes that we use to evaluate and select candidates include establishing a list of questions that are administered to all candidates. We screen the applications and resumes of course, so that top qualified candidates can be identified. We also do reference checks and verifications that give us at least a little bit about

character and integrity and vigilance. The evaluation process correlates with the performance appraisal in that the metric system to evaluate should be clear to employees. It also needs to cover all elements of job tasks in the position description. Managing expectations should be reasonable and honest and encouraging to the individual.

P2 added,

We look at everything that makes up the person. Then we're doing an assessment of where the individual came from, where that person sits, the potential of talent and the time it's going to take to groom that person. Additionally, we also utilize the annual review in coordination with performance reviews.

P5 also stated,

We actually used a third-party consulting firm that did a leadership evaluation assessment. Those are pretty prevalent in the marketplace. Performance evaluation was utilized in the assessment process as well, but I think that could be another way it's correlated.

Retaining top performing talent is a major interest to organizations today. The development of the future leadership structure of an organization can assist in ensuring the most qualified individuals are in the right positions. This type of talent management objective can be the foundation for long term organizational success. Therefore, organizations could potentially experience huge benefits by pursuing talent management practices such as succession planning to achieve this (Tamunomiebi & Okwakpam, 2019).

When it comes to succession planning, it is important that senior leaders carefully reflect on their understanding of succession planning as an approach to developing future leaders. The most effective succession planning efforts start with leader involvement and commitment to the organizational strategy by the organization's chief executive and senior leaders. It appeared that all the leadership in this study were aware of the importance of evaluations in the succession planning process. Some used their own basic evaluation techniques and some developed score cards. Some companies used self-evaluations to accompany performance appraisals. The secondary data revealed that evaluations were actually being conducted. While the methods of evaluation may have varied to some degree between organizations, the leadership were all consistently engaged in the evaluation of the succession planning process as well as the individuals in their organization. This aligns with the seventh and final point on Rothwell's seven-pointed star model. Evaluation is crucial as it allows organizational leaders to constantly make improvements to their succession planning programs. According to Rothwell (2005), without evaluating the process regularly, there would be no true way to tell how well the process is moving along. Finally, the most effective leaders of succession planning view their employees as valuable assets shared across the entire organization (Barton, 2019).

Applications to Professional Practice

Leaders within the banking industry must deal with a fast-paced and always evolving environment. Human resource managers who partner with those leaders in the banking industry are faced with the challenge of helping the organization identify, train,

develop, and promote the right individuals to fill the key positions in the organization. In addition to finding qualified personnel who are capable of filling the key leadership positions, there are also challenges in finding those qualified personnel who want the responsibilities of filling such roles due to the high demands of the jobs as well as doing it with fewer resources (Chen & Klyver, 2021).

Therefore, it is critical for leaders in the banking industry to develop and create strategies to help provide those leaders with a talent pool from which qualified candidates can be selected when the opportunities arise. Also, finding a balance between job demands and job resources is very important (Hai et al., 2022). The organizations that are successful at building talent pools full of qualified candidates who are ready to take on the challenges of the banking industry will also achieve balance when they implement resources that aid organizational members in reaching the competencies of their jobs. According to Cook et al. (2019), studies have shown when leaders provide their members with the appropriate resources, great leadership, and guidance, it significantly increases retention, as well as aid in goal achievements, and stimulates growth and development.

According to Hassan and Siddiqui (2020), succession planning affords the opportunity for organizational development based on strategic thinking for the future of the organization. This study will arm leaders with further data which will allow them to articulate objectives, desired paths, and courses of action that will build talent pools full of qualified candidates who are ready for leadership roles.

Succession planning and management are critical parts of strategic planning for many organizations in the twenty-first century (Hall-Ellis & Grealy, 2013). When

candidates are selected for leadership development programs, it is assumed that they were selected as individuals who have demonstrated the capacity to lead (Cavanaugh, 2017). It is important for organizations to confirm that the right people with the proper prerequisite training, development, and experience are the ones who are selected to assume leadership positions. That is why selecting the right personnel is an essential part of succession planning.

Organizations must also make sure they are retaining top-performing talent. This should be one of the major priorities in all organizations today. Therefore, organizations can benefit from seeking talent management practices such as succession planning to achieve this. Succession planning allows organizations to shape its future leadership structure. This will ensure the right people with the right skills are in the right positions. The success of an organization can potentially be attributed to the results of this type of talent management objective. This type of objective can be the foundation for long-term organizational success. Originally, succession planning originated from human resource planning (HRP), which organizations adopted to guarantee the right number of people with the right skill could deliver the desired level of service (Tamunomiebi & Okwakpam, 2019).

Organizations that find ways to create strategies for developing leaders should rely on and trust their human resource managers to guide the process. Human resource managers can provide an avenue for organization members to have some sort of representation during the process of change and development. From an HR perspective, it

is vital that they gain an understanding of the corporate culture when trying to implement change, which occurs during the succession planning process.

Human resource managers can also assist in identifying change champions, helping leaders communicate effectively during the succession planning process, and assist in providing leadership development training to support the process. HR provides an avenue for employees to have a voice in the process of change and development. From an HR perspective, it is vital to understand the corporate culture when trying to implement change. HR seems to be best positioned to provide this type of feedback to change leaders. HR can assist in identifying change champions, helping leaders communicate effectively during the succession planning process and assist in providing leadership development training to support the process. Having HR managers involved directly in succession planning and change management probably does not happen as often as it should, especially since their involvement is useful in terms of communication and training. Human resource management is designed to work specifically in these areas, so organizations that don't take advantage of this asset could potentially miss their benefits. Human resource managers are the change leaders, planners, educators, and advisors and should be treated as active participants in the succession planning process (Hallady & Clay, 2018).

Finally, strategies human resource managers use to initiate succession planning in professional business organizations play an integral role in helping succession candidates become better prepared when it is time to take on their new leadership roles. Frequently, human resource managers focus on hiring or training but often neglect succession

planning. However, this is a key component of sustaining organizational success and achieving the organizational strategic goals. Additionally, human resource managers must remember that succession planning requires a successor who is competent and skilled in the organization's leadership needs and can ensure that the company is stable and sustainable in the current markets (Johnson et al., 2018).

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change include the potential for leaders to better understand effective strategies human resource managers in partnership with banking organizations use to fill the leadership positions in their organizations. This could help leaders take the appropriate actions to achieve the desired results for the organization, its members, and the community. Improving an organization's competitive edge by developing members who are instilled with confidence, who are ready to take on the challenges of the market and lead the organization into the future, also produces satisfied organizational members and happy families, and improving the overall health of their community. Furthermore, this could lead to more and better interaction with the community by participating in food drives, youth mentoring groups, community clean up events, and neighborhood blood drives. Finally, there are implications that this study can effectively contribute to the sustainability of the local economy and the environment.

Recommendations for Action

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore succession planning strategies that some human resource managers in the banking industry use to fill key leadership positions. There is a necessity for leaders in the banking industry to

develop or improve the strategies to create talent pools of qualified candidates who will be identified, trained, and developed for future key leadership positions. According to Yin (2018), the researcher's job is to fulfil the qualitative purpose by producing an in-depth study. Some business leaders in the banking industry face challenges in developing and executing strategies to increase the levels of leadership in their organizations. Such leaders could benefit from this study's findings to develop better strategies to create talent pools full of highly qualified and well-trained candidates who will be ready to lead and move the organization into the future.

The first recommendation is that all banking organization regardless of size, should formulate a succession plan that suits their organization. The organizations that effectively implement succession planning strategies can prevent the loss of highly skilled talents and improve the processes the organizations use to measure the performances of those talents. Organizations need to construct strategies to implement succession planning systems that produce qualified leaders who have achieved competencies for key leadership roles within the organization. Succession planning has evolved over the last several decades with a wave of workplace management and human resource changes. Additionally, organizational environments are currently more robust than they have ever been before. Therefore, organizations need to move towards development to be more effective in the new environment (Ghayoor et al., 2020).

Employing succession planning strategies would allow organizations to be strategic in managing challenges to the process and allow for the identification, development, and evaluation of potential leaders. The process will also ensure leadership

continuity within an organization. In many cases, leadership development is often an essential part of the succession planning process as it focuses on grooming future leaders (Phillips et al., 2017). Retaining top-performing talent is a chief concern to current organizations. Consequently, organizations are motivated to seek talent management practices such as succession planning to achieve the desired results. Shaping the future leadership structure of an organization will ensure the right people with the right skills are in the right positions at the right time. This type of talent management objective can be the foundation for long-term organizational success. Originally, succession planning originated from human resource planning (HRP), which organizations adopted to guarantee the right number of people with the right skill could deliver the desired level of service (Tamunomiebi & Okwakpam, 2019).

The second recommendation is that human resource managers in the banking industry prioritize succession planning appropriately within their organizations and should be more intentional in their succession planning efforts. One way to do that is by partnering with HR managers. The process of succession planning is inevitable in every organization regardless of the industry and is a key component in the organizational life cycle. Succession planning appears to be more successful when organizations partner with HR managers to assist them in creating the strategies that assist in choosing leaders to fill key positions, which is critical to an organization (Johnson et al., 2018).

Human resource managers in the banking industry that fail to give the proper amount of attention to succession planning could potentially face damaging and crippling effects to the organization. The intentional involvement of organizational leadership

could possibly counter those negative effects. Leaders can help their organizational members explore and create the conditions, culture, and structures of the organization that will allow for the greatest success. Organizational leaders can also provide the necessary support, tools, and resources and assess the current needs of the succession planning process. Leadership also provides the inspiration and motivation to ensure everyone is engaged in the process (Schepker et al., 2018).

The third recommendation is that banking organizations who have not yet partnered with HR managers consider investing in such a partnership. HR managers can provide significant benefits to an organization and assist in achieving organizational objectives as they relate to developing succession planning strategies. HR managers can serve as liaisons between the organizational leadership and the employees as they can help with effective communication during the succession process. According to Hallady and Clay (2018), HR managers are also instrumental in assisting leaders in developing effective training and development programs for the candidates who have been identified during the succession planning process.

The fourth and final recommendation is that human resource managers in the banking industry make the best of their evaluation processes to confirm the success of their succession planning efforts. The evaluations can also show the need for organizations to place a greater emphasis on conducting succession planning. Succession planning strategies must involve identifying and evaluating the current leadership structure and the organization's evolving needs. The strategy for such an assessment should include (a) the identification of critical positions, (b) an analysis of the current

depth and breadth of leadership talent, (c) the expected future needs of the institution in various areas of leadership, and (d) a risk assessment of any associated gap. Intentional and planned succession planning efforts will help business leaders get a long-term view of the leadership pipeline, including an inventory of current roles and likely upcoming leadership gaps and turnover. Therefore, thoughtful evaluation of an organization's succession planning process can serve as a risk-management strategy and contribute to greater support, engagement, and organizational performance (Barton, 2019).

Recommendations for Further Research

The focus of this study was to achieve a greater perspective and a deeper understanding of the strategies used by human resource managers in the banking industry to fill key leadership positions. The study consisted of six different human resource managers at six banks in the United States' southeast region. There is a possibility that limiting the study to one area of the country could produce limited results. Therefore, researchers can conduct similar studies in different parts of the country, which may be beneficial. It could also confirm that the results found in this study are common throughout the entire banking industry as they relate to succession planning. Conducting the same study looking at human resource managers in other industries may reveal commonalities in the findings or if there are any significant differences. It is also possible that studying a larger population size can increase data validity. In the future, researchers can further develop the study geographically and increase the sample size for more information-rich data. Researchers can take the quantitative approach to this study and administer surveys, which can reach a larger population much faster while analyzing

relationships (Rubenstein & Furnier, 2021). Finally, the seven-pointed star of succession planning and management is just one of the several conceptual frameworks that can be used to evaluate succession planning, although there are several. Future researchers may consider choosing a different framework to explore other aspects of the succession planning strategies that organizations use to fill key leadership positions.

Reflections

My DBA journey has been quite an experience filled with ups and downs, highs and lows. Overall, I am grateful that I have been able remain persistent and resolute in my quest to achieve my educational goals. I have significantly increased my ability to conduct scholarly research. I had to polish my skills in time management as well as change management. During this journey, I had to develop tougher skin as I've had to accept constructive feedback from professors and peers. As rewarding as the doctoral journey has been, it was also very tough, demanding, and mentally challenging. I can attribute the successful completion of the doctoral program to my support system, which was comprised of family and friends who cared about my achievement.

My doctoral study was birthed from an interest in succession planning and how leaders are developed and prepared for leadership positions in their organizations. For my study, I chose a topic in which I have working knowledge; however, in the banking industry which I am not familiar. I assumed that banks would have systems in place to ensure that all key leadership positions are appropriately filled, which allows organizations to experience continued organizational profitability. I attempted to limit any biases by utilizing member checking and generating open-ended interview questions

to align with the research question to ensure that participants were not led in any way during the interviews. By conducting this study, I will be able to share my findings and add value to further research on succession planning strategies to fill key leadership positions in their organization.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that human resource managers in the banking industry use to fill key leadership positions. The target population was six human resource managers in the southeast region of the United States who found success in implementing these strategies into their respective banking organizations. Senior business leaders in the banking industry have realized the importance of developing leaders within their succession planning strategies who can meet the organization's future needs, and what it will mean to their overall growth if they fail to do so (Ballaro & Polk, 2017). Having the appropriate succession planning in place makes the organization much more prepared for expected transitions as well as unexpected transitions.

My chosen conceptual framework helped me to identify the themes that emerged during data analysis. I was also able to connect those themes to the literature review of older studies, as well as connect them to the latest studies for verification. This was all done in effort to make my findings more credible. I concluded that banking organizations who had leaders that were committed to the organization's overall success and who strongly supported the succession plan, experienced higher levels of sustainability, they

were much stronger competitors within their markets, and even had more positive social impact in the communities they serve.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

The research question is: What succession planning strategies do some human resource managers in the banking industry use to fill key leadership positions? This qualitative multiple case study will consist of eight open-ended interview questions to explore strategies and gain knowledge from human resource managers that have been successful in improving employee well-being in the southeast region of the United States.

Protocol Steps	Protocol Actions
Select participants and provide an informed consent form	I will contact potential participants by e-mail or other online measures deemed appropriate by Walden's guidelines. I will attach the informed consent form to each e-mail
Set time and place for interviews	Interviews will occur in person at the participant's office or public space, or virtually via Zoom at an agreed-upon time.
Introduce the interview and obtain verbal consent	I will reiterate the purpose of the research study, obtain verbal consent from each participant.
Audio record the interview and maintain a time limit	I will advise the participant that the interview will be audio recorded for accuracy and follow-up. The interview will begin with the participant's background information, including (a) educational background, (b) title/position, and (c) years of experience. There will be a time limit of 45 minutes for each interview.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct the semi-structured interview by asking eight questions • Paraphrase when necessary • Ask follow-up questions to achieve in-depth responses and 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What succession planning strategies do you currently use to fill key leadership positions? 2. What role do human resource managers play in the succession planning process in the organization? 3. What other leaders are involved in leadership development and succession planning? 4. How are work competencies developed for key leadership positions and how are individuals prepared to meet them? 5. What evaluation process is used to determine which individuals are selected as candidates for future leadership roles? 6. How does the evaluation process coordinate and correlate with the regular performance appraisal process?

ensure accuracy	<p>7. How do you maintain the relevance and currency of the succession planning process?</p> <p>8. What else should I know about your succession planning strategies?</p>
Thank the participant and set a follow-up time for member checking	I will thank the participant for their time and involvement in the research study, provide them with a thank you card, and set up a follow-up time for when participants will receive the researcher's interpretations of their interview responses.
Conduct member checking	After the interview, the participant will receive a copy of the researcher's interpretation of the data collected. The researcher will ask each participant to review and confirm the accuracy and validity of the researcher's interpretations of their interview responses. The researcher will ask or answer any follow-up questions at this time.