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Developing Talent Pipelines for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Saudi Arabia

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2019

Abstract

Developing Talent Pipelines for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Saudi Arabia

by

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MS, Walden University, 2014

BS, Louisiana State University, 1993

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

March 2019

Abstract

Firms lose strategic business opportunities to create sustainable growth because leaders do not establish talent pipelines. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore strategies used by the leaders of Saudi firms to develop talent pipelines. The conceptual framework for this study was the resource-based view. The overarching question that guided this study explored strategies business leaders in small and medium-sized enterprises in Saudi Arabia used to establish talent pipelines to create sustainable growth. Data were collected from semistructured interviews with 8 business leaders of 4 firms operating in western Saudi Arabia and a review of company documents. The business leaders had successful experience and knowledge in talent and performance management. Data were analyzed using inductive and deductive content analysis. The results revealed 4 strategies business leaders in small and medium-sized enterprises in Saudi Arabia used: hiring the right people, establishing a performance management system, differentiating employees based on performance, and implementing employee retention strategies. The implications of this study for positive social change include reducing unemployment rates among Saudi nationals, growing Saudi workers' capabilities, and increasing Saudi families' standard of living.

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Dedication

I thank God for giving me the inspiration and strength to go through this challenging learning experience. I dedicate this study to the people who encouraged and gave me hope throughout this very challenging journey. First, I dedicate this study to my parents Abdulrahman and Asma Bafagih. Thank you mom and dad for your love and support. To my lovely wife Maylad, you were always there for me with love and encouragement. Thank you for being by my side during all those difficult days, you never gave up on me. To my mentor and dear friend Mahfoodh Mubarak, thank you for your support and encouragement. Your coaching helped me see the light at the end of the tunnel. Finally, to my two sisters and all my children, I love you all.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The primary source of competitive advantage in an organization is its human capital talent (Nijs, Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, & Sels, 2014). Firms cannot create competitive advantage by relying on developing products, technology, and financial capability (Davis & Simpson, 2017). Business leaders and human resource (HR) professionals understand that they can no longer survive without developing talent. Though leaders know that developing organizational talent is the way to establish long-term success (Davis & Simpson, 2017), leaders still face challenges to develop talent (Dutta, 2015).

Background of the Problem

Talent management has gained attention since the 1990s (Al Ariss, Cascio, & Paauwe, 2014). Business leaders have paid significant attention to developing talent pipelines because they believe that organizational talent is a renewable resource that no other organization can copy (Dutta, 2015). Consequently, talent has become a significant source of competitive advantage for an organization (Davis & Simpson, 2017). However, business leaders' attention to talent has created competition for talent among organizations, leading to a shortage for talent (Suseno & Pinnington, 2017). In addition, firms suffer from shortages of talented people to manage divisions and functions and lead organizations (Suseno & Pinnington, 2017).

There are several factors contributing to the shortage of talent. One factor is a decrease in employee engagement (Dutta, 2015). Low employee engagement causes low productivity, which requires firms to increase the number of people needed to complete a

job (Barrick, Thurgood, Smith, & Courtright, 2014). Small and medium enterprises' attention for talent is another factor contributing to the talent shortage (Suseno & Pinnington, 2017). Before the 1990s, only major conglomerates focused on acquiring talent. However, after the 1990s, talent professionals observed growing attention for talent in small and medium enterprises (Al Ariss et al., 2014). Finally, increase in employee mobility is also a significant factor contributing to the shortage of talent (Suseno & Pinnington, 2017).

Because of talent shortages, there is competition for talent (Suseno & Pinnington, 2017). Firms seeking to create competitive advantage in the marketplace must focus on attracting, developing, and retaining talent (Dutta, 2015). However, despite the broad attention that talent management has gained since the 1990s, some organizations have had difficulty implementing talent management programs (Al Ariss et al., 2014). Effective implementation of talent management programs requires firms to focus on developing talent pipelines through establishing performance systems, improving employee engagement, and increasing employee retention (Dutta, 2015).

Problem Statement

Firms lose strategic business opportunities to create sustainable growth because do not establish talent pipelines (Al Ariss et al., 2014). Additionally, there is a projected shortage of 40 million talented people across the world in the next two decades (Lanvin & Evans, 2014). The general business problem is that businesses do not establish talent pipelines to create sustainable growth. The specific business problem is that some

business leaders in small and medium enterprises in Saudi Arabia do not to establish talent pipelines to create sustainable growth successfully.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies business leaders in small and medium enterprises in Saudi Arabia used to establish talent pipelines to create sustainable growth. The target population consisted of HR leaders working in four small and medium enterprises located in western Saudi Arabia with successful experience in the design, implementation, and management of a talent pipeline. The population was appropriate for this study because researchers have indicated that organizations that establish talent pipelines can maintain sustainable growth (Al Ariss et al., 2014; Collings, 2014; Dutta, 2015). The implication for positive social change includes the potential to reduce the talent shortage in the Saudi labor market. Furthermore, talent development professionals may use the results of this study to strengthen the employer–employee relationships, increasing employee tenure that can improve unemployment rates among Saudi nationals and reduce dependence on expatriates.

Nature of the Study

Researchers use the qualitative research method to explore social behavior and study complex behavioral phenomena because it helps them understand social behavior (Isaacs, 2014). The qualitative research method was an appropriate method for this study because the goal was to explore social behavior and phenomena, as I explored strategies business leaders in small and medium enterprises in Saudi Arabia used to establish talent

pipelines to create sustainable growth. In contrast, the purpose of the quantitative research method is deductive reasoning among variables (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). The quantitative method was not appropriate for this study because the study did not involve deductive reasoning among variables. Additionally, mixed methods are used for exploratory and explanatory purposes with findings supported by surveys (Hong, Pluye, & Hong, 2014). The mixed method was not appropriate for this study because the goal was not to support the findings with surveys. The qualitative method was chosen over the quantitative and mixed methods because this study involved exploring a business phenomenon in the context of the social surroundings of an organization.

A case study was the design for this research study. Four qualitative designs may have been appropriate for this study, which were case study, phenomenological, narrative, and ethnographic. Researchers use a case study design to explain human behavior within the confined context of the case or cases (Yin, 2014). Conversely, the purpose of phenomenological design is to understand human behavior through studying the individuals' lived experiences (Quick & Hall, 2015). Narrative inquiry is a qualitative design that uses people's stories to understand human behavior. In the narrative inquiry, researchers analyze stories to give meaning to people's experiences and perceptions by looking into actions and events told in stories (Wang & Geale, 2015). Finally, an ethnographic inquiry is a qualitative design that refers to studying people's behavior in their everyday context or by participating in social interactions with people with the aim to understand human behavior and give meaning to their experiences and perceptions (Brooks & Alam, 2015).

A phenomenological design did not meet the needs of this study to seek information from the lived experiences of participants. Similarly, the narrative design was not an appropriate design because this study did not involve understanding human behavior through analyzing people's stories. Additionally, ethnographic design did not meet the needs of this study because this study did not involve interacting with participants in social settings to understand their behavior. The case study was an appropriate design because the goal was to understand how business leaders develop talent pipelines within the context of their organizations.

Research Question

The overarching question that guided this study was: What strategies do business leaders in small and medium enterprises in Saudi Arabia use to establish talent pipelines to create sustainable growth?

Interview Questions

1. What processes do you use to develop a talent pipeline that supports your organization's business needs?
2. How do you determine your organization's future talent requirements?
3. How do you select candidates for your talent pipeline?
4. How do you develop a talent pipeline that contributes to developing a constant flow of leaders for the organization?
5. How do you align your talent pipeline development process with your organization goals?

6. How do you develop the technical and soft skills of your talent pipeline candidates?
7. What recruitment processes do you use to attract talent that can contribute to establishing your talent pipeline?
8. What processes do you use to reduce the loss of organization talent?
9. How do you maintain the talent pipeline to ensure that your organization's talent meets your future business needs?
10. How do you assess the effectiveness of your organization's talent pipeline?
11. Is there anything you would like to say that I have not asked you regarding strategies you used to establish talent pipelines to create sustainable growth successfully?

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore strategies business leaders in small and medium enterprises in Saudi Arabia used to establish talent pipelines to create sustainable growth. The resource-based view (RBV) theory was a suitable conceptual framework for this study because it included a lens to understand how business leaders have successfully developed talent pipelines. Birger Wernerfelt developed the RBV theory in 1984. Wernerfelt (1984) indicated that firms should look internally to create a competitive advantage. Wernerfelt also suggested that firms can only create sustainable growth when they possess resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and not substituted. Thus, organizations must develop their internal talent to attain sustainable growth.

RBV was also suitable for this study because it is central to the development of human resources management (HRM), and sustainable growth relates to the resources an organization possesses (Dutta, 2015). Moreover, each firm has a unique combination of resources that includes people skills, assets, capabilities, and organization processes (Mensah, 2015). Business leaders should use these unique resources to develop talent, thus creating sustainable growth (Mensah, 2015).

Operational Definitions

This section contains definitions for several terms frequently used within this study. The goal was to define terms that may not be known to those outside of HR. The defined terms have contextual meanings regarding developing talent pipeline.

Employer branding: Employer branding is the image established by the employer in the form of economic, functional, psychological, and social benefits to attract and retain employees (Sengupta et al., 2015).

People equity: People equity is the combination of three elements: the degree to which employees' efforts synchronize with the vision, the extent firms use people's knowledge, skills, and experiences to deliver the vision and degree of employee satisfaction and commitment (Schiemann, 2014).

Psychological contract: Psychological contract is the individuals' beliefs about their obligations and fulfillment of these obligations on one side and the perception of the career and financial promises and their fulfillment from the other side (Sonnenberg, Van Zijderveld, & Brinks, 2014).

Succession planning: Succession planning is a systemic process aimed at minimizing the existing or anticipated gap in leadership talent through developing a pipeline of talented leaders (Alter, 2013).

Talent management: Talent management is a set of activities and processes that involve a systemic approach to identify key positions, selecting the right people with high potential to grow in the future, developing the capabilities of these high potentials, and retaining these high potentials in the organization (Al Ariss et al., 2014).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions stem from the researcher's view on how to conduct the study (Preston & Barnes, 2017). Assumptions give depth to research questions (Hasanzadeh et al., 2017). The knowledge, understanding, and beliefs of the researcher significantly determine the assumptions made by the researcher (Hasanzadeh et al., 2017). Five identifiable assumptions exist for this study. The first assumption was that the number of HR leaders available in each of the selected cases were sufficient to reach saturation. The second assumption was that the selected HR leaders responded honestly and felt comfortable to share their experience. The third assumption was the data collection method and analysis techniques provided valid data, and the fourth assumption was that multiple case study research design applied for investigating talent practices in a natural environment. However, a multiple case study research design met the need of this study for investigating human behavior in a context with defined boundaries (Yin, 2014). The final assumption was that using multiple sources increased reliability (see Yin, 2014).

Limitations

Every study has a set of limitations, which are research gaps out of the control of the researcher (Yin, 2014). Limitations are also threats to the validity of the study (Hasanzadeh et al., 2017). One key limitation that existed for this study was the small sample size of senior HR executives participating in the study. The small sample size could have limited the generalizability of the results (Yin, 2014). A small sample size creates a threat to the generalizability of the research findings to other contexts (Barratt, Ferris, & Lenton, 2015). Another limitation of the study was the availability of senior HR executives with talent management experience in the Arab Gulf. As indicated by Sidani and Al Ariss (2014), the Arab Gulf market suffers from a shortage of senior HR executives with talent management experience.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the boundaries of the study (Yin, 2014). Delimitations indicate the scope researcher does not include in the study and areas the researcher does not intend to investigate (Hasanzadeh et al., 2017). These delimitations influence the validity and generalizability of the study (Hasanzadeh et al., 2017). The delimitations of this study included studying firms in western Saudi Arabia only. The results of this study may not be transferable to other regions of the country, which may have different economic, demographic, and employment structures. Studying talent development should involve different stakeholders possessing the understanding and the influence on of talent pipeline development such as HR manager, direct managers, and non-HR managers (Mathew, 2015).

This study excluded some talent development stakeholders such as direct managers and non-HR managers. A delimitation of this study was narrowing the sample size using a purposive sampling strategy to include only senior HR executives. The study excluded some talent development stakeholders such as direct managers, non-HR managers, and mid-level HR managers. A third delimitation related to using case study design. The uniqueness of case study research is that researchers can investigate the dynamics of a business phenomenon within a specific setting (O’Cathain et al., 2017). Researchers using case study design often build their theory from the bottom up. Researchers try to describe the theory within a case and then raise the level of generality (O’Cathain et al., 2017).

As an additional delimitation, RBV theory’s characteristics did not include an explanation of the influence of management systems and organizational relationships on developing talent (Kaufman, 2015). Thus, findings from this study may not be transferable to organizations that lack adequate management systems. The potential findings from this study may not explain the fact that some organizations with talented employees do not create sustainable growth because of inadequate management systems or weak organizational relationships.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

Business leaders in small and medium enterprises in Saudi Arabia can use the results of this study to establish talent pipelines and create sustainable growth. Using the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of this study, business leaders can contribute

to the advancement of talent pipeline development for businesses in Saudi Arabia. A talent pipeline is an essential factor for creating sustainable growth (Mensah, 2015). HR practitioners have indicated that the output of talent management programs is to establish effective talent pipelines and create sustainable growth (Mensah, 2015). Because most of the talent management literature refers to organizations in America and Europe (Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014), there is limited research on talent management in the Arab Gulf Cooperative Council, which includes Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates. The contribution of this study was to understand the successful practices used by business leaders working in small and medium enterprises in Saudi Arabia to establish talent pipelines so other leaders can benefit from their expertise.

Implications for Social Change

The concept of talent management is new to Saudi Arabia, and there is limited talent management research in the context of the Saudi labor market (Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014). The lack of attention to developing talent pipelines in Saudi Arabia has created a shortage of talent driving Saudi firms to hire foreign labor, leaving some of the Saudi populations without jobs (Nalband & Awadh, 2017). Furthermore, researchers have indicated governments could not reduce unemployment using macroeconomic measures alone (Lanvin & Evans, 2014). Governments encourage firms to invest in developing talent to reduce unemployment rates (Lanvin & Evans, 2014). Using the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of this study, Saudi business leaders can improve talent development practices in small and medium enterprises in Saudi Arabia. Saudi business leaders can also improve the skills and capabilities of the Saudi labor force and

increase the opportunities for local Saudi nationals to fill jobs currently filled by foreign expatriates. Because of improved skills and capabilities of the Saudi workforce, Saudi business leaders can increase the local community's employment rate and reduce dependence on foreign labor. The implications for positive social change include influencing the unemployment rates among Saudi nationals, reducing dependence on expatriates, and improving Saudi nationals' standard of living.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that business leaders in small and medium enterprises in Saudi Arabia used to establish talent pipelines that create sustainable growth. To achieve the purpose of the study, I developed a literature review strategy that provided analysis and evaluation of diverse perspectives on developing talent pipelines. The focus was on conducting a comprehensive and critical analysis of academic sources from 2014–2018 on talent pipeline development. The strategy for reviewing the available literature consisted of a preparation stage that included identifying sources on talent pipeline development from Walden University Library databases, ProQuest, EBSCOhost, Science Direct, Academic Search Complete, SAGE, Thoreau, and Google Scholar to search for sources related. Search terms included the following: *definition of talent management, performance management, Herzberg theory, psychological contract, employee motivation, employee retention, succession planning, employee development, work design, and employer branding.*

In the following stage of the literature review strategy, I examined the research on talent pipeline development. Critical analysis of the related academic literature yielded

insight on effective practices to develop talent pipelines, diverse perspectives on talent management, the link between talent pipelines and a firm's performance, talent pipeline challenges facing Saudi Arabian firms, and influence of psychological contract and employee engagement on talent pipeline development. With this strategy, I developed the foundation to explore ideas on recent practices for developing talent pipelines, linking performance to talent, talent management challenges in Saudi Arabia, the influence of employee motivation on talent management, effective talent retention practices, and effective succession planning practices.

The literature review consisted of 83 articles from 67 different scholarly sources. To ensure scholarship, rigor, and depth, I used a diverse range of journals (see Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). The total number of peer-reviewed references published within the 2014–2018 was 77 articles, representing 92.8%. The literature review also included four peer-reviewed references published before 2014, two nonpeer-reviewed references, and a book. See Table 1 for a summary of the literature review references.

Table 1

Summary of References in Literature Review

Literature Type	Count	Percentage
Peer-reviewed journals published within 2014–2018	77	92.8%
Peer-reviewed journals published before 2014	3	3.6%
Nonpeer-reviewed journals	2	2.4%
Books	1	1.2%
Total	83	100%

I begin the literature review with an introduction to RBV theory, limitations of RBV theory, and a discussion of some of the competing theories. I also discuss literature on the practices to develop talent pipelines, organization performance, employee motivation and engagement, talent retention, succession planning practices, and talent management challenges facing HR leaders in Saudi Arabia. Reviewing the existing body of talent management knowledge, and the extensive analysis of RBV theory was central to my understanding the relationship of between employees' talent and other intangible firm resources.

Progressive Review of RBV Theory

The RBV theory has been viewed as one of the most influential perspectives in organization science (Kellermanns et al., 2016). Scholars used RBV theory in a range of disciplines to understand the role of a firm's resources in creating a competitive position and long-term success (Bromiley & Rau, 2016). Many scholars have used the RBV theory to understand and improve firms' sustainability and achievement of competitive advantage (Bromiley & Rau, 2016). Practitioners have used RBV theory to improve operations management, supply chain management, performance management, and talent management (Bromiley & Rau, 2016). Talent professionals have used RBV theory to help organizations understand the reasons some firms had a competitive advantage for long periods of time, while other firms did not maintain success and a competitive advantage position (Kellermanns et al., 2016). For example, business leaders must

support talented employees with systems, policies, and procedures to create a sustainable competitive advantage (Dutta, 2015).

The root of RBV theory traces back to Penrose (1959). Penrose focused on the significance of resources to the long-term success of firms. Two decades after Penrose, Wernerfelt (1984) focused on the significance of resources to a firm. Wernerfelt's contribution was to direct scholars toward looking at firm resources as a necessary element to improve firms' performance and achieve sustained competitive advantage (Bromiley & Rau, 2016). Other scholars have advanced RBV theory further by focusing on the characteristics of the resources that contribute to a firm's competitive position and long-term success (Kellermanns et al., 2016). For instance, another perspective that has advanced RBV theory involved understanding the elements linked resources to a firm's competitive advantage (Dutta, 2015). Additionally, the idea that a bundle of resources creates competitive advantage rather than a selection of resources was introduced to the theory (Kellermanns et al., 2016). Organizational leaders seeking to achieve sustainable growth and gain competitive advantage must draw on all their resources including tangible and intangible resources such as people, practices, system, processes, management decisions, reputation, and organization culture (Dutta, 2015). Due to the various perspectives in the RBV theory, it served the purpose of this study and provided a comprehensive lens for developing talent.

RBV theory can be connected with a firm's strategy (Nyberg, Moliterno, Hale, & Lepak, 2014), as it is a guiding paradigm for HRM (Kaufman, 2015). The source of competitive advantage lies in developing internal resources to take advantage of the

opportunities that markets present (Kaufman, 2015). Organizations create a sustainable competitive advantage by developing resources that are heterogeneous, immobile, rare, and hard to copy (Dutta, 2015). Because the relationship between a firm's resources and its competitive advantage is complex, competitors cannot replicate the firm's competitive advantage strategy by acquiring similar resources (Bordeianu & Buta, 2015).

RBV theory relates to the idea that talented employees will generate superior results, as talented employees fit its description of resources that firms need. Firms should seek to identify, attract, and develop resources that are (a) valuable, (b) rare, (c) inimitable, and (d) nonsubstitutable (Tatoglu, Glaister, & Demirbag, 2016). Valuable resources are those that allow the firm to achieve its business results (Tatoglu et al., 2016). Firms must own resources that allow the firm to implement the business strategy and sustained achieve economic growth. Rare resources are those controlled by a limited number of firms and not available for everyone (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Inimitable resources, however, are resources that other firms cannot create because it would put them at a cost disadvantage. Finally, nonsubstitutable resources are those that produce results not easily achieved by other means (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). These four characteristics of RBV theory are central to this study on talent pipeline development.

Limitations of RBV Theory

A key limitation of RBV theory is lack of attention to other organizational factors needed to create a sustainable competitive advantage. Besides valuable, rare, inimitable, and nonsubstitutable resources, firms must have systems that will allow them to use the capabilities of talented people (Tatoglu et al., 2016). Firms must have the

appropriate management systems and processes to benefit from the capabilities of their talented people (Kaufman, 2015).

Another limitation of RBV theory is that it does not consider how the relationship between a firm and its resources can be a source of competitive advantage.

Organizational culture can influence the value generated by its resources (Barney, 2014). Successful application of RBV theory requires organizations to have the right culture that allows the organization to make effective use of people's capabilities (Tatoglu et al., 2016). In addition, developing talent internally maximizes value creation (Piening & Salge, 2015). Thus, organizational leaders must consider factors such as employee motivation, employee–employer trust, and alignment of employee goals with organizational goals.

RBV theory has also been critiqued for not addressing time and providing a static perspective of resources (Hitt, Carnes, & Xu, 2016). Managers must accept the fact that they need to develop organizational resources through continuous training, special projects, and job rotation (Ferlie, 2014). Achieving competitive advantage requires firms to develop and upgrade organizations' resources continuously. Thus, firms must adopt a dynamic perspective of RBV theory to incorporate for the time factor (Hitt et al., 2016). Therefore, RBV theory is not sufficient to explain the elements for effective talent development. Talent professionals seeking to develop talent pipeline need to consider other elements that influence organizational talent as well.

Another significant criticism of RBV theory is its narrow definition of resources. Narrowing the definition of resources to imply only HR limits the application of the

theory (Hill et al., 2016). For example, it is important that firms have talented employees to advance business and achieve competitive advantage; however, firms must also have the right practices. Thus, the definition of resources should include tangible and intangible resources to be practical for talent pipeline development (Schiemann, 2014).

Theories Competing with RBV Theory

Several alternative theories are used to examine talent pipeline development, including the dynamic capabilities theory and the knowledge-based view theory (Hitt et al., 2016). The dynamic capabilities theory refers to a firm's ability to develop its talent pipeline that enables the organization to cope with rapidly changing environments (Piening & Salge, 2015). The knowledge-based theory indicates that organizations' uniqueness spans from its ability to create, accumulate, and apply knowledge (Piening & Salge, 2015). Thus, the social and technical knowledge becomes a source of competitive advantage for the firm (Chen, 2016). The contrast between RBV theory and the dynamic capabilities theory is that RBV theory promotes the idea of the uneven distribution of resources across organizations because of the imperfect mobility of resources.

The dynamic capabilities theory is focused on the concept of modification and improvement of skills and competencies in pursuit of adaptation and improvement (Piening & Salge, 2015). An organization's ability to innovate qualifies as a dynamic capability. The dynamic capabilities theory indicates that organizations should develop activities for acquiring, integrating, and disseminating skills and competencies for change (Piening & Salge, 2015). The dynamic capabilities theory was not appropriate to explain the reasons managers develop talent pipelines because the dynamic capabilities theory is

focused on organizations' capabilities to adapt to changing market conditions. RBV theory was chosen because it explained the connection between talent pipelines and organization value.

RBV Perspective on Homegrown Talent Versus Acquired Talent

Current challenging business environments create the need to build and sustain a strong talent pipeline through effective management of HR (Nijs et al., 2014). However, many organizations continue to treat talent management as a short-term skills shortage problem rather than a long-term strategy (Kim, Williams, Rothwell, & Penaloza, 2014). Based on RBV theory, talent managers can understand that the main objective of a talent pipeline is to have a consistent flow of valuable, rare, inimitable, and nonsubstitutable talent that the organization can draw on to create value and advance its competitive position (Bromiley & Rau, 2016; Kim et al., 2014). But building effective talent pipelines requires a futuristic view of the organization, and firms need to assess the talent requirements to meet potential business challenges. Continued success of an organization depends on developing a consistent pipeline of talent (Rana & Goel, 2015).

A key success factor for talent pipelines development is to include homegrown talent (Khan & Jacob, 2015). Homegrown leaders have better alignment with the mission and values of the organization (Rana & Goel, 2015). The internally developed talented employees have a better understanding of the business and can better anticipate customer needs, and they can influence others without authority because of the social connection they have with the people within the organizations (Rana & Goel, 2015). Homegrown, talented employees gain trust of the other employees and set a good example of the way a

firm can assist with employee career development and secure the future of talented employees.

Firms have shown the advantage of homegrown talent in developing a talent pipeline. For example, an Indian conglomerate used a three-step process to develop its talent pipeline (Rana & Goel, 2015). The first step consisted of processes to identify the high potential employees. The firm differentiated the high achievers from the rest of the employees. The Indian conglomerate used results and potential assessment of employees to determine the stars of the organization. In the following step, the firm introduced and structured an action-learning process (Rana & Goel, 2015). The process consisted of workshops and action learning projects. The firm assigned coaches to employees with high potential to support their broadening assignment. Finally, the firm had a regular feedback tool that provided the high potentials employees with consistent, actionable feedback (Rana & Goel, 2015). The Indian conglomerate's successful experience of homegrown talent suggests that talent professionals should consider homegrown talent when developing talent pipelines.

RBV Perspective of Talent Development

Because firms must possess valuable, rare, inimitable, and nonsubstitutable resources (Wernerfelt, 1984), business leaders must focus on talent development to create competitive advantage (Tatouglu et al., 2016). However, managing talent and developing effective talent pipelines requires understanding the definition of talent. Drawing from Bromiley and Rau's (2016) research, firms must be able to generate value from their

resources to sustain success. Talent is the combination of competence, commitment, and the contribution that allow the firm to generate economic value.

The literature indicated that there was no clear definition of talent with a range of definitions that complemented and competed with the RBV theory's perspective of talent. The vague and incomplete understanding of the nature of talent is a challenge for talent practitioners (Al Ariss et al., 2014). One definition of talent is that it is the combination of competence, commitment, and contribution (Schiemann, 2014). Another definition of talent is the person's skills, experiences, knowledge, behaviors, and ability to learn (Schiemann, 2014). These definitions are significant in setting the direction for developing talent pipelines.

Growing Organization Talent Using RBV

Talent management is a new discipline with ambiguity (Ingram & Glod, 2016). Confusion remains on who should be considered talented, what talent is, and what schemes and practices should organizations have in place to develop talent (Cooke, Saini, & Wang, 2014). However, RBV theory minimizes the ambiguity (Kellermanns et al. 2016), including four conditions for developing firm's talent for long-term success: (a) talent must be valuable, (b) rare, (c) inimitable, and (d) nonsubstitutable (Bromiley & Rau, 2016).

Moreover, developing talent requires firms not only to develop people, but also to develop other intangible resources such as management decision making, reputation, and work environment (Ingram & Glod, 2016). Firms must continuously combine talent with other firm resources to create uniqueness and advance the firm's competitive advantage

(Bromiley & Rau, 2016; Mensah, 2015). Firms that can continuously bundle various resources in various combinations create unique opportunities that other firms cannot replicate (Bromiley & Rau, 2016).

This literature review focuses on the RBV theory perspective on talent management. Referring to RBV theory; talent management is a strategic discipline that bundles various resources to achieve the business strategy (Bromiley & Rau, 2016). Other researchers such as Cappelli and Keller (2014), referred to talent management as the HR practices that deal with workforce planning, succession planning, employee development, and career planning. Cappelli and Keller stated that no standard definition of talent management exists. The lack of a standard definition leads to lack of clarity and ambiguity in the operation of talent management, thus making talent development a challenge for managers

Two debates arise from attempts to define talent management. The first is whether to approach talent management as an inclusive or exclusive discipline. In the inclusive approach, talent managers consider all employees when developing talent pipelines. While in the exclusive approach, talent management professionals focus on the top talent in the organization (Cappelli & Keller, 2014). The other debate concerns the argument of whether to differentiate employees or jobs (Vnoučková, 2016). The approach to differentiate employees requires talent managers to focus their attention on high-potential employees, by providing differential development programs and differential reward systems (Vnoučková, 2016). By contrast, advocates for the job differentiation approach

advises talent managers to focus on the critical jobs, which have the most influence on the organization results (Cappelli & Keller, 2014).

The analysis and review of the academic sources resulted in the discovery of diverse perceptions of the meaning of talent management. One of these perceptions referred to talent management as being a new label for HRM (Collings, 2014). Scholars believed that talent management included practices that business leaders used to create successors for leading the organization in the future; hence, some scholars believed that talent management is another name for succession planning (Collings, 2014). Scholars disagree regarding the scope of talent management (Al Ariss et al., 2014). Some scholars support talent programs that focus on elite employees, while others prefer talent programs that include all employees (Collings, 2014).

The most popular definition of talent management was that talent management is a systemic process that included a set of practices that organizations use to develop organization talent (Al Ariss et al., 2014; Collings, 2014). Talent management consists of practices that focus on identifying the key positions that contribute to organizational sustainability (Collings, 2014). In addition, talent management also consists of practices that identify the skills, capabilities, and knowledge that needed to excel in these key positions (Collings, 2014). Furthermore, talent management consists of practices that business leaders use to select high-potential employees, develop the employees' skills, place the employees in the suitable key positions, and retain employees in the company so they continue to contribute to the long-term sustainability (Collings, 2014). Despite the

significant attention that talent management received in the past decade, many organizations fail to manage talent effectively (Al Ariss et al., 2014).

Creating Value through Talent Development

Some HRM literature draws the definition of talent management from RBV theory (Davis, 2017). Researchers advocating for RBV theory, claim that talent is a combination of value and uniqueness (Davis, 2017; Nijs et al., 2014). Value refers to the potential of a talented individual to contribute to the organization's sustainability (Davis, 2017). While uniqueness refers to the extent to which talent within an organization is difficult to replace because of the specialization of the job or the scarcity of the skills in the labor market (Davis, 2017; Nijs et al., 2014). Rabbi, Ahad, Kousar, and Ali, (2015) referred to talent management as a set of activities that aim to attract, select, develop, and retain employees that possess the knowledge and skills to perform the jobs that enable the organization to achieve its strategic objectives. Collings (2014) added to the definition of talent management by stating that it is the management and development of high performing individuals holding critical positions in the organization.

Bromiley and Rau (2016) draw another interesting view of talent management from the RBV theory. Bromiley and Rau stated in their extended research on RBV theory that firms develop resources by accumulation rather than by acquisition. Firms that bundle various organization resources create a diverse combination of ways to deliver the business strategy and advance their chances for sustainable growth (Collings, 2014). Hence, these firms can develop resources using this diverse combination (Bomiley & Rau, 2016). Consequently, business leaders need to understand that developing talent

pipelines requires firms to establish processes that involve systemic identification, attraction, development, and retention of talented employees (Collings, 2014). In addition, business leaders must combine employee talent with adequate systems including: motivating job design, adequate work environment, and proper reward systems to drive business results towards creating competitive advantage versus competitions (Collings, 2014).

Talent management is a process that places high-potential employees in critical positions, to ensure effective contributions to the business strategy (Collings, 2014). Talent professionals characterize highly talented people by the competency, skills, ability, experience, drive, knowledge, and ability to grow within an organization (Festing & Schäfer, 2014). Some practitioners have tried to operationalize talent management by focusing on employee ability and effectiveness (Nijs et al., 2014). When applying the ability perspective; talent managers indicate that talented people possess above normal abilities (skills, capabilities, and knowledge) compared to other individuals (Nijs et al., 2014). Consequently, organizations should proactively focus on such people to leverage their abilities to meet current and future organization needs (Nijs et al., 2014). When applying the effectiveness perspective, talent managers refer to the concept that talented people are adding value to the organization and contribute to attaining sustainability (Festing & Schäfer, 2014). Furthermore, talented people are motivated and interested in investing effort and time to utilize their skills and knowledge to contribute to the organization's sustainability (Nijs et al., 2014).

The ultimate source of competitive advantage lies in developing talent pipelines that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable, which enable firms to take advantage of the opportunities that markets present (Wernerfelt, 1984). Talent managers must understand the process that talent pipelines generate value for their organization (Collings, 2014). In addition, talent managers must understand the factors that improve their organizations' effectiveness through the development of effective talent pipelines (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). The aim of developing a talent pipeline is to generate value for the organization (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Therefore, when developing a talent pipeline, talent managers must consider the organization strategy (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Talent pipelines are unique to each organization's need. Organizations receive value when leaders can exploit the human capital to implement the organization strategy and create economic value by responding to opportunities available in the market (Collings, 2014).

In line with RBV theory, organizations need four distinct processes to create valuable talent pipelines (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). The first process is to create valuable resources by attracting and acquiring talent that contributes to the value creation process of the organization through contributions in implementing the organization strategy (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Following value creation, talent managers must be able to capture the talent through bundling human capital with other organization resources, systems, procedures, and products (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). By capturing talent, organizations increase the dependency of talented people on the organization and make the resources inimitable (Collings, 2014). The third step is to leverage the value of

the organization's talent by developing people's capability and knowledge (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Finally, talent managers must protect the organization talent through applying turnover reduction strategies to minimize the loss of valuable talent (Sparrow & Makram, 2015).

Effective Practices for Developing Talent Pipelines Based on RBV

The revised RBV theory extended the definition of firm resources to include tangible and nontangible resources (Bromeliy & Rau, 2016). Business leaders must have the ability to continuously bundle tangible and intangible resources to create and implement the right strategy that the market needs (Bromeliy & Rau, 2016). Furthermore combining resources is a continuous process that firms need to change frequently to adapt to the customer changing needs. Consequently, the use of the term talent pipeline in this study instead of talent is to stress the RBV theory concept that talent development is a continuous process and firms must have a consistent flow of talent to create sustainable growth.

Drawing from the RBV theory, manager must understand that talent development is a continuous process (Mathew, 2015). Firms need to have a constant flow of talent that will sustain business growth and meet the continuously changing market needs (Mathew, 2015). Businesses by nature grow and evolve because of changing market conditions, competition, technology, and customer needs (Mathew, 2015). The concept of changing and evolving business needs supports The RBV theory firms must face changing market needs by continuously combining and bundling various resources in different

combinations to address the consistently changing market challenges (Bromiley & Rau, 2016).

Talent development should be a continuous process that produces talented people possessing the required skills and knowledge to meet the business needs in such continuously changing conditions affecting the organization (Festing & Schäfer, 2014). With increasingly demanding customers and aggressive market competition, business leaders turn to talent management as a critical tool to create competitive advantage and sustainable customer satisfaction (Mathew, 2015). Poor talent management not only promotes drops in productivity, but also risks losing valuable knowledge and experience in the organization (Festing & Schäfer, 2014). The success of organizations depends on how well firms can bundle resources to achieve the business objectives (Bomiley & Rau, 2016). The right talent generates high performance through productivity, quality, innovation, and customer satisfaction improvements (Mathew, 2015). Moreover, organizations demonstrating strong performance attract talented people (Mensah, 2015).

Firms needed to have resources that were valuable, rare, inimitable, and nonsubstitutable to create competitive advantage (Wernerfelt, 1984). Owning resources possessing RBV theory criteria posed a major challenge for many companies (Mathew, 2015). According to a study conducted on small and medium enterprises in the United Kingdom (UK), the primary obstacle that faced high growth companies from growing was to cover for the shortage of valuable resources (Lee, 2014). Many small and medium enterprises in the UK reported the primary obstacle that prevented their growth was the shortage of talent (Lee, 2014). Organizations were short of skills needed for the firm to

deliver its business objectives. The shortage of skills posed a challenge from two perspectives (Lee, 2014). Growing firms by default needed new employees to compensate for new roles created by the firm's growth. Therefore, acquiring new people became an obstacle to further growth (Lee, 2014). The acquisition of the right people was a challenge because of existing talent shortage (Suseno & Pinnington, 2017). Thus, training new people in time to ensure the continuation of growth became an obstacle even when the acquisition was successful (Suseno & Pinnington, 2017).

The second perspective addressed the shortage of managerial skills. Fast growing organizations needed managers possessing special skills to lead their business teams to success (Suseno & Pinnington, 2017). Managers of fast-growing firms required innovative skills, entrepreneurship skills, and the ability to create and utilize business opportunities (Lee, 2014). Consequently, fast-growing firms faced the challenge of developing a pipeline of managers that possessed these skills (Lee, 2014). The talent shortage required firms to carefully align HR with the current and future needs of the firm (Sparrow & Makram, 2015).

Referring to the RBV theory, firms need to bundle various resources to create sustainable growth and improve their competitive position (Bromeliy & Rua, 2016). One way to effectively bundle a firm's resources is to create strong alignment between the firm's HR and organization needs (Mansour, Heath, & Brannan, 2015). Sparrow and Makram (2015) introduced four approaches for aligning talent pipelines with organization needs. It is essential to mention that these approaches are competing ideas (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Thus, talent managers include a higher likelihood to develop

effective talent pipelines when considering how these approaches can complement each other rather than compete with other needs (Mansour, Heath, & Brannan, 2015). The approaches introduced by Sparrow and Makram complement RBV's concept of bundling firm's resources to achieve sustainable growth (Bromeliy & Rau, 2016).

The first approach is the people approach (Sparrow & Makram, 2015).

Researchers indicated that firms must focus on the elite group of people, also known as high potentials, that are hard to find (rare), and can contribute to the organization strategy (valuable) (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). High potential people are difficult to find because of the special skills they possess (Tatouglu et al., 2016). In a people-oriented organization, managers segment employees based on performance and potential (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Firms having people-oriented cultures place a high value on employees with strong performance and promising potential and often lavishly reward and retain such employees (Tatouglu et al., 2016).

By contrast, those employees with low performance are separated from the firm using proper and legal separation plan that do not disrupt the organization or hurt the firm's reputation (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). The people approach requires firms to strengthen their talent acquisition program by establishing a strong employer brand, adopting attractive compensation schemes, and developing effective employee retention systems (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Critics of this approach argue that the focus on people alone cannot ensure organization competitiveness (Tatouglu et al., 2016). Without the right practices, systems, social capital, reputation, and business model firms would not be able to create consistent growth or create a sustainable competitive advantage

(Tatouglu et al., 2016). Moreover, when organizations focus only on the elite, firms fail to take advantage of the skills of these employees not categorized as high potential, but still possess the talent that may add value to the organization (Tatouglu et al., 2016).

A fundamental RBV theory requirement for firms' long-term success is to have resources that are valuable (Wernerfelt, 1984). HR must not only be talented but must also be able to add value to the organizations (Bromeliy & Rau, 2016). Sparrow and Makram (2015) introduced their second approach for aligning talent with firm's performance, which they called the practice approach. Despite the significance of focusing on people skills and differentiating employees based on performance, developing an effective talent pipeline requires that firms have proper procedures to manage talent pipelines (Tatouglu et al., 2016).

Procedures to manage talent revolve around several pivotal HR activities. Sparrow and Makram (2015) research supports Bromeliy and Rau's (2016) view of RBV theory because of their suggestion to combine HR with the firm's procedures to achieve business results. Firms must have the right systems to identify the sources of high-skilled people, attract talented people to the organization, and recruit these people (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Another process that firms must focus on is engaging the talent towards contributing to the firm's strategy (Suseno & Pinnington, 2017). A third pivotal process is a process to manage the performance of people to ensure that the pipeline adds value to the organization (Suseno & Pinnington, 2017). Finally, organizations should have a process to manage the talent pipeline through, growing and developing talent, and

ensuring a consistent flow of talent that will meet not only the current needs but also the future needs (Sparrow & Makram, 2015).

The third approach for firms to create RBV valuable resources is to focus on positions rather than people (Bromeliy & Rau, 2016). Organizations should classify positions based on their contribution to the organization strategy (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). As an example, positions A, are those that have a disproportionate contribution to the business goals. Positions A normally require people to have a wide variety of skills and highly specialized talent. Positions B, are positions that contribute significantly to the organization strategy, but require people with common skills. Finally, positions C, are those positions that are non-core or support functions (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Furthermore, the position approach requires organizations to invest in developing people skills and knowledge to ensure a constant supply of talent fill these positions (Suseno & Pinnington, 2017).

Finally, the fourth approach drives focus on the human capital element (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Firms must be able to measure the impact of the human capital on the business results (Suseno & Pinnington, 2017). The human capital element is a primary resource for the organization that requires significant investment (Nijs et al., 2014). Consequently, firms must consistently measure the rate of return from investing in human capital. Firms must also have the ability to forecast human capital requirements and properly plan to staff the organization with the adequate quality and quantity of talent (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Despite the importance of HR to the success of the firm, focusing on people alone will not result in long-term success for the organization (Hitt et

al., 2016). Achieving long-term success and sustainable competitive advantage require firms to adopt a dynamic view of RBV theory (Barney 2014). A need exists for further study to understand the relationship between the firm's dynamic human capital requirements and talent pipeline.

Developing Talent Pipelines through RBV Resources Bundling

Referring to RBV theory concept of bundling various resources, I discussed how intangible resources must be combined with HR to achieve competitive advantage. Critics of RBV theory stressed that focusing on HR alone does not enhance the firm's competitive position (Hitt et al., 2016). Firms must combine HR with other resources to achieve competitive advantage (Kaufman, 2015). The review of some scholarly sources suggested that an effective talent pipeline is a significant influencer of organization success (Al Ariss, Cascio, & Paauwe, 2014; Dutta, 2015; Nijs et al., 2014). In addition, Bromeliy and Rau (2016) identified the reasons for lack of success in some firms despite having talented people. The two views suggest the need for studying, the concept of bundling four HR systems and practices with the presence of effective talent pipeline approach. The four HR systems include: (a) performance management system, (b) employee motivations and engagement practices, (c) employee retention practices, and (e) succession planning systems.

Linking Talent Pipeline to Performance

A fundamental concept of RBV theory is that organization resources must be dedicated to creating value for the organization (Davis, 2017). Drawing from RBV theory is an essential element for creating a competitive advantage for firms to be able to bundle

resources for maximum leverage of talent (Bromiley & Rau, 2016). Firms seeking to bundle value with the talent pipeline must combine the talent pipeline (firm's tangible resource) with its performance management system (firm's intangible resource) to enhance the organization's capability to implement the business strategy and generate economic value. One example of effective bundling of talent pipelines with the firm's performance system is for firms to link talent pipelines to the firm's performance by alignment between organizational goals and employee goals (Sparrow & Makram, 2015).

Organization-employee alignment requires an effective connection between the various functions of the firm from one side and alignment between the employees and functional business goals from the other side (Ayers, 2015). When employees see their contribution to the organizational goals, they became motivated and committed to delivering their goals. Collings (2014) suggested a plurality of stakeholders would drive an organization towards long-term success (Ayers, 2015). When organizations consider shareholders, employees, customers, suppliers, and other significant stakeholders as key contributors to organization performance, organizations can create the necessary commitment and engagement from stakeholders (Collings, 2014). Aligning all stakeholders' efforts toward a common goal, results in driving the firm towards long-term success (Sonnenberg et al., 2014). Obviously, trade-offs in developing performance measures that consider multiple stakeholders exist. However, this trade-off translates into higher productivity and high return on investment (Collings, 2014). One basic requirement for creating a link between talent pipelines and organization performance is alignment between employee and employer.

In the following sub-sections of this literature review, I presented an analysis from different academic sources regarding RBV theory's concept of bundling firm's resources and suggest the need for studying the bundling of talent pipeline with the various HR systems. The discussion involves ways talent managers combine talent pipelines and performance management systems elements including: employee skills, training effectiveness, employee work plan design, implementing a culture of assessment, organization alignment, and employee support.

Developing employees' skills. Combining talent pipelines with performance management system requires firms to securing organization talent while considering future business growth (Dutta, 2015). Consideration of business growth needs involves developing the skills and competencies of people to meet the growing complexity of the business (Dubey & Gunasekaran, 2015). Developing sustainable talent requires firms to develop the individual's hard and soft skills (Dubey & Gunasekaran, 2015). The hard skills refer to the technical skills and competencies that an individual requires performing a job in a specific discipline (Lundkvist & Gustavsson, 2017). Hard skills enable employees to perform their tasks by their profession (Lundkvist & Gustavsson, 2017).

Hard skills are not enough to create sustainable talent; employees must also acquire soft skills (Dalayga, Mohkber, Zaleha, & Rashid, 2017). Soft skills involve enabling people to execute their role with excellence (Dalayga et al., 2017). Leadership, innovation, and communication are skills required to create a productive environment and synergized efforts (Lundkvist & Gustavsson, 2017). Talent development initiatives must include programs that develop both hard and soft skills (Dubey & Gunasekaran, 2015).

Organization success requires firms to develop the right set of skills to meet both local and global needs (Dalayga et al., 2017). An increasing mismatch exists between the available supply of skills and the required demand (Murti & Paul, 2014). Managers complain that many of the available skilled workers do not have the right skills firms require to create sustainable growth (Dubey & Gunasekaran, 2015). The increasing mismatch between the supply and demand is a significant contributor to the skills shortage (Dubey & Gunasekaran, 2015). Candidates lack the skills and experience that the firm needs to achieve a business objective (Paul & Murti, 2014). In other instances, candidates lack the motivation, attitude, and personality to succeed (Paul & Murti, 2014). Some candidates even lack the basic abilities to deliver their objectives (Paul & Murti, 2014).

Referring to the RBV's concept of bundling firm's resources to create competitive advantage, effective bundling of talent pipelines and performance management systems requires firms to effectively train their employees (Lee, Lee, Lee, & Park, 2014). In 2012, organizations in developed countries spent \$400 billion on training (Ben-hur, Jaworski, & Gray, 2015). Lee et al. (2014) stated huge spending on training did not have a significant effect on organization productivity. Scholars attributed the low influence of training on organization productivity to focusing on the wrong objectives of training (Mehralian, Nazari, Akhavan, & Rasekh, 2014). Hence, a need for further study of talent pipeline development while considering employee training, training objectives, and employee soft and hard skills development.

Employee work plans design. Another use of RBV's concept of resource bundling is to bundle work plans with talent management (Ayers, 2015; Bromeliy & Rau, 2016). One of the significant practices for developing effective talent pipelines is to create a clear "line of sight" (Ayers, 2015, p. 170) and linking individual performance with organizational results. Employees need to see a clear connection between the activities they perform and the organizational goals (Parke, Weinhardt, Brodsky, & Devoe, 2018). Employees possessing right skills and a clear line of sight are likely to be motivated and committed to achieving their goals because they know the expectations of their organization (Ayers, 2015).

Creating a line of sight is necessary for enhancing employee performance and increasing employees' contribution to the organization goals (De Vos & Cambre, 2017). Individual work plans are essential to creating an effective talent pipeline because an employee adopts behaviors that add value to the organization (Ayers, 2015). Firms that seek to develop valuable talent pipelines that generate value for the organization as suggested by Wernerfelt (1984) must have effective work plan practices. The idea of creating a line of sight supports RBV theory because employees stay in-touch with the organization's value element. Consequently, a need exists to further study the influence of employees' work plan design and line of sight on talent pipeline effectiveness.

Implementing a culture of assessment. The culture of assessment is an intangible firm's resource. Based on RBV theory, firms must combine tangible and intangible resources to achieve competitive advantage (Bromeliy & Rau, 2016). One intangible resource firms can apply to develop talent pipeline is to introduce a culture of

assessment (Bititci, Cocca, & Ates, 2015). Many organizations lack the understanding of the causes of low performance and ways to improve (Adriansyah & Affif, 2015).

In spite of the general agreement among business leaders regarding the significance of assessment, leaders still conduct an assessment in a mechanistic way that prevents the organization from realizing the full benefits of assessment (Bititci et al., 2015). A culture of assessment means that managers conduct assessments with the intent to learn the means to improve individual performance, the causes of employee's success or failure (Adriansyah & Affif, 2015). In a culture of assessment, organizations are willing to change processes, systems, and policies based on the assessment findings to enhance individual performance (Kirovska & Qoku, 2014). A need exists for further study of the influence of assessments and assessment culture on talent pipeline.

Influence of organization alignment on talent and performance. Building on RBV's resource bundling idea (see Bromiley & Rau, 2016), organization alignment is a vital performance sub-system that firms can draw from to improve talent development and performance system (Collings, 2014). Three dimensions of employee-employer alignment exist, including: capability, communication, and return on investment alignment (Collings, 2014). Capability alignment refers to a match between employee's skills and knowledge with firm's business needs (Lee, Park, & Koo, 2015).

Talent development programs must consider developing valuable employee capabilities (Collings, 2014). Aligning employee capabilities with business needs is a dynamic process (Lee et al., 2015). Individual capabilities continuously change due to training and experience (Collings, 2014). Similarly, firm capabilities also change due to

market conditions and customer needs evolve (Sonnenberg et al., 2014). Effective talent management practices consider the dynamic nature of capabilities alignment.

Communication alignment has a significant influence on the effectiveness of talent pipelines (Collings, 2014). Managers must transparently communicate their perception of the employee's talent status to promote desirable employee work behaviors (Sonnenberg et al., 2014). Talent professionals argued, publicizing the names of high-potentials influences the motivation and commitment of employees and sets standards of acceptable and nonacceptable work behaviors (Lee et al., 2015). Thus, employees not selected as high-potential may become disengaged and demotivated (Lee et al., 2015).

The alignment on the return of investment relates to the employee's expectations of reward when adopting talent behaviors versus the organization's perception of the value added by talented employees (Collings, 2014). Firms must communicate financial and non-financial rewards that employees will gain upon adopting desirable talent behaviors and deliver the desired business results (Sonnenberg et al., 2014). The alignment on return on investment increases employees' desire to adopt behaviors that support business objectives (Lee et al., 2015).

Influence of Engagement on Developing RBV Talent Pipeline

Based on RBV theory, firms must consistently combine multiple resources in various combinations to develop talent that is valuable, rare, inimitable, and nonsubstitutable to create competitive advantage and enjoy sustainable growth (Barney, 2014). Linking talent pipeline development to the firm's performance management system is not enough to create a sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 2014). Firms

need to create another combination of resources to achieve long-term success (Barney, 2014). Combining talent pipeline with the firm's ability to create employee engagement is another way to create success (Ruck et al., 2017).

Business leaders and HR practitioners understand that employee engagement is strongly related to employee performance (Ruck et al., 2017). Engagement resembles the employee's willingness to use his or her knowledge and skills to advance the organization towards the business objectives (Ruck et al., 2017). Consequently, talent development practitioners have paid considerable attention to understanding employee engagement drivers (Bromeliy & Rau, 2016).

The purpose of talent management is to create a pipeline of high-potential employees willing to invest their knowledge, skills, and time to drive the organization towards sustainable growth (Howell, 2017). Accordingly, developing talent pipelines require talent practitioners to understand the organization variables that drive high-potential's engagement (Al Ariss et al., 2014). High-potential employees have a different perception of the organization and its needs than non-high potential employees (Sonnenberg et al., 2014). Ruck et al. (2017) aimed to identify differences between high-potential employees and non-high-potential employees. The research results indicated that no significant difference in engagement between the high-potential and non-high-potential talent groups (Howell, 2017). Both groups showed a similar level of engagement (Howell, 2017).

Talent professionals understand the influence of employee motivation on talent pipeline effectiveness (Church, 2014). Using a reward system to motivate employees has

a temporary effect on employee motivation and willingness to contribute (Stello, 2017). Gaps in hygiene factors include company policy, bad supervision, improper working conditions, salary, and insecurity demotivate employees (Stello, 2017). By contrast, motivation factors include achievement, recognition, responsibilities, and growth increase employee motivation (Stello, 2017). Talent professionals must consider the influence of motivation factors and hygiene factors in the process of developing talent pipelines (Khoreva, Vaiman, & Van Zalk, 2017).

Employee engagement drivers. Employee motivation is significant in developing an effective talent pipeline because it leads to employee engagement. Scholars defined employee engagement as the employee's willingness to invest physical, mental, and emotional efforts to accomplish the objectives of the role assigned to her or him (Barrick et al., 2014). An essential tool for fueling engagement is to create motivating work design (Barrick et al., 2014).

The key influencing factor on motivating work design is for the employees to feel the meaningfulness of their roles within the organization (Shuck, Nimon & Zigarmi, 2017). Managers create motivating work design by using the job characteristics model (Barrick et al., 2014). A well-designed job allows employees autonomy in making decisions and implementing ideas (Shuck et al., 2017). Through a motivating job design, employees utilize a variety of skills and learn new skills that develop their capabilities (Barrick et al., 2014).

A second influencing factor that fuels engagement is through aligning HR practices that influence the employee's perception of engagement (Barrick et al., 2014).

HR needs to align employee expectations with the overall organization objectives (Whiteoak & Mohamed, 2016). HR also needs to provide practices that increase employee credibility in the reward system of the firm (Whiteoak & Mohamed, 2016). The alignment of these HR practices with the engagement initiatives shifts the employee-employer relationship from an economic-based relationship to one that is open-ended (Shuck et al., 2017). Open-ended relationships are relationships which both the firm and the employee are willing to invest in one another and work towards common interests (Barrick et al., 2014).

The third component influencing engagement is feedback (Barrick et al., 2014). Employees receiving information regarding their performance can adjust and their work behavior to improve performance and eventually meet company expectations (Daniels, Gedikli, Watson, Semkina, & Vaughn, 2017). Lack of feedback creates an expectation gap between the company and the employee (Daniels et al., 2017).

Huang, Guo, and Qiu (2015) discussed the influence of the relationship between the personal values of the employee and the organization values on employee engagement. Organizational support strengthens employee engagement because it allows the employees to exploit their abilities and skills without social threat or fear of losing their job or self-esteem (Huang et al., 2015). Organizational support encourages employees to be more creative and less reserved through empowering them to implement their ideas without the risk of reprimand (Lee, Idris, & Delfabbro, 2017). Similarly, the fit between the organization and the employee allow managers to maximize the use of the empowerment resulting from organizational support (Lee, Idris, & Delfabbro, 2017).

Analysis of the academic literature indicated a significant relationship between employee engagement and talent development (Huang et al., 2015), however, a need for further study exist to understand ways business leaders can use employee engagement to develop effective talent pipelines.

Psychological contracts influence engagement. A psychological contract is the individuals' beliefs about their obligations and fulfillment of these obligations on the side, and the perception of the career and financial promises and their fulfillment from the other side (Sonnenberg et al., 2014). Because the psychological contract is the individual's perception, every individual has their own evaluation of the contract based on their perception of obligations, organization promises, and their fulfillment (Lee et al., 2015). The evaluation of the psychological contract has a significant influence on the employee's performance and productivity (Alcover, Rico, Turnley, & Bolino, 2017). Consequently, business leaders must understand the factors that influence the perception of the employee's psychological contract.

Psychological contracts are the perceptions of employees regarding their employer's promises fulfillment (Guchait, Cho, & Meurs, 2015). Psychological contracts are good sources for studying employee job attitude and work behaviors (Alcover et al., 2017). Employees formulate their psychological contract based on two elements, their perception of the demands, and their perception of the fulfillment of these demands (Lee et al., 2015). The perception of fulfillment relates to the way employees perceive fulfillment of their obligations and the firm's fulfillment of its promises (Alcover et al.,

2017). Employees perceiving their employers to fulfill their commitments become engaged and less likely to leave (Lee et al., 2015).

The psychological contract resembles the employees' understanding of their obligations towards the organization, their role, level of commitment, and results required (Guchait et al., 2015). In other words, the employees expect certain rewards in return for achievement. In Addition, the psychological contract also resembles the employees' perception regarding the employer's obligations towards the employee's compensation, fair treatment, and career planning (Guchait et al., 2015). The psychological contract also covers the employee's perceptions regarding the extent of fulfillment of his or her obligations and the fulfillment of the employer's promises (Lee et al., 2015).

Employment tenure stabilized psychological contracts perceptions, increased work engagement, and reduced turnover intentions (Lee et al., 2015). Reward employees received for their good performance in the form of compensation, training, and recognition drives low-tenure employees' performance (Lee et al., 2015). By contrast, loyalty to the employer drives high-tenured employees' performance (Lee et al., 2015). Moreover, high-tenured employees have a better personal-organization fit (P-O fit) (Guchait et al., 2015). Employees with low P-O fit leave the organization in their early years of employment (Guchait et al., 2015). Consequently, the perception of high-tenured employees of their obligations aligns with the expectation of their employers (Guchait et al., 2015).

People equity. Another factor contributing to talent pipelines is people equity (Schiemann, 2014). People equity is the combination of alignment, capability, and

engagement. Alignment is the degree to which the firm synchronizes the efforts of all the employees towards the achievement of organization goals (Mathew, 2015). Capabilities refer to the extent, which employee use their knowledge, skills, experiences, and behaviors to deliver the organization strategy (Mathew, 2015). Employee equity relates to the financial performance of the organization and the employee retention ratio (Schiemann, 2014). Consequently, people equity is a significant factor in optimizing talent pipelines (Mathew, 2015). A need for further study exists to understand ways leaders can use psychological contracts and people equity to develop effective talent pipelines.

The influence of HR team on talent pipelines. Scholars attributed failure to develop effective talent pipelines to lack of focus on people development (Krishnan & Scullion, 2017). Failure to develop organizational talent may disrupt growth and eventually lead to the decline of the business (Mathew, 2015). One-way firms address failure to develop talent pipelines is to focus on developing the expertise of their HR personnel (Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015). These HR practices have a profound influence on employee productivity (Mathew, 2015). Ulrich and Dulebohn (2015) stressed the right place to start is to develop the HR department capabilities. Business leaders improve the skills of HR staffing by enhancing coaching, performance assessment, training, and succession planning (Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015).

HR professionals oversee the human capital resource and are responsible for improving the productivity of the organization's human capital (Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015). Influencing people's performance is a challenge and requires HR professionals to

approach the challenge through forming a shared vision (Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015). HR professionals need to form strategic alliances with department heads of other functions and develop a shared vision (Schiemann, 2014). Strategic alliance with other department heads is an effective tool HR professionals use to implement talent management plans that influence people productivity and build organization talent (Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015). Alliances with other functions require HR professionals to build personal credibility and develop the capability of the HR personnel (Schiemann, 2014). A need for further study exists to understand the influence of HR personnel skills of talent pipeline.

Effective Talent Retention Practices

The previous subsections of the literature review included ideas to combine various resources including: performance management, employee engagement practices, psychological contract, people equity, and HR staff mastery to develop talent pipelines that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. In the following section of the literature review, I analyzed the relationship among retention practices, succession planning, and talent pipelines. A relationship exists between retention, succession planning, and organizational talent (Cascio, 2014).

The RBV theory refers to the firm's ability to create talent pipelines is a reason for having a competitive advantage versus other firms (Bromeliy & Rau, 2016). The definition of firm's resources is not a straightforward matter (Bromeliy & Rau, 2016). Firms need to bundle different resources to create a unique combination of employee talent and organization practices that other firms cannot replicate (Barney, 2014). Firms

must create means to protect talent pipelines from competition and changing market demand (Cascio, 2014).

Firms must protect talent pipelines from the competition by combining talent pipelines with the right retention practices (Singh & Satpathy, 2015). Firms must combine their talent pipelines with a strong succession planning system (Cascio, 2014). Firms that combine talent pipelines with performance management systems and employee engagement and motivation practices will achieve competitive advantage (Bromiley & Rau, 2016; Ruck et al., 2017; Collings, 2014; Mathews, 2015). However, if firms are not able to retain talented employees, then they will fail to sustain their competitive advantage. Therefore, another crucial bundling of resources is to bundle talent pipelines with the appropriate talent retention practices.

An essential element of talent pipeline development is employee retention (Twigg & McCullough, 2014). Organizations cannot develop and sustain a talent pipeline if talented employees leave the organization (Cascio, 2014). Employee retention is a challenging endeavor for organizations (Twigg & McCullough, 2014). The number of people voluntarily leaving their companies in the United States has increased by 63% from 2009 to 2013, which is a reason managers consider retention to be a threat to talent pipeline development (Cascio, 2014). In addition, organizations significantly reduce talent shortage by focusing on retention (Twigg & McCullough, 2014). Several strategies to enhance employee retention exist including: employer branding, improving the work environment, employee empowerment, direct managers' competence, and workforce planning.

A common strategy companies use to retain people is to develop a positive employer brand (Cascio, 2014). A brand is a name or symbol that identifies goods, services, and companies (Sengupta, Bamel, & Singh, 2015). A brand resembles the values that goods and services stand for, and the promise they make to their customers (Sengupta et al., 2015). Brands simplify choice, increase trust and promise a specific level of value (Tatoglu et al., 2016). Employer branding, on the other hand, stands for the economic, functional, psychological benefits that an employer offers the employees (Sengupta et al., 2015).

The purpose of employer branding is to establish the firm's image with current employees and future employees (Cascio, 2014). Firms seek to create an image that will attract the best talent to join and retain its current talent (Sengupta et al., 2015). The employer branding must contain a value proposition that convinces the current employee to stay in the company and the potential employee to join (Tatoglu et al., 2016). The value proposition that motivates employees and influences their attitude toward working (Sengupta et al., 2015).

Employers must design the value proposition that fulfills the emotional and personal needs of employees (Tatoglu et al., 2016). Consequently, the employer must consider needs such as competitive pay, job structure and clear objectives, working environment, and work-life balance when developing policies and practice (Cascio, 2014). Other factors that may influence retention ratios are career potential and realizing true potential, justice and fairness, firm credibility and trust between the employer and employee, and a learning and development environment (Sengupta et al., 2015).

Another effective strategy to improve retention rates is to improve work environments (Cassar & Buttigieg, 2015). A strong relationship exists between positive work environment and retention (Twigg & McCullough, 2014). The interventions aimed at improving work environment have more effect on preserving organization talent than increased recruitment (Cassar & Buttigieg, 2015). Factors that contribute to improving work environment are employee empowerment and the competence of the direct manager (Twigg & McCullough, 2014).

Staffing and adequate resources is another significant factor for improving retention rates (Louch, 2014). Talented employees assigned with a reasonable workload are more likely to stay longer with their organizations and contribute more effectively to the firm's performance (Twigg & McCullough, 2014). The first step towards improving workplace environment is to conduct an assessment to identify the gaps between the firm's staffing requirements and the current staffing structure (Twigg & McCullough, 2014).

An empowering environment improves employee commitment, engagement, and retention rates (Twigg & McCullough, 2014). Empowerment refers to the employees' perceptions of being involved in making decisions in their area of responsibility and getting the support to make those decisions (Twigg & McCullough, 2014). Empowered employees have the freedom to act based on their perception of the firm's interests (Twigg & McCullough, 2014). Empowerment is to hold employees responsible in a positive manner (Twigg & McCullough, 2014). Organizations that value their people's contribution can increase job satisfaction and eventually improve retention rates (Twigg

& McCullough, 2014). Empowerment does not only lead to improved retention rates, but also facilitates the flow of information, and increased commitment and engagement (Twigg & McCullough, 2014).

Leadership style is another significant factor that leads to improving the workplace environment and employee retention (Twigg & McCullough, 2014). The leadership and management style of the direct manager significantly enhances the employee-manager relationship (Cassar & Buttigieg, 2015). More people leave their organization because of the quality of their managers than any other reason in the organization (Twigg & McCullough, 2014). Therefore, the organization must provide managers with the appropriate training to improve their ability to lead talented people (Cassar & Buttigieg, 2015).

The third factor that contributes to improving workplace environment is staffing the organization with the adequate number and quality of people (Cassar & Buttigieg, 2015). Despite a general agreement among practitioners, that workforce planning is essential to the survival of any organizations; many firms fail to develop a proper workforce plan (Louch, 2014). Working in a team that has the right number of qualified staff enhances workload distribution (Twigg & McCullough, 2014). Consequently, talented people do not become overloaded. A low level of staffing puts pressure on talented employees and increases working hours, which creates a work-life imbalance (Twigg & McCullough, 2014).

Better work-force planning leads to better retention (Cassar & Buttigieg, 2015). Four barriers cause organizations to fail in workforce planning (Louch, 2014). The first

barrier was that managers often focused on dealing with the current year workforce challenges ignoring the future organization needs (Louch, 2014). Managers do not take the time to understand the future workforce needs and prefer to focus on current needs (Louch, 2014). Managers must balance handling current workforce challenges and planning for future workforce requirements.

The second barrier was paralysis-by-analysis (Louch, 2014). Managers are busy with developing the plan and getting accurate data for the workforce essential part of any strategy, however, implementing a good plan is often better than not implementing an excellent plan (Louch, 2014). Thus, managers must exert some effort to understand the organization's workforce needs, but they should set firm dates for implementing the plan (Louch, 2014). The third barrier is that workforce planning is forecasting for future needs (Louch, 2014). The traditional forecasting methods that many firms use generate poor results (Louch, 2014). Moreover, workforce planning involves complex factors such as turnover and retirement. Firms have no accurate methods to forecast future turnover, retirement, and staffing growth needs (Cassar & Buttigieg, 2015). Therefore, workforce plans do not project firm needs accurately (Louch, 2014). Finally, managers tend to rely on their gut and experience to forecast future workforce requirements ignoring actual data as input for their workforce plans (Louch, 2014).

Drawing from the RBV theory firms need to combine various resources to create competitive advantage (Bromeliy & Rau, 2016). In line with RBV theory, many researchers suggested that firms must combine talent pipeline development with strong employee retention practices to ensure the protection of talent from competition (Louch,

2014; Sengupta et al., 2015; Twigg & McCullough, 2014). Moreover, the right employee retention practices are the combination of several intangible firm's resources: employer branding, improved work environment, employee empowerment, direct manager competence, and workforce planning. The bundling of talent pipeline development with employee retention system is evidence of the effective use of RBV theory in developing firm's talent pipeline. The analysis of the academic literature on employee retention shows a need to study the relationship between talent pipelines and employee retention further.

A Dynamic RBV Approach for Succession Planning

According to RBV theory's concept of bundling resources, firms must secure the future talent requirements of the firm by bundling talent pipeline with a succession planning system (Bromeliy & Rau, 2016). Firms need to perceive resources from a dynamic perspective (Bromeliy & Rau, 2016). Initially, Warenafelt (1984) explained in his version of RBV theory that firm's talent pipelines were not mobile across firms. Bromeliy and Rau (2016) disagreed with Warenafelt's assumption of static resources. Firms must perceive their resources as mobile and plan for the possibility that their resources may move to competing firms (Bromeliy & Rau, 2016). Therefore, bundling the firm's talent pipeline with the appropriate succession planning practices is crucial to achieve sustainable growth and advance the firm's competitive position.

Despite the increasing attention to succession planning, organizations are still not doing enough to operationalize succession planning (Alter, 2013). The objective of succession planning is to develop strategies that aim to minimize the existing gap or

anticipate a gap in talent and provide continuity (Gilding, Gregory, & Cosson, 2015). The departure of employees holding critical positions creates chaos in many organizations (Cascio, 2014). The objective of succession planning is to develop strategies that aim to minimize the existing gap in talent and ease the transition between outgoing and incoming talented employees (Alter, 2013).

Developing talent that is valuable, rare, inimitable, and nonsubstitutable is a challenging task (Warenfelt, 1984). Firms must have a dynamic system to compensate for valuable talent departure (Bromiely & Rau, 2016). Organizations must have documented plans responding to the sudden departure of key talented employee in the organization (Cascio, 2014). When business leaders develop succession plans, they proactively think of options ahead of time so the organization can be prepared to deal with the departure of critical talent (Singh & Satpathy, 2015). Succession plans show the seriousness of planning for future talent needs (Cascio, 2014). Business leaders must identify two or more candidates to fill critical roles on an interim basis (Singh & Satpathy, 2015).

Business leaders agree that the first step in succession planning is assessing the talent needs of the organization (Denker et al., 2015). Organization leaders must identify the firm's critical roles and the skills required to fill these roles (Alter, 2013). The second significant element is the basis for selecting high potential candidates for succession planning (Denker et al., 2015). Some firms select employees for leadership roles based on their technical skills or seniority (Singh & Satpathy, 2015). A selection strategy based on technical skills only or seniority does not appropriately develop the organization's future talent (Denker et al., 2015).

Candidates possessing good technical skills do not necessarily possess leadership skills. In addition to their technical skills, future talented employees need to have emotional and social intelligence, financial knowledge, and leadership skills (Denker et al., 2015). The wrong selection of high potential candidates results in weakening the firm's future talent (Singh & Satpathy, 2015). As employees grow into senior roles, technical skills become less important (Jindal & Shaikh, 2015).

Senior managers need to focus more on soft conceptual skills, such as leadership, the ability to influence others, and strategic thinking (Jindal & Shaikh, 2015). Thus, senior managers should undergo heavy behavioral training to prepare them with high personal and moral skills, and the ability to motivate and influence direct reports (Jindal & Shaikh, 2015). Business leaders intending to develop future talent pipelines should not only focus on developing the technical skills, but also include behavioral training (Jindal & Shaikh, 2015). The balance between technical and behavioral skills prevents firms from falling into the performance trap (Jindal & Shaikh, 2015).

Firms fall into the performance trap because they do not differentiate between high performance and high potential (Newhall, 2015). High performance is current employee's work behaviors and does not indicate future potential (Newhall, 2015). High potential is the anticipated future performance of the employee (Khoreva et al., 2017). When firms do not differentiate between performance and potential, they fall into the trap of promoting an employee currently performing well but currently does not have the skills and capacity to handle future roles (Jindal & Shaikh, 2015).

Three dimensions for selecting high-potentials exist which include personality and cognitive skills, learn and self-motivated, and leadership and functional abilities (Khoreva et al., 2017). The high-potentials selection criteria form the basis for a comprehensive long-term selection of high-potential employees (Alcover et al., 2017). Some reputable organizations that have a strong record of accomplishment in talent management use these dimensions including Procter and Gamble and General Electric (Church, 2014).

Talent Development Challenges in Saudi Arabia

The concept of talent management is new to Saudi Arabia. Limited talent management research is available in the context of Saudi Arabia (Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014). Research on talent management in Saudi Arabia indicated that several barriers to talent pipeline development in Saudi Arabia exist (Cascio & Boudreau, 2016). The first is a lack of senior talent managers in Saudi Arabia to lead talent development initiatives (Nijs et al., 2014). Another barrier is that CEOs and senior HR executives in Saudi organizations have not seen the practical influence of talent development on their organizations' financial performance. Thus, they do not see the benefit of putting talent pipeline development on their top priority list (Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014).

The third barrier to talent development in Saudi Arabia is the lack of effective organizational structure in many Saudi organizations that would help high-potentials to grow into the key position (Cascio & Boudreau, 2016). Saudi organizations are not able to create promising career paths to motivate high potentials to stay (Nijs et al., 2014). Another barrier to developing talent pipelines in Saudi Arabia is a lack of willingness to

acknowledge performance variances among employees in Saudi firms (Nijs et al., 2014). Thus, organizations fail to act upon performance variances (Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014). Finally, managers in Saudi firms experience a discrepancy between their knowledge and actions concerning talent development (Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014).

A Shortage of Talent in Saudi Arabia

In the past four decades, Saudi Arabia faced a discrepancy between knowledge and skills of the local population and the talent demands of Saudi companies (Vinod et al., 2014). Saudi firms faced a shortage of talent to fill critical positions (Cascio & Boudreau, 2016). Consequently, Saudi firms searched for talent outside the country to fill the talent gap (Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014). Hiring expatriates from abroad resulted in increased unemployment among the local the population in recent years (Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014). Because of the increased unemployment rates among Saudi nationals, the Saudi governments increased legislation on localizing the workforce (Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014).

Talent managers in Saudi Arabia face challenges to meet the firms' talent needs because they can only hire Saudi national, which limits the option for developing effective talent pipeline (Vinod et al., 2014). Similar to other labor markets around the world, the Saudi market is facing increasing scarcity of talent (Dutta, 2015). Therefore, developing talent in Saudi Arabia is crucial to achieving sustainable growth (Vinod et al., 2014). A growing belief among Saudi business leaders is that Saudi firms can only achieve competitive advantage in the local markets through acquiring the best talent (Cascio & Boudreau, 2016).

Saudi Business leaders' efforts to develop local Saudi talent will result in maximizing the quality of life for Saudi nationals and reducing dependence on expatriates (Cascio & Boudreau, 2016). Saudi business leaders could develop local talent through developing the proper talent strategies, acquiring the right talent, and retaining talent (Vinod et al., 2014). Organizations that have a good talent strategy start by having a clear understanding of the organization business strategy, firm's objectives, and the talent required to achieve these goals (Dutta, 2015). Subsequently, business leaders must have a clear view of the talent gaps (Dutta, 2015). Finally, business leaders must have a time-bound plan to fill the talent gap (Dutta, 2015).

Another talent pipeline challenge facing Saudi business leaders is to acquire and retain talent. Saudi nationals preferred to work for the public sector because it offered better pay, better work environment, and better work hours and holidays (Vinod et al., 2014). Therefore, private organizations in Saudi Arabia need to capitalize on their strengths, such as international assignments, strong business models, and diverse work experience. Moreover, private organizations need to develop competitive pay structures to compete with the public sector (Vinod et al., 2014).

Since the introduction of the term war for talent by McKinsey in the 1990s talent management has become a focus for organization leaders and HR professionals (Tatli, Vassilopoulou, & Özbilgin, 2013). Thus, organizations that seek to develop talent pipelines must diversify their pipeline development strategies (Vinod et al., 2014). Managers should not only focus on developing talent, but also utilize untapped talent such as female talent (Tatli et al., 2013).

Despite the increase in female literacy and the growth of female employment, female talent is still significantly underutilized (Tatli et al., 2013). In Asian Pacific countries, such as China, Singapore, and Korea female employees constitute almost half of the workforce and contribute up to 50% of the economy, and still fewer females hold strategic leadership roles (Tatli et al., 2013). Researchers reveal that the limited presence of female participation in a strategic leadership role is because of a limited number of female mentors and female role models (Knipfer, Shaughnessy, Hentschel, & Schmid, 2017). Knipfer et al. (2017) also pointed out that the double standard in expectations from female leaders and male leaders also contributes to the presence of female professionals in leadership positions. HR professionals need to focus on tapping into such huge talent potential that can contribute significantly to reducing the talent shortage.

A close relationship between female talent management and gender quotas exists (Tatli et al., 2013). Countries that have enforced gender quotas have experienced greater success in talent management results (Knipfer et al., 2017). Female talent in Saudi Arabia is extremely underutilized (Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014). Saudi business leaders must focus on female talent to overcome the talent gap (Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014). Although the Saudi government has enforced female employment regulations and focused on improving female literacy, Saudi firms still do not effectively include female talent when implementing talent initiatives (Tatli et al., 2013). The need for further study exists to understand the talent pipeline challenges facing Saudi business leaders.

Transition

In this multiple case study, I focused on exploring strategies business leaders in small and medium enterprises in Saudi Arabia use to establish talent pipelines to create sustainable growth. Researchers revealed that talent pipelines had become a requirement for creating competitive advantage (Al Ariss et al., 2014). The first section of this study began with a background for the study; an overview of the problem and purpose statements; nature of the study; research question; conceptual framework; operational definitions; assumptions, limitations, delimitations; and significance of the study. Section 1 also included a review of the academic and professional literature related to this study topic.

Section 2 of the doctoral study included: the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instrument, data collection technique, data analysis, reliability and validity, and transition. In Section 3, I provide an introduction, presentation of the findings, application to professional practice, the implications for social change, recommendations for action and future research, reflections, and a conclusion to the study.

Section 2: The Project

Section 2 includes a description of the research process for this qualitative multiple case study. I describe the role of the researcher and provide the characteristics of the population and sample size. I also describe the data collection and data analysis processes. Finally, I provide the ethical procedures I followed during the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies business leaders in small and medium enterprises in Saudi Arabia used to establish talent pipelines to create sustainable growth. The target population consisted of HR leaders working in four small and medium enterprises located in western Saudi Arabia with successful experience in the design, implementation, and management of a talent pipeline. The population was appropriate for this study because researchers have indicated that organizations that establish talent pipelines can maintain sustainable growth (Al Ariss et al., 2014; Collings, 2014; Dutta, 2015). The implication for positive social change includes the potential to reduce the talent shortage in the Saudi labor market. Furthermore, talent development professionals may use the results of this study to strengthen the employer–employee relationships, increasing employee tenure that can improve unemployment rates among Saudi nationals and reduce dependence on expatriates.

Role of the Researcher

In a qualitative study, researchers have a role to play in every stage of the inquiry process. A researcher’s role in qualitative inquiry involves defining the conceptual

framework, designing the research plan, interviewing participants, collecting and analyzing data, and verification and reporting of finding (Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi, & Cheraghi, 2014). Additionally, the researcher is the main instrument in data collection (Twining, Heller, Nussbaum, & Tsai, 2017). The researcher's role in data collection includes gaining access to a group of study participants, developing a dialog, organizing the research process, executing the research, collecting the data, and analyzing the results. I collected data from four different Saudi companies and included different levels of HR practitioners as study participants to explore strategies that business leaders in Saudi Arabia use to develop talent pipelines.

I ensured quality work during all stages of the study, including concept definition, data collection, interview process, data analyses, and development of codes and themes. I also used multiple sources of data during the data collection process (see Yin, 2014). I conducted and recorded interviews; transcribed the audio responses; analyzed the raw data for emergent themes, independent variables, significant insights; and ensured saturation using the finalized version of this study design and interview questions (see Robinson, 2013). I focused on searching for the associations and context through interviews using open-ended questions that encouraged detailed descriptions (see Robinson, 2013).

My 25 years of professional experience in human capital management allowed me to understand the diverse talent pipeline perspectives of the participants. Working with HR professionals in Saudi Arabia has nurtured my knowledge and strengthened my

investigation skills. I used my experience to develop interview questions that helped me explore the participants' experiences and perspectives on talent pipelines.

Another part of my role involved ethical consideration, which is a requirement for social research (Mealer, Flynn, Ironside, & Spurlock, 2017). Researchers must conduct their studies by following ethical research guidelines, codes, and regulations that are published by university review boards (Mealer et al., 2017). Researchers must also conduct their study in line with the guidelines provided by The Belmont Report protocol, addressing respect for people, beneficence, and justice (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 1979). Researchers honoring the respect for people's principle acknowledge participants' autonomy; researchers must also recognize that some participants may have diminished autonomy and should then act accordingly (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 1979). Under the beneficence principle, researchers should bring no harm to participants while maximizing benefits (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 1979). Applying the justice principle requires researchers to treat participants fairly regarding potential benefits and burdens brought about by the research (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 1979).

The Belmont report also includes guidelines for researchers with regard to protecting participant rights. Researchers must acquire a signed consent form that revolves around information disclosure procedures (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 1979). As a researcher, I was responsible for complying with (a) the ethical principles of the Belmont Report protocol, (b) any requirements of Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB), and (c) any additional ethical requirements of the

participating organization. I did not commence with the research study before obtaining permission from the IRB. I explained the content of the consent form to all participants and obtained their signature on the consent form. Additionally, I treated all participants fairly, reminded participants that participation is voluntary, allowed participants to withdraw at any stage of the study, and ensured confidentiality of information.

A challenge for researchers in a qualitative study is to avoid bias (Galdas, 2017). Researchers' characteristics including the cultural, educational, and professional background may cause biases that may influence data collection, analysis, and findings of the study (Galdas, 2017; Yin, 2014). Researchers may introduce confirmation bias by favoring evidence that supports their beliefs contrary to the participants' experiences. Another challenge is researchers' ability to neutralize their personal lens. Researchers must understand that the essence of qualitative studies is to understand the phenomenon through the perceptions and experiences of participants. Thus, researchers have an ethical obligation to accurately reflect these perceptions and experiences (Yin, 2014).

To avoid bias, researchers include member checking in their research design (Galdas, 2017). Using member checking affords participants an opportunity to review the researcher's description of the participant's experiences (Varpio, Ajjawi, Monrouxe, O'Brien, & Rees, 2017). I allowed participants to review and comment on their interview transcripts. Additionally, the assumptions and limitations of this study outlined in this paper provide the reader with information to evaluate reliability and validity of this study. Consensual validation is another strategy that researchers can use to mitigate bias, which refers to seeking the support of other professionals possessing respected opinions in the

field when interpreting data and developing the research outcome (Galdas, 2017). I applied consensual validation in my research to minimize researcher bias when interpreting data and the outcome of this study. Researchers can also develop a traceable chain of evidence that readers can track and understand how the researchers arrived at the findings (Yin, 2014), which I did so that other researchers referring to my research can understand the process I followed to arrive at the findings of my study.

Finally, an interview protocol includes a guide for the researcher to conduct effective interviews. The protocol may include information such as the introduction script, explanation of the consent form and the interview question (Robinson, 2013). I used an interview protocol (see Appendix B) to assist and guide me through for the interview process and to ensure that I consistently shared the same information with all participants.

Participants

HR professionals successful in developing talent pipeline possess experience in talent management and extensive knowledge in various disciplines of HR (Krishnan & Scullion, 2017). This is important because professionals seeking to develop effective talent pipelines must also possess experience in performance management (Kaufman, 2015). Therefore, I recruited participants possessing at least 3 years of successful experience in talent and performance management, which was the eligibility criteria for this study.

I used personal contacts to gain access to participants from four companies (see Hoyland, Hollund, & Olsen, 2015; Lancaster, 2017). Additionally, developing a working

relationship with participants is central to obtaining relevant data from the study (Robinson, 2013). A strategy to develop a working relationship with participants is to acquire their trust (Houghton et al., 2013). Researchers can develop trust with participants by sharing their academic credentials, contact information, and providing a brief their professional experience (Lancaster, 2017). I sent the participants and introductory e-mail, which included a brief self-introduction and my contact information. The e-mail also included a statement that requested the candidate to participate in the study and share knowledge and experience that would benefit the study. Another strategy to develop a working relationship is constant communication with participants (Lancaster, 2017). As a tactic to keep constant communication with the participants, I followed my e-mail with a call to the participants to answer any questions and encourage their participation. During the call I confirmed that the participants had my contact information and encouraged them to contact me if they had further questions.

Participants' characteristics should align with the overarching question for an effective data collection process (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014). The overarching question of this study was: What strategies do business leaders in small and medium enterprises in Saudi Arabia use to establish talent pipelines to create sustainable growth? To address the overarching question, I selected participants who had knowledge and experience in both talent and performance management (see Kaufman, 2015).

Research Method and Design

I used a qualitative exploratory method and multiple case study design for this research. Qualitative exploratory case study research is relevant to investigations that

involve exploring how and why a social phenomenon works (Yin, 2014). Researchers also use case study research to understand social behaviors of business leaders within the context of their organizations (Isaacs, 2014).

Research Method

There is a growing interest in and acceptance of qualitative research methods in academic investigation (Anderson, Leahy, Delvalle, Sherman, & Tansey, 2014). Researchers recommended using qualitative methods to study social problems (Anderson et al., 2014). Researchers can develop a deeper understanding of social behavior by using qualitative methodology (Isaacs, 2014). Qualitative studies are more relevant to inquiries that focus on *what*, *how*, and *why* questions (Isaacs, 2014; Yin, 2014). Thus, qualitative research methods are effective when researchers need to investigate complex topics including topics related to human behavior (Isaacs, 2014). Because this study involved investigating how business leaders successfully establish talent pipelines to create sustainable growth, a qualitative research method was appropriate.

In contrast, the purpose of the quantitative research method is deductive reasoning among variables (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Researchers use the quantitative method to focus on answering *how many* and *how much* questions (Anderson et al., 2014). In addition, researchers use the quantitative method to understand social behavior using numbers or by understanding relationships of variables (Anderson et al., 2014). I did not use a quantitative method because I was not interested in investigating talent pipelines from a numeric perspective and I was not interested in understanding relationships between variables.

Researchers use mixed methods to provide exploratory and explanatory perspectives, often supporting findings with a survey (Hong et al., 2014). In addition, researchers use mixed methods when neither qualitative nor quantitative methods are sufficient to investigate the research topic and develop a deep understanding of social behavior (Hong et al., 2014). I did not use mixed methods as an option for my research method because I did not need to support my research findings with a survey, and the qualitative method was sufficient to understand how leaders develop talent pipelines.

Research Design

There were four potential research designs for this study: case study, phenomenological, narrative, and ethnographic. After an analysis of the four qualitative designs, I concluded that the appropriate selection for this study was a case study design. Case study investigation is relevant to research that focused on questions that required an understanding of social or organizational processes within a specific context (Yin, 2014). Researchers use a case study design to explore the issues at hand in a real-life context and interact with participants in their everyday work environment (Njie & Asimiran, 2014; Yin, 2014).

I selected a multiple case study design because it enables a researcher to generate a comprehensive picture to review the strategies along with insight gained from participants' experiences within their organization's context (Vohra, 2014). An advantage of a multiple case study design is that it is more robust than a single case study design because researchers can collect evidence from multiple sources (Yin, 2014). In multiple

case studies, researchers are interested in discovering whether they can replicate findings from a single case into other cases (Yin, 2014).

Other designs were considered but not chosen for various reasons. The purpose of the phenomenological design is to understand human behavior through studying the individuals' lived experiences (Quick & Hall, 2015), which was not appropriate because in this study I did not focus on giving meaning to participants' lived experiences. Narrative inquiry is a qualitative design that involves the use of people's stories to understand human behavior (Wang & Geale, 2015). I did not select the narrative inquiry design, because I was not seeking to understand social behavior from analyzing stories or series of events. Finally, an ethnographic inquiry is a qualitative design that refers to studying people's behavior in their everyday context or by participating in social interactions with people with the aim to understand human behavior and give meaning to their experiences and perceptions (Brooks & Alam, 2015). I did not select the ethnographic inquiry because this study did not involve interacting with participants in social settings to understand their behavior.

Population and Sampling

A common sampling method used in qualitative research is purposive sampling (Etikan, 2016). Purposive sampling is a strategy that allows researchers to select participants they believe to have knowledge and experience that will contribute to the study (Etikan, 2016; Yin, 2014). A purposive sampling strategy is a nonrandom sampling method that ensures that a category of participants will be present in the final sample because the researcher believes that this category of participants can contribute to

understanding the research problem (Barratt, Ferris, & Lenton, 2015). Thus, I used a purposive sampling method for my study.

In a multiple case study design, one participant for each case is sufficient to investigate that case (Yin, 2014). Other researchers have also confirmed that it is acceptable to use a number of participants $N = 1$ per case in qualitative case studies (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007). A single participant per case is sufficient for demonstration of the possibility of the phenomenon and illustration of best practice (Robinson, 2013). For this study, the desirable number of participants was eight participants.

An essential element of multiple case study research is to ensure data saturation (Watson, 2014). Researchers achieve data saturation when additional data do not enhance meaning or add further value (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016). When the researchers reach a stage where additional interviews do not generate unique concepts related to the topic, then the researcher has achieved data saturation (Rowlands, Mckenna, & Waddell, 2015). One way to ensure data saturation is to ensure that the selected participants possess the successful experience and knowledge relevant to the research topic (Watson, 2014). Investigators can achieve data saturation with as few as eight participants (Watson, 2014). I achieved data saturation by ensuring a minimum sample size of eight participants. I also selected participants with knowledge and experience relevant to the overarching question. Finally, I continued to use probing and open-ended questions until I reached a level where no additional unique concepts and themes emerge from the interviews.

Rigorous participant selection and adequate interview settings are vital to the data selection process (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). In addition, McIntosh and Morse (2015) indicated that interviewing distinguishes itself from other data gathering methods by engaging participants with the researcher to generate contextually an understanding of participants' experiences and beliefs. Therefore, researchers should carefully select the interview settings. Interviews should be conducted in an environment that would encourage participants' openness to express their experiences (Cope, 2014). I arranged for interview setting that ensured that all participants are comfortable and that no interruption occurred during the interview. I conducted all interviews in a face-to-face setting.

Ethical Research

Walden University requires researchers to use an informed consent form as a tool to protect participants' rights (see Appendix A). The objective of the qualitative research is to create social value without harming individuals (Doody & Noonan, 2016). Investigating a business phenomenon involves interaction with human participants and collecting personal information. Thus, the need to protect human subjects and confirm the confidentiality of data carries significant importance (Yin, 2014). The first step towards protecting participants' rights is to acquire their consent for voluntary participation in the research (Bromley, Mikesell, Jones, & Khodyakov, 2015).

The researcher is obligated to inform participants of their role in a research study (Elo et al., 2014). Participants must receive a written informed consent explaining the intent of the research and their voluntary role as participants (Bromley et al., 2015). An

informed consent form signed by the participant becomes an agreement to ensure that the researcher adheres to the ethical principles required the university's IRB (Cugini, 2015). The intent of an informed consent form is to ensure compliance with the three principles of the Belmont Report, which are autonomy, beneficence, and justice (Cugini, 2015). I used the consent form as a full disclosure document to provide participants with an overview of the purpose of the study, interview procedure, confidential clause, and statement of consent for participation (see Doody & Noonan, 2016).

Researchers must ensure that the content of the informed consent is free from coercion, adheres to the rule of voluntary participation, and written in the native spoken language of participants to promote understanding and protect vulnerable populations (Bromley et al., 2015). I used the standard informed consent form provided by Walden University which is free from coercion and included statements that promoted understanding of participants' rights. I also translated the informed consent form into Arabic to ensure that participants in Saudi Arabia understand their rights and agree to participate in the study voluntarily. A consent form includes information regarding participants' ethical concerns such as the risk of identity breach, confidentiality, benefits, and their right to withdraw at any time during the study (Cugini, 2015). The researcher is obligated to communicate to participants their freedom to withdraw from the study (Elo et al., 2014). The consent form I used for this study included a statement which indicated that participants' involvement in the study was voluntary and that participants could withdraw at any time before or during the interview without any penalty.

Participants should not receive any incentives as a reward for participation (Bromley et al., 2015). Voluntary participation does not require the researcher to compensate participants (Elo et al., 2014). In addition, providing no compensation will strengthen reliability and validity (Judkins-Cohn, Kielwasser-Withrow, Owen, & Ward, 2014). I explained to each participant that they would not receive any incentive for participating in this study. In addition, the informed consent form included a statement confirming that participants will not receive any incentives for their participation in the study.

The researcher is responsible for taking adequate measure to ensure the ethical protection of the participants (Elo et al., 2014). Researchers are responsible for ensuring that participants' identity stays confidential (Bromley et al., 2015). I confirmed to the participants the confidentiality of their identity and the information they share in the study. I assured them that I will not use their personal information for any other purpose except this study. To guarantee the confidentiality and privacy of participants, I replaced the names of participants and the research organizations with alphanumeric codes. I used F1, F2 codes to resemble for firm names and P1, P2 to replace participants' names. I stored the participants' names, code keys, and other research data on a password-protected flash drive. I then stored the drive and other research documents in a safe location for 5 years (see Elo et al., 2014). Walden IRB approval number is 08-09-18-0347772.

Data Collection Instruments

In a qualitative study, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument (Gorlin et al., 2016). Researchers recommend semistructured interviews in qualitative research because participants are involved in meaning making and have more room for expressing their perceptions and experiences (Wilson, 2014). As the researcher, I was the primary data collection instrument. I used semistructured interviews for collecting data. Each interview consisted of 10 open-ended interview questions covering the participant's experience and perceptions of how HR leaders develop talent pipelines (see Appendix B).

In addition to the semistructured interviews, I reviewed and analyzed company documents. Researchers must triangulate the data collected from interviews with other sources including company policies, procedures, and websites (O'Keeffe, Buytaert, Mijic, Brozović, & Sinha, 2016). Researchers found that they can understand the firm's situational context by reviewing company documents (Heslinga, Groote, & Vanclay, 2018). Company documents are a good representation of the experience, knowledge, and decision-making process of the people leading the firm (Heslinga et al., 2018). I reviewed company documents and developed a deep understanding of the firms' values, procedures, and plans with regards to talent pipelines development. In my review of company documents, I sought to develop an in-depth perspective of how leaders in those firms develop talent pipelines. The company documents included: policies, procedures, and guidelines related to talent development.

All participants received an informed consent form before the interview (see Gorlin et al., 2016). I conducted eight interviews in person. I followed a carefully

developed interview protocol to guide me through the interview (see Appendix B). The rationale for using an interview protocol is to provide an outline for the interview process and guide to explore the key points of the study (Arsel, 2017). An interview protocol should not be strict step by step instructions, but a guide for the interviewer to allow participants to contribute and share their perceptions spontaneously (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). The interview protocol should include components that guide evolution of dialogue, maintain focus on the research topic, and help researcher connect verbal and nonverbal communication (Arsel, 2017). The quality of the interview protocol influences implementation of the interview and the quality of the data collected (Kallio et al., 2016).

Researchers must allocate adequate time for the interviews to allow participants to express their thoughts and share their experience and knowledge adequately (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I allocated 30 to 45 minutes for each interview. Researchers must seek to build rapport with participants (Robinson, 2013). One tactic researchers use to build rapport is by introducing themselves to the participants and share the intent of the research (Wilson, 2014). I began each interview by introducing myself to the participant and thanking the participant for agreeing to participate in the study. I also explained the research topic and the intent of the research. I then went through the informed consent form to ensure that the participants understood their rights. Following the discussion of the informed consent form.

A good interviewing practice is to share the flow of the interview with participants at an early stage of the interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I briefly explained

the interview flow and explained that I would be recording the interview and taking notes during the interview. I then began asking the interview questions. I followed each interview question with probing questions as a tool to dig deep into each area of the discussion and encouraging the participants to share more details about their experiences. At the end of the interview questions, I asked participants if they had anything more to add. I explained that I will be conducting member checking to ensure that I reflected their thoughts and ideas accurately. I explained the member checking process. Finally, I thanked participants for their time and contribution to the study.

Reliability and validity of the data collection instrument are central to the overall quality of the study (Cope, 2014). Researchers have recommended the use of member checking to ensure reliability and validity of the data collected from the semistructured interviews (Galdas, 2017; Varpio et al., 2017). Member checking involves interpreting participants' responses to interview questions (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016; Harvey, 2015) and sharing that interpretation with participants to validate the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation of participants' responses (Birt et al., 2016; Harvey, 2015). I used member checking to enhance the reliability and validity of the data collection instrument. I interpreted participants' responses and gave these interpretations back to the participants to allow them to validate their answers.

Data Collection Technique

After receiving Walden University's IRB approval, I started the process of data collection using an interview protocol as shown in Appendix B. Researchers must conduct an in-depth analysis using a saturated data collection process, open-ended

questions, and semistructured interviews (O'Keeffe et al., 2016). The objective of interviews in qualitative inquiry is to create an understanding of the participants' perceptions and experience (Robinson, 2013). In semistructured interviews, researchers guide the flow of interviews to achieve a specific objective by developing a set of interview questions (Robinson, 2013). Researchers must use open-ended questions to ensure that participants' responses would not be limited (O'Keeffe et al., 2016).

I started the data collection process by sending participants a formal notification regarding the study. The notification included a summary of the study topic and the informed consent form for each participant to sign. I then agreed with each participant on a schedule for conducting the interview. I offered participants a choice of several convenient locations for the face-to-face interview. Researchers recommended face-to-face interviews to allow better interaction with participants (Galdas, 2017; Robinson, 2013). However, if participants are not comfortable in face-to-face interviews, then researchers can use other communication methods (Robinson, 2013).

Researchers must be able to create a rich dialogue with participants by asking questions that encourage participants to share their thoughts, experiences, and perceptions (Yin, 2014). The researcher must be able to detect the messages the participant is sending through verbal and nonverbal communication (Galdas 2017). I started the interview with an introduction that explains the participant's rights and the goals of the research. The intent of the introduction was to develop rapport, gain the trust of the participant, and determine the scope of discussion (see Robinson, 2013). I asked open-ended questions and allowed the participant to share their experience and expand thoughts (see O'Keeffe

et al., 2016). I created a rich dialogue and following each interview question with probing questions to ensure participants provide comprehensive responses to each interview question (see Yin, 2014). I observed the verbal and nonverbal signs participants communicate to develop a complete view of their perception and experience (see Yin, 2014). At the end of the interview, I confirmed to participants that their identity and the information shared in the interview will be confidential. Finally, I thanked the participants for their time and inform them that the next step will be a follow-up member checking process.

Researchers must be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of interviews before commencing the interviews (Robinson, 2013). Several advantages to using qualitative interviews versus other data collection techniques exist. One advantage of interviews is that researchers can engage the participants in direct conversations that allow a deep understanding of the participants' perceptions and experiences (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Another advantage is that researchers have the opportunity to explore the phenomenon from different human perspectives by learning from body language, emotions, motives, and opinions of the interviewee (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). A third advantage is that researchers can reconstruct events that present the social phenomenon in a real-life context (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Researchers must pay equal attention to disadvantages of interviews. Two such disadvantages exist, the first of which is that interviews are time-consuming and require a lot of effort (Young et al., 2018). I allocated appropriate time and prepare well to minimize the effect of this disadvantage (see Young et al., 2018). The second

disadvantage is the limitation of access to participants (Young et al., 2018). Researchers suffer from limited access to participants either because participants are not willing to share information, or because their organizations would not allow them to disclose sensitive data (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I expanded my search for candidate participants to a minimum of 15 candidates, which increased the chances of recruiting the minimum saturation requirement of eight participants. I also used the potential for social change as a tool to encourage more participants to participate in the study.

Pilot studies are common in qualitative research (Sharma & Palanichamy, 2018; Yin, 2014). Researchers use pilot studies to determine design structure, define the pool of participants, test the planned procedures of the study, and train the researchers prior to the full implementation of the study (Anderson et al., 2014). In this study, the design structure was clear, and the pool of participants was clearly defined. The research procedures for this study were simple and no testing or training requirements exist. Therefore, a pilot study is not necessary.

Member checking is a crucial tool for ensuring credibility and accuracy (Varpio et al., 2017). Researchers use member checking to strengthen the quality of the data collection process (Galdas, 2017). Following the process of member checking (see Harvey, 2015), I reviewed and interpreted interview transcripts and share these interpretations with participants to ensure that my interpretations resembled an accurate representation of the participants' responses. Researchers must continue the member checking with participants until no new data emerges from the process (Birt et al., 2016). I continued the member checking process until no new data emerged.

Data Organization Technique

Researchers aim to achieve two goals by organizing data, which are confidentiality and anonymity of participants (Lancaster, 2017) and to simplify access to information emerging from the data collection process (Malterud et al., 2016).

Participants' identities should not appear in the study (Harriss & Atkinson, 2015). In addition, Lancaster (2017) recommended assigning codes to participants to conceal their identity. I used alphanumeric codes to mask the identities of participants. Participants had a code that consists of the letter P and a number between 1 and 8. I also masked the identity of the firms by assigning each firm a code that included the letter F and a number between 1 and 4. Researchers must not include any information that may identify the participant (Ross, Iguchi, & Panicker, 2018). Thus, I changed the names of people, place, and any other information mentioned during the interviews that may lead to disclosing the identities of the participants.

Researchers the use of audio recording during the interviews instead of handwritten notes (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Researchers should focus on creating dialogue and meaning from the participant, rather than taking notes (Robinson, 2013). I used audio recordings to collect the participants' responses to the interview questions and then transcribe each recording. I created a separate password-protected electronic folder for each participant containing all the information related to the participant including the consent form, e-mail communications, interview audio recording, and transcripts (see Atkinson, 2015). I stored these electronic folders on a password-protected flash drive. Researcher must retain research information for a limited time and then destroy the

information to protect participants (Chassang, 2017). I stored the flash drive along with the other research documents in a safe location with limited access for 5 years (see Chassang, 2017).

Researchers recommended that research documents should be scanned and electronically stored as PDF images or similar format to ensure safekeeping of these documents (Ross et al., 2018). I electronically scanned the interview transcripts, notes, observations, and participants' keys codes and converted all paper files to PDF images. I stored the scanned images in a password-protect folder on a flash drive. Each electronic document had an identification number to ensure proper organization and easy retrieval. I used a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software program to improve data organization. NVivo is a user-friendly data analysis program that researchers use to import raw data directly from a word processing application (Zamawe, 2015). However, NVivo only enhances the data organization process, it does not replace the researcher's role in organizing and analyzing data (Sotiriadou, Brouwers, & Lee, 2014).

A researcher's journal ensures transparency of the research process and assists in data retrieval during the analysis stage (Broström et al., 2017). Researchers use journals to enhance data organization and improve the data analysis process (Cope, 2014). I used a reflective journal to record reactions to interviews, descriptions of the interview setting, thoughts and ideas during the documentary review, coding keys, and analysis decisions to ensure transparency of the research process.

Researchers must retain research information for a reasonable period and that research information must be kept in a secure location (Chassang, 2017; Ross et al.,

2018). Researchers must follow specific steps to ensure data protection (Chassang, 2017). These steps include obtaining an informed consent form, collecting only data relevant to the study, using data only for the purpose of the research, retaining data only as long as required, and storing data in a safe location. Researchers must use data protection strategies that include storing electronic data in password-protected flash drives and storing hard copies in locked locations with limited access (Ross et al., 2018). I complied with Walden's data retention requirement by retaining the research data for 5 years. When not in use, I stored the raw data in a password-protected flash drive and store the hard copies in a locked safe. After the 5 years, I will physically shred the hard copies and destroy the flash drive.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a process through which researchers organize, index, identify common themes, and recode datasets (Mayer, 2015). Graue (2015) added that data analysis is the process by which the researcher interprets the collected data and forms an understanding of the concepts discovered during the investigation. When analyzing data, the researcher deals with meaning (Graue, 2015) and must follow a consistent set of propositions to create meaning from the experiences of participants (Mayer, 2015). These propositions must explain the logic linking the various concepts found in the data (Mayer, 2015). The researcher must develop an explanation of the social phenomenon and the reasons that lead to forming participants' perceptions of the occurrences from their experiences (Yin, 2014).

Researchers recommend triangulation to analyze data in case study research (Hussein, 2009; Yin, 2014). Triangulation involves cross-examining data from different sources to achieve a more accurate and valid estimate of a specific construct (Carter et al., 2014; Yin, 2014). There are several types of triangulation methods: (a) methodical, (b) theoretical, (c) investigator, (d) analysis, and (e) data sources (Hussein, 2009). I used data sources triangulation, which as defined by Hussein (2009), involves analyzing data collected independently from various sources. I analyzed data from four different Saudi companies. I also triangulated data collected from the interviews, corporate documents, company websites, and observation notes.

The data analysis process of a qualitative study involves four steps: data collection, data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions (Yin, 2014). Researchers create an understanding of the participants' experiences through thematic analysis of the emerging themes and their possible connections (Mayer, 2015). Once I collected data through interviews, corporate documents, company websites, and observation of employees, I used data reduction, which is a process to reduce data to a manageable level without losing information, as explained by Zamawe (2015). After reducing data, I arranged and assembled information in a manner that connected the different themes (see Mayer, 2015). Finally, I used the connections that I established between the different fragments of the data and develop the conclusions as described by Mayer.

I used NVivo software for coding data. NVivo is a commonly used qualitative data analysis tool (Sotiriadou et al. 2014). Researchers use NVivo to analyze, code, sort,

store, and manage qualitative data (Jackson, Paulus, & Woolf, 2018). I used NVivo for my study because it is simple to use. Zamawe (2015) indicated that it is possible to import documents directly from word processing software to NVivo. Researchers can apply coding stripes, which make it easy for the researcher to see the codes and connect the emerging themes (Sotiriadou et al., 2014). Finally, researchers can write notes about a particular aspect of the document and link the notes to the document (Jackson et al., 2018).

A key challenge that researchers face in the data analysis stage is to correlate the key themes emerging from the data analysis with the literature review, research question, and the conceptual framework of the study (Graue, 2015). I used content analysis to correlate the key themes emerging from the research data with the literature review, research question, and the conceptual framework of the study (see Graue, 2015). Content analysis is an approach that emphasizes the role of the investigator in making meaning out of collected data (Armat, Assarroudi, Rad, Sharifi, & Heydari, 2018). Researchers use this technique to make replicable meaning from text to context (Graue, 2015).

Armat et al. (2018) indicated that there are two logical and sequential approaches for content analysis: inductive and deductive analysis. In the inductive approach, researchers approach data analysis with no framework or proposed concepts in mind (Armat et al., 2018). Consequently, the researcher creates themes as the coding process progresses (Malterud et al., 2016). In the deductive approach, the researcher develops a list of themes based on the research questions and literature review before the coding process begins (Malterud et al., 2016). Then, the researcher codes the collected data

based on these predefined themes (Malterud et al., 2016). In my research, I used a mixture of both data analysis approaches. I started with a list of themes that I extracted from the interview questions and literature review (see Armat et al., 2018). I later revised the themes as the data analysis process progressed by including the new themes that emerged from the data analysis process.

Reliability and Validity

Trustworthiness is a significant component of qualitative research; both reliability and validity significantly influence research trustworthiness Yin (2014). Researchers use four different elements to assess the trustworthiness of qualitative case study research: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Broström et al., 2017; Elo et al., 2014; Yin, 2014). These criteria are not measured and need to be established using qualitative methods. Denzin (2012) and Yin recommend triangulation and member checking as effective qualitative methods to establish reliability and validity.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the ability to replicate findings and arrive at similar conclusions when using the same process and instruments of research (Houghton et al., 2013). Reliability is analogous to dependability and transferability (Elo et al., 2014). Dependability refers to the replicability and repeatability of the investigation process (Cope, 2014). Dependability relates to whether it is possible to obtain the same results if the investigation process is repeated (Broström et al., 2017). A researcher achieves dependability when another researcher follows the same research process and arrives at the same findings (Broström et al., 2017). Therefore, researchers need to account for

continually changing elements of the investigation process (Broström et al., 2017). I provided a documented trail that shows the process I used to create the concepts and arrive at the findings of the research, as outlined by Broström et al. (2017). I also used rich or thick descriptions, as advised by Davis and Maldonado (2015). Thick description is thorough documentation of the chain of events followed in the investigation process (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). I thoroughly documented the data collection and the data analysis processes so that other researchers can trace the steps I followed in the research (see Anderson et al., 2014).

Validity

Validity refers to the credibility of the research method and findings (Elo et al., 2014), in other words, how valuable and believable the methods and findings of the research are. Validity is analogous to credibility and confirmability (Cope, 2014). Credibility refers to the establishment of credible results from the perspective of the participants (Cope, 2014). Thus, the researcher must have an accurate representation of participants' lived experiences and perceptions (Cope, 2014). Researchers need to represent data collected from the field in a way that reflects the actual lived experiences of the participants (Cope, 2014). Triangulation is an effective strategy to achieve credibility (Denzin, 2012). The combination of multiple sources such as interview transcripts, corporate documents, company websites, and observation notes adds rigor, breadth, depth, and richness to the investigation (Denzin, 2012; Yin, 2014). Therefore, triangulation reflects the depth of understanding of the phenomenon and enhances credibility (Denzin, 2012). Triangulation is a means for confirming the reliability of the

data collected during the interviews by comparing the data with other sources (Mayer, 2015). I achieved credibility through data triangulation (see Denzin, 2012). I used multiple data sources such as observation notes and company documents to triangulate data collected from interviews (see Turners et al., 2017).

Transferability refers to the feasibility to generalize findings to other settings and organizations (Cope, 2014). Researchers can achieve transferability when readers can generalize the findings to different contexts and settings (Broström et al., 2017). I achieved transferability by using cross-case analysis, as advised by Broström et al. (2017). I matched patterns from the four different cases of this multiple case study research and illustrate similarities and differences in each case, as described in Broström et al.'s research. Following Yin's (2014) advice, I also cross-checked results from the different cases to enhance transferability of the findings.

I also used member checking to enhance credibility, as advised by Houghton et al. (2013). Researchers indicated that member checking is a widely used tool for increasing credibility (Martin, McCormack, Fitzsimons, & Spirig, 2014; Quick & Hall, 2015). I used member checking to achieve credibility. Another element of validity is confirmability (Broström et al., 2017). Each researcher is unique and brings to the investigation unique perspectives. Confirmability addresses the influence of such uniqueness and ensures that results can be confirmed by another researcher regardless of their uniqueness (Cope, 2014). Researchers can demonstrate confirmability by describing how they developed their findings and conclusions, so readers are assured that the findings are bias-free and represent actual participants' experiences (Cope, 2014). To achieve confirmability, I

retained raw data, findings, and recommendations so that other researchers can confirm the appropriateness of the investigation process and the research findings (see Broström et al., 2017). I also presented my interpretation of participants' responses to interview questions to participants to confirm that these interpretations reflect their perceptions (see Houghton et al., 2013). I kept accurate and concrete observation notes (see Cope, 2014). I also audio recorded the interviews for reference (see Robinson, 2013). I developed a database of the inquiry documents and organize the mass data (see Broström et al., 2017).

Data saturation is crucial for trustworthiness (Malterud et al., 2016). Data saturation ensures that the researcher has exhausted all the time and effort to extra the ideas and perceptions so that the findings represent an accurate reflection of the participants' experiences (Malterud et al., 2016). Researchers can achieve data saturation when additional data do not enhance meaning or add further value (Harvey, 2015). One way to reach data saturation is to select participants possessing experience and knowledge relevant to the research topic (Watson, 2014). Researchers can achieve data saturation in multiple case studies by recruiting one or two participants per case (Creswell et al., 2007). Because this multiple case study consists of four cases, I achieved data saturation by ensuring a minimum sample size of 8 participants (see Creswell et al., 2007) I also carefully selected participants with successful knowledge and experience relevant to talent pipeline development. Finally, I used probing and open-ended questions reach a level where additional information did not add value to meaning and understanding (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Transition and Summary

In this qualitative multiple case study, I explored how business leaders in small and medium enterprises in Saudi Arabia develop talent pipelines. Section 2 included a justification for selecting a qualitative case study. The participants included HR managers with successful experience and knowledge from four Saudi firms. I was the primary data collection instrument using open-ended questions in semistructured interviews.

Furthermore, Section 2 included information regarding: (a) a restatement of the purpose (b) role of the researcher; (c) participants; (d) research method and design; (e) population and sampling; (f) ethical research; (g) data collection instruments, techniques, and organization; (h) data analysis; (i) reliability and validity; and (j) transition and summary.

In section 3, I present the findings and correlate these findings with the academic literature and conceptual framework. I also discuss the applicability of the findings with respect to business practice and the implications the study may have the Saudi community. Furthermore, I propose further study ideas based on the limitation of this study. I also recommend actions for businesses to help develop talent pipelines. I provide a reflection on my research experience within the study process. Finally, I close the study with the conclusions. Section 3 includes (a) the introduction (b) presentation of findings, (c) applications to professional practice, (d) implications for social change, (e) recommended actions (f) recommendations for further research, (g) reflections, and (h) conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies business leaders in small and medium enterprises in Saudi Arabia used to establish talent pipelines that create sustainable growth. I used semistructured interviews to explore the perspectives of eight participants, including CEOs, general managers, and HR senior managers with at least 3 years of successful experience in talent and performance management. I also analyzed firms' documents such as employee scorecards, job descriptions, company annual objectives, recruitment procedures, and performance assessment policies.

During the study, four main themes emerged from the data analysis that provide insight about strategies business leaders in Saudi Arabia use to establish talent pipelines: (a) hiring the right people, (b) establishing a performance management system, (c) differentiating employees based on performance, and (d) implementing employee retention strategies. Participants mentioned that hiring the right people was the first step toward successful talent pipeline development. Participants reported that the alignment of organizational goals with employees' targets resulted in creating valuable talent pipelines that influenced the firm's bottom line. Participants also reported that they achieved this alignment by establishing a clear performance management system that everyone in the firm understood. The participants also agreed that differentiating high performers from regular performers was essential to the success of talent development. Additionally, participants mentioned that they had clear retention strategies in place.

Presentation of the Findings

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to address the following overarching research question: What strategies do business leaders in small and medium enterprises in Saudi Arabia use to establish talent pipelines to create sustainable growth successfully? I used 11 open-ended questions to gain insight on the strategies Saudi managers used to develop a talent pipeline. Eight managers from four firms signed consent forms and participated in semistructured interviews. Table 2 shows the participants' titles and years of experience in performance and talent manager.

Table 2

Summary of Participants' Experience

Participant	Firm	Title	Years of experience
P1	F1	General Manager	25
P2	F1	HR Manager	16
P3	F2	Chief Executive Officer	32
P4	F2	Deputy Director of HR	27
P5	F3	Managing Partner	21
P6	F3	S. Vice President – HR	17
P7	F4	Managing Partner	18
P8	F4	Talent Management Director	13

After the face-to-face interviews, I transcribed and interpreted the participants' responses. I conducted member checking by sharing the interpretations with participants to ensure the validity of the data I collected from the interviews. In addition, I confirmed the interview data by triangulating my interpretation of the interviews with employee

scorecards, job descriptions, company annual objectives, recruitment procedures, and performance assessment policies.

I used NVivo 12.2.0 software to analyze the collected data. I used data reduction to reduce data to a manageable level without losing information. I arranged and assembled information in a manner that connected the different information fragments. Finally, I used the connections to identify the emerging themes and develop the study conclusions. I identified four major themes from the data analysis process, which I correlated to the literature review and the conceptual framework. Wernerfelt's (1984) RBV theory was a guide for my research and enhanced my understanding of the strategies business leaders in Saudi Arabia used to establish talent pipelines and create sustainable growth.

Theme 1: Hiring the Right People

The first theme that emerged from the analysis of the participants' responses was hiring the right people. P2F1, P3F2, P5F3, and P8F4 agreed that talent pipeline development started with having the right people on board. The data collected from the interviews confirmed the concepts that emerged from the literature review analysis like talent pipeline development requiring firms to have effective recruitment processes (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). P3F2 and P6F3 indicated that they could not develop organizational talent without a good recruitment process. In addition, participants stressed the significance of hiring people possessing skills that match the organization's needs.

In response to the first interview question, "What processes do you use to develop a talent pipeline that supports your organization's business needs?" P7F4 stated that it

was inaccurate to define talent development as a single process such as training. P7F4 believed that talent development is a series of HR processes that started with the recruitment process and included training, performance tracking, the reward system, and retention. Other participants shared the same idea about recruitment. P1F1 explained that F1 had strict recruitment standards and was very careful when selecting candidates. P2F1 confirmed that the general manager personally participated in the interviewing process to stress the significance of the selection process.

P5F3 discussed the significance of recruitment sources. P5F3 said, “the quality of the recruitment process depended on the quality of the sources used to acquire candidates.” In response to a probing question related to recruitment, P8F4 shared a similar perspective. P8F4 stated that in his firm, the recruitment manager focused on conducting recruitment campaigns in the top universities in Saudi Arabia. P8F4 believed that headhunting was not an effective strategy because headhunters did not always rely on good sources for acquiring candidates.

According to P3F2 and P6F3, employer brand was another element influencing recruitment. P3F2 and P6F3 stressed the significant influence of the firm’s reputation and values on the recruitment process. P6F3 explained that the challenge was to convince candidates to join their firm. P6F3 said, “candidates are smart, you cannot attract them into your company with money only.” P6F3 explained that candidates wanted to join companies that had a strong reputation for being a fair employer. P3F2 shared a similar perspective. P3F2 confirmed that developing employer branding was one strategy his firm used to attract the right people.

In addition to recruitment sources and employer branding, all participants expressed the need to match new hires' skills to the organizational needs. P4F2 stated, "We at [F2] start any recruitment campaign by identifying the skills we need from the target candidates. We ensure that the skills we identify match the business needs." P5F3 had a similar response, declaring that "it becomes easy to identify the right candidate if you know the skills you are targeting during the interview."

All four firms had documented procedures for the recruitment process that outlined the steps each company followed during recruitment. I triangulated the data gathered from the interviews with the documented recruitment procedures. F1's recruitment procedure required the general manager's involvement in all management positions interviews. F2's recruitment procedure indicated that all candidates must take a problem-solving test before moving to the interview stage. Similarly, F3's recruitment procedure required candidates to pass a technical and an HR interview. F4's recruitment procedure included an extensive job description section. P8F4 indicated that the recruitment personnel used these job descriptions to match the candidates' skills with the business need. P8F4 indicated that recruitment personnel the job descriptions to shortlist applicants.

Correlation to the literature review. The findings discussed in Theme 1 correlated with the literature on talent pipeline development. For example, participants' perspectives regarding the significance of the recruitment process aligned with Sparrow and Makram's (2015) assertion that firms must have adequate recruitment processes to identify the sources of highly skilled people, attract talented people to the organization,

and recruit these people. Guchait et al. (2015) also stated that organizations must ensure that new hires' skills fit the organizational needs. Without such a fit, employees' output will not contribute to the bottom line of the firm. Finally, Mathew (2015) stressed that firms must hire people possessing the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that increase the propensity of a firm to achieve its business strategy.

Correlation to the conceptual framework. According to the RBV theory, firms needed to have resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and nonsubstitutable to create competitive advantage (Wernerfelt, 1984). Valuable resources are those that align with a firm's business need and contribute to the bottom line (Mansour et al., 2015). Thus, recruitment managers' quest to align candidate characteristics with a firm's strategic needs is the first step toward establishing valuable resources. Suseno and Pinnington (2017) added that recruiting valuable people involved identifying the skills firms needed to achieve the organization strategy before embarking on the recruitment process.

Theme 2: Establishing a Performance Management System

During the interviews, participants explained that performance management was pivotal to talent pipeline development. Participants' perceptions revealed two main points about performance management. The first was the necessity to align employee targets with the firm's objectives. The other point was that the firm needed to assess employees' performance frequently rather than once a year.

All participants stressed the significance of deriving the employees' goals from the overall company objectives. P4F2 stated that "the only way to know if an employee is performing well is to measure his contribution to the business goals. We at [F2] cascade

the firm objectives down to all levels of employees.” P5F3 responded that “we make sure that our peoples’ goals originate from the company strategy.” P2F1 explained that every year the leadership team issues the annual targets for the firm. Then, each department head uses these annual targets to derive the department’s goals and the employees’ targets. P7F4 commented about the alignment of the company and individual goals saying, “It is a chain that starts with the firm’s 5 years plan and ends with the daily tasks of the individual employee.” P8F4 noted that firms fall into chaos if managers are not able to connect the dots between what the company wants to achieve and what the individual does daily. P3F2 stated, “It is also important that employees know how their daily work contributes to the overall business otherwise they lose commitment and perform poorly.” P4F2 supported the same idea by stating that “employees get a sense of pride as they realize that their daily tasks add value and contribute to driving business towards its objectives.”

Effective performance systems have clear and measurable key performance indicators (KPIs) that managers frequently assess (Mensah, 2015). In the interviews, participants shared similar views regarding clarity and frequency of performance assessment. P1F1 stressed that the assessment should not be a once-a-year activity. P1F1 said that “in the past, we conducted performance assessments once a year every February and after the assessment, everything is forgotten, that was wrong, it is not healthy. Now we do it differently.” P7F4’s perspective was similar: “we conduct regular performance reviews. Depending on the employee level, we assess some employees monthly and others quarterly. Frequent assessment keeps us always informed about employee

performance.” P2F1 explained, “We have measurable KPIs that each employee knows well. Our employees monitor their own performance.” According to P5F3, the firm invested in a KPI software that measures employee KPIs: “We know the score of any KPI on a daily basis.” P6F3 said, “We conduct quarterly performance assessments in our firm. Managers use the output of performance assessments to correct performance problems at an early stage. We can minimize damage at an early stage.” P8F4 indicated that managers use performance assessment results to determine employees’ training needs.

The analysis of company documents confirmed the participants’ perspectives on the significance of establishing a performance management system. I analyzed a sample of individual employee scorecards and company annual objectives. I observed that F1’s cascaded company annual objectives to the individual employee work plans. For example, F1’s 2017 objective was to increase product distribution. Similarly, individual employee scorecard showed that each sales representative had to introduce two new products to their customers every quarter. The observation aligned with P2F1’s claim that managers derived employee targets from the annual objectives.

I also analyzed the performance assessment policies for two firms. The document analysis aligned with the participants’ perspectives on the concept of a regular review of performance. For example, F3’s policy required sales managers to review the performance of their sales representatives every quarter using an automated business intelligence software. F4’s performance policy requires monthly review for employees to ensure that employees close monthly projects timely. In addition, I analyzed a sample of

employee work plans from F1. The work plans included a clear description of the employees' daily tasks and the required monthly targets. The analysis of the work plans sample supported P1F1's perspective on regular performance review.

Correlation to the literature review. Participants' feedback for this theme correlated with the literature review. For instance Ayers (2015) mentioned that firms need to create a line of sight for their employees by linking individual performance with organizational results. Ayers argued that the right skills and a clear line of sight are sources for employee motivation because they know the expectations of their organization. Parke et al. (2018) also stated that employees need to see a clear connection between the activities they perform and the organizational goals. De Vos and Cambre (2017) explained that creating alignment between the firm goals and the employees' tasks is necessary for enhancing employee performance and increasing employees' contribution to the organization goals. Alignment is the degree to which the firm synchronizes the efforts of all the employees towards the achievement of organization goals (Mathew, 2015). Align employees' capability, skills, and knowledge with the firm's business needs is not enough to achieve organizational goals; firms need to frequently assess the impact of these capabilities and skills on the bottom (Lee et al., 2015). Additionally, a culture of assessment entails regular performance assessment and a frequent measure of KPIs (Kirovska & Qoku, 2014; Sonnenberg et al., 2014). Firms must act on assessment output by providing feedback to employees on their performance and developing corrective actions to improve performance (Collings, 2014).

Correlation to the conceptual framework. A fundamental concept of RBV theory is that organization resources must be dedicated to creating value for the organization (Davis, 2017). Participants' perspectives regarding the influence of effective performance management on talent development correlate with the RBV theory. Bromiley and Rau (2016) indicated that firms need to bundle various tangible and intangible resources to grow organizational talent. Combining the right people with an effective performance system would increase firms' ability to develop talent pipelines (Bromiley & Rau, 2016). Researchers supported the RBV concept of bundling resources, suggesting that firms that rely on talented people without introducing systems such as performance management fail to sustain growth (Sparrow & Makram, 2015).

Theme 3: Differentiating Employees Based on Performance

The third theme that emerged from the interviews complemented the previous two themes. According to participants, employee differentiation strengthened talent pipelines. Participants believed that the set of the three themes combined, hiring the right people, the existence of performance management, and employee differentiation was the basis for successful talent pipeline development.

Participants believed that without differentiating elite performer from the rest of employees, firms could not sustain a successful talent pipeline. Participants discussed employee differentiation from two perspectives: reward and development of high performer. P1F1 stated that his firm has a clear process to identify star performers. P1F1 added, "We have a special training program for star performers. We also focus on star performers' financial prosperity and pay them handsomely." P8F4 said that they give

great attention to rewarding top performers. F4 announces every year a list of top performers in every department. People on the list receive a special bonus and a one-week paid family vacation. P8F4 declared, “Now, everyone competes to get on that list, even their family members ask about the list.”

P4F2 also commented that firms must differentiate and reward high performing employees. P4F2 explained his perspective on developing high performers and said, “Management must have a clear time-bound development plan for high performing employees.” P4F2 added, “Managers must proactively coach these employees to ensure their success.” P5F3 stated that the firm has a documented process for planning the careers of their top performers, which included broadening assignments, frequent assessment, feedback sessions, and regular rotation on the job. Similarly, P3F2 said, “Star performers motivation increases with growing responsibility and transparent view of their future career plans.” P3F2 stressed that each high performing employee must have a career plan. P6F3 mentioned that it is important for star performers to have a mentor to guide them through their growth journey.

F4’s documented performance policy aligned with the data gathered from the interviews. The performance policy included a section for reward and recognition. The reward section included guidelines for rewarding employees based on the employee year-end results. The reward schemes included bonuses, paid vacations, and generous salary increases. I was permitted by F2 to read a sample of employee career plans, but P3F2, the CEO of the firm, apologized for not permitting me to make copies of the documents. The notes I wrote describing the career plans indicated that some F2 employees had 3 years’

career plans, which included future assignments and projects designed to prepare employees for future leadership positions.

Correlation to the literature review. Participants' feedback on the significance of employee differentiation to talent pipeline development correlated with the literature review. Khan and Jacob (2015) confirmed that successful conglomerates differentiated pay and development of high-potential employees to develop a talent pipeline. Rana and Goel (2015) stated that an important step in talent development consisted of processes to identify the high potential employees. Sparrow and Makram (2015) indicated that firms must focus on the elite group of people, also known as high potentials. Sparrow and Makram added, firms must differentiate high-potentials from other employees in pay and benefits.

Many firms realize that high-potential people are difficult to find. As a result, firm managers segment employees based on performance and potential (Tatouglu et al., 2016). Firms having effective talent development programs place a high value on employees with strong performance and promising potential and often lavishly reward and retain such employees (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Talent pipeline development must include a structured action-learning process for high-potential employees (Rana & Goel, 2015). The firm assigned coaches to employees with high potential to support their broadening assignment responsibilities (Tatouglu et al., 2016). Sonnenberg et al. (2014) also stated that part of the organization's role is to fulfill the employees' career aspirations.

Correlation to the conceptual framework. Employee differentiation correlates with the RBV theory in the sense that firms must focus on the resources that generate

value to the organization. Firm's reward system, development program, and cultural aspects can influence the value generated by its resources (Barney, 2014). Successful application of RBV theory requires organizations to have the right reward, training, coaching, and career planning systems that allows the firm to make effective use of people's capabilities (Tatoglu et al., 2016). Organizations must consider differentiating high-potential employees with a special reward system, robust training and development plan, and a strong career planning process (Piening & Salge, 2015).

Theme 4: Implementing Employee Retention Strategies.

Retention is the process that firms use to keep employees in the organization. Employee retention is a fundamental process of talent development (Schiemann, 2014). Participants agreed that retention is a process that protects organization talent. According to participants, the firm would not succeed in talent development without implementing retention strategies. Participants' responses regarding retention elements included: fulfillment of promises, job characteristics, and work environment. P5F3 stated that keeping promises to employees was an important factor for retaining talent. P5F3 explained, "Firms must fulfill their obligations towards employees otherwise employees will leave the firm. Managers promise employees financial and career growth. These promises must be fulfilled." P1F1 also stated, "Firms cannot retain employees if they do not keep their promises."

According to P2F1's response, one reason that leads to non-fulfillment of obligations towards employees is clarity of promises. P2F1 stated, "Financial and career promises to employees must be clear to avoid misunderstanding." P6F3 also stressed the

idea of clarifying financial and career promises to employees. P6F3 added that firms must pay extra attention to clarifying their promises to employees. P6F3 commented that “in many instances, firms lose talent because of misunderstood promises.” P3F2 stated that “in our company, we include our career promises in the career plan. For example, the career plan would include a statement like, upon successful achievement of targets the employee will be promoted to the next pay grade.”

P7F4 shared a different perspective regarding clarity. P7F4 stressed the significance of clear goals to maintain high retention. P7F4 stated, “Unclear goals can be a major problem. In many instances, the employees believe they are performing well, while the manager is not satisfied with the employees’ performance.” P7F4 explained, “Employee work hard to achieve the wrong targets because they perceived the targets differently than the manager. Such misalignment in goals perceptions leads to employee turnover.” P1F1’s response aligned with P7F4’s statement regarding goals clarity. According to P1F1, his firm experienced high turnover ratios in the past because some people did not understand their goals and work hard to achieve the wrong goals. As a result, managers did not reward these employees leading to the departure of some good employees.

According to participants, another factor influencing employee retention was job characteristics. Participant responses indicated that employees stayed longer in jobs that offered employees autonomy to make decisions, use their skills, and have an adequate workload. P8F4 stated that “We trust our people and show that trust by giving employees room to make decisions in their area on responsibility.” P5F3 also mentioned, “We

engage our people by allowing them to participate in the decision-making process.” P6F3 stated, “Employees enjoy working in jobs that utilize their strengths, we try to put the right people in the right place based on people’s strengths.”

A third perspective that emerged from participants’ responses regarding employee retention was the work environment. Participants believed that factors such as workload and supervisor leadership style influenced work environment. P4F2 asked, “Have you ever come across the statement; people leave their manager, not their company? That is a true statement. An employee might believe that a firm is good, but still, leave because of his relationship with his supervisor.” P1F1 mentioned that they had intensive management skills training and had an open-door policy to strengthen employee-supervisor trust. P2F1 also confirmed that supervisors with strong people management skills had lower turnover rates than others

The second element that participants believed to improve the work environment and increase retention was an adequate workload. P4F2 mentioned that the workload in his firm was balanced. P4F2 added, “We have adequate staffing to ensure that employees enjoy a work-family balance. We try not to keep employees in the office after hours.” P7F4 mentioned that his firm lost an accountant because of the long working hours. P7F4 explained, “Most of our departing accountants mentioned long working hours as the reason for their decision to leave. We decided to hire more accountants so that we can retain talent in our accounting department.” P2F1 faced a similar problem. P2F1 stated, “We decided to introduce more break-time for our manufacturing people because we noticed a high turnover in that area of our business.”

The participants' perspectives of effective retention strategies included the fulfillment of promises, autonomous job characteristics, and a motivating work environment. The documents that participating firms permitted me to copy and review did not include information that reinforced participants' perspectives. Thus, I was not able to triangulate the data collected from the interviews with company documents. I ensured trustworthiness by following Birt et al.'s (2016) recommendation that researchers continue asking probing questions and conduct thorough member checking with participants until no new data emerges from the process. During the interviews, I asked probing questions regarding retention strategies until no new data emerged from the interviews. I also conducted thorough member checking with each participant.

Correlation to the literature review. Participants' feedback on employee retention correlated with the literature review analysis I conducted. Business leaders understood that talent pipeline development is a set of processes that involve systemic identification, attraction, development, and retention of talented employees (Collings, 2014). Business leaders consider turnover to be a threat to talent pipeline development (Schiemann, 2014). Retention strategies protect the organization talent from competition (Twigg & McCullough, 2014).

Participant's perceptions regarding financial and career growth promise fulfillment confirmed the concept of psychological contract found in the literature review (Sonnenberg et al., 2014). A psychological contract is the individuals' belief about their obligations and fulfillment of these obligations on one side and the perception of the career and financial promises and their fulfillment from the other side (Sonnenberg et al.,

2014). Guchait et al. (2015) indicated that psychological contracts improved retention rates, stabilized employment tenure, and increased work engagement. Participant's observations also correlate with Sengupta et al., 2015 research on employer branding. Employer branding stands for the economic, functional, psychological benefits that an employer offers the employees (Sengupta et al., 2015). Employers must design the value proposition that fulfills the emotional and personal needs of employees (Tatoglu et al., 2016).

Firms must protect talent pipelines from the competition by improving work environments (Cascio, 2014). Improved work environments influenced employee retention rates (Cassar & Buttigieg, 2015). Interventions aimed at improving the work environment have more effect on preserving organization talent than increased recruitment (Cassar & Buttigieg, 2015). Researchers showed factors that contribute to improving work environment are employee empowerment, supervisor leadership style, and employee workload (Twigg & McCullough, 2014).

A strong relationship exists between a positive work environment and retention (Twigg & McCullough, 2014). Factors that contribute to improving work environment are employee empowerment and the competence of the direct manager (Twigg & McCullough, 2014). An empowering environment improves employee commitment, engagement, and retention rates (Twigg & McCullough, 2014). Organizations that value their people's contribution can increase job satisfaction and eventually improve retention rates (Twigg & McCullough, 2014). Empowered employees stay on the job longer

because they enjoy utilizing their skills to contribute to the organization goals (Huang et al., 2015).

In addition to empowerment, supervisor leadership style had a significant influence on the work environment. Leadership style improves the workplace environment and employee retention (Twigg & McCullough, 2014). The leadership and management style of the direct manager significantly enhances the employee-manager relationship (Cassar & Buttigieg, 2015). More people leave their organization because of the quality of their managers than any other reason in the organization (Twigg & McCullough, 2014). Thus, an organization must provide managers with the appropriate training to improve their ability to lead talented people (Cassar & Buttigieg, 2015).

Participants mentioned a third element that influenced work environment was employee workload. Talented employees assigned with a reasonable workload are more likely to stay longer with their organizations and contribute more effectively to the firm's performance (Louch, 2014). Despite a general agreement among practitioners, that assigning appropriate workload is essential to employee retention; many firms fail to manage employee workload (Louch, 2014). Working in a team that has the right number of qualified employees enhances workload distribution (Twigg & McCullough, 2014). Consequently, talented people do not become overloaded. A low level of staffing puts pressure on talented employees and increases working hours, which creates a work-life imbalance (Twigg & McCullough, 2014).

Correlation to the conceptual framework. The employee retention theme correlated with the conceptual framework. Firms would not be able to develop talent

without combining the development process with other supporting processes (Bromiley & Rau, 2016). Protect organization talent with employee retention strategies is an effective application of the RBV theory (Twigg & McCullough, 2014). In his introduction of the RBV theory, Wernerfelt's (1984) definition of resources referred to employees only. Bromiley and Rau expanded the Wernerfelt's definition of resources to include all firm's tangible and intangible resources people, practices, system, processes, management decisions, reputation, and organization culture (Dutta, 2015). Firms need to combine talent pipeline development with employee retention to protect organization talent (Bromeliy & Rau, 2016). Thus, participant's perspectives on the influence of employee retention on talent development is a form of resources bundling (see Mathew, 2015; Schiemann, 2014).

Applications to Professional Practice

The findings of this study apply to professional practice and may prove valuable to business leaders in Saudi Arabia. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies business leaders in small and medium enterprises in Saudi Arabia used to establish talent pipelines to create sustainable growth. The findings of this study may provide value to Saudi business leaders attempting to develop talent pipelines. Business leaders can develop organizational talent by (a) hiring the right people, (b) establishing a performance management system, (c) differentiating employees based on performance, and (d) implementing employee retention strategies. Figure 1 shows the elements influencing talent pipeline development.

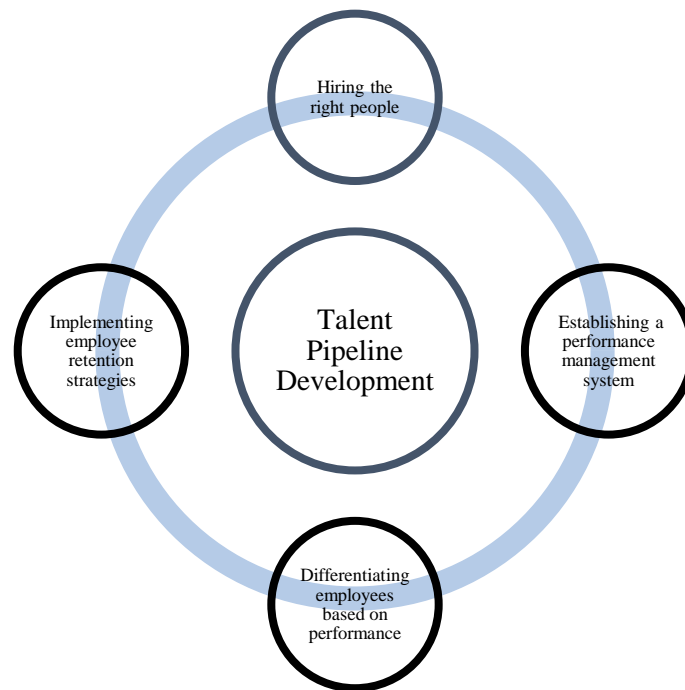


Figure 1. Factors influencing talent pipeline development.

According to the findings of this study, business leaders attempting to develop a talent pipeline should begin with hiring the right people. Firms must have adequate recruitment processes to hire the right people into the organization (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). I found that recruitment managers must first identify the right sources for acquiring candidates (see Sparrow & Makram, 2015). The firm must establish an attractive employer brand to attract the right people into the organization (Sengupta et al., 2015). Finally, recruitment managers must identify the candidates possessing adequate skills to ensure that the new hires capabilities match the firm's business needs (Collings, 2014).

The second step in applying the findings of this study is to develop an effective performance management system. Three elements that influence the effectiveness of

performance management exist: (a) aligning employee goals with organizational objective, (b) frequent assessment of employee performance, and (c) clarity of goals (Mensah, 2015). Managers must align employee goals with the organizational target to ensure that people's daily tasks contribute to the firm's goals (Ayers, 2015). In addition, managers should frequently assess the performance of employees and ensure timely feedback and correct the performance deviations (Bititci et al., 2015). HR managers must assign employee clear goals (Adriansyah & Affif, 2015). Clarity of goals directly influences employee performance (Kirovska & Qoku, 2014). Thus, managers must ensure clarity of goals to improve employee performance (Kirovska & Qoku, 2014).

Employee differentiation is the third theme that emerged from this study.

Professional application of this theme includes differentiating star performers' pay and career aspirations. High performers make a significant contribution to business results (Collings, 2014). Managers must seek high performer's engagement (Al Ariss et al., 2014). Professional application of employee differentiation involves differentiating high performers' pay and career aspirations compared to other employees (Kim et al., 2014). In addition, firms must establish a proactive coaching program for high performers.

Finally, the findings reinforce the importance of protecting organizational talent. According to this study, firms can protect organizational talent by applying employee retention strategies. Retention strategies protect organizational talent from the competition (Singh & Satpathy, 2015). I found that employee retention strategies include: fulfilling career and financial promises made to employees, engaging job characteristics, and improving the work environment. Managers interested in improving employee

retention must ensure that they fulfill career and financial promises made to employees (Sonnenberg et al., 2014). Fulfillment of career and financial has a significant influence not only on employee retention, but also on employees' performance and productivity (Alcover et al., 2017). Employers' fulfillment of employees' promises results in a reduction of turnover (Lee et al., 2015).

Saudi business leaders can further apply the findings of this study to improve retention by improving job characteristics. Job characteristics significantly influence employee retention (Nijs et al., 2014). Through a motivating job design, employees utilize a variety of skills and learn new skills that develop their capabilities (Barrick et al., 2014). Thus, employees enjoy performing their jobs, become more engaged, and stay longer in the company (Barrick et al., 2014). Finally, managers can apply the findings of this study to improve the work environment and positively influence employee retention.

This study reveals two strategies to improve work environment: adequate workload and supervisor leadership style. Inadequate workload significantly influences an employee's decision to leave the organization (Louch, 2014). Working in a team that has the right number of qualified staff enhances workload distribution and improves retention (Twigg & McCullough, 2014). Similarly, the supervisors' leadership style has a significant influence on the work environment (Cassar & Buttigieg, 2015). More people leave their organization because of a managers' leadership than any other reason in the organization (Twigg & McCullough, 2014). Business leaders attempting to improve work environment must have a training program to improve the leadership style of their managers and supervisors (Lundkvist & Gustavsson, 2017).

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change for this study include the potential to reduce unemployment among Saudi nationals. The Saudi market is facing a shortage of talent among Saudi nationals (Vinod et al., 2014). Consequently, Saudi firms searched for talent outside the country to fill the talent gap (Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014). Saudi firms' dependence on expatriate talent resulted in increased unemployment among the local the population (Cascio & Boudreau, 2016). The findings of this study may assist small and medium firms in Saudi Arabia address the talent shortages that exist among Saudi nationals and hire more people from the local community. In addition, the findings of this study have the potential to improve the employees' family income and standard of living as a result of the employees' career growth.

The findings of this study could contribute to the Saudi community by improving the profitability of small and medium enterprises (SME) in Saudi Arabia. According to a report issued by the Saudi labor office (2018), 34% of Saudi nationals work for SMEs. The Saudi labor office is expecting SMEs to mainly target Saudi youth. In addition, SMEs contribute 20% of the Saudi economy. SMEs could use the strategies found in this study to grow the youth skills and capabilities and contribute more to the Saudi community and economy.

Recommendations for Action

Although I explored talent development strategies for small and medium firms in Saudi Arabia in this study, the findings may benefit the small and medium firms in general. I found strategies business leaders can use to develop talent pipelines. My

recommendations for action to business leaders of small and medium firms interested in developing talent pipelines are as follows:

1. Business leaders must establish effective recruitment processes to hire the right people into their firms. Business leaders need to identify the right sources to acquire candidates and build a strong employer brand to attract these candidates into their firms.
2. HR managers must establish robust performance systems to evaluate employee performance. HR managers must lead the efforts to align the company goals with employee targets and provide a clear line of sight for employees to associate their daily tasks with the firm objectives. HR managers must ensure frequent employee performance assessment.
3. Business leaders must have the tools to differentiate high potential employees from others. HR managers must establish coaching programs to help high-performers grow their skills and capabilities. Managers must also differentiate the pay and career aspirations of high performers from the rest of the employees.
4. Business leaders must protect firm talent by following employee retention strategies. Employee retention strategies include: fulfilling the career and financial promises to employees, designing autonomous jobs, assigning adequate workload, and developing supervisors' leadership style.

I plan to share the findings of my research with small and medium enterprises in Saudi Arabia. I will develop a summary presentation of the study findings and the

recommendation. I will then share this summary with small and medium firms in Saudi Arabia starting with the firms that participated in the study. I will also share the summary and recommendations with the Saudi Chamber of Commerce in the Western Region. This study could make an important contribution to the available literature on talent development in Saudi Arabia. In addition, I will publish the study in ProQuest to provide access to business leaders.

Recommendations for Further Research

The limitations of this study were having a small sample size of senior HR executives participating in the study and limited access to business leaders with talent and performance management experience. These limitations could influence the generalizability of the results (Yin, 2014). Future researchers could conduct studies to explore talent pipeline development further and address those limitations. While the qualitative method was an appropriate method for this study, the quantitative method could address the limitations associated with this research. The quantitative method allows the inclusion of a larger participant size and allows more access to business leaders because of its dependence on surveys rather than interviews.

I found four strategies business leaders used to develop talent pipelines. Two of the strategies emerging from this study were complex and need further study: performance management systems and employee retention. The study revealed that the elements of an effective performance management system are: aligning employee goals with firm objectives, frequent assessment, and clarity of objectives. Similarly, the research findings revealed that the elements of the employee retention strategy are:

fulfilling promises, job characteristics, and work environment. Future researchers should explore these two strategies in more detail and seek to discover other elements that influence performance management and employee retention.

Reflections

The doctoral study was a transformative experience for me. The most significant insight I gained was that we need to be humble because the knowledge we possess is limited compared to the knowledge our world and society have to offer. Another transformative insight I gained was that achievement and success come from one's ability to contribute to society and drive positive change. I hope that through the findings of this study, I can contribute to the efforts of business leaders toward developing employees' talent and growing people to their fullest potentials.

This study made me appreciate the challenges of writing. I now understand that writing is not only a communication tool, but an intellectual exercise of putting one's perceptions, ideas, and thoughts on paper. The literature review and the data collection exercises were also rewarding. With each academic literature and participant's interview, I expanded my knowledge, understanding, and perception of talent pipeline development. Bias was a challenging element to overcome during the study. To limit the influence of preconceived ideas and perspectives that I had as I started the research process, I selected participants I have never met before and used member checking. The findings from this study exposed me to strategies and practices employable in my career.

Conclusion

Saudi business leaders understand that the primary source of competitive advantage is human capital talent. Despite the significant attention to developing talent pipelines, Saudi businesses still suffer from a shortage of talented people. The business problem that promoted this study was that business leaders in Saudi Arabia failed to establish talent pipelines to create sustainable growth. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies business leaders in small and medium enterprises in Saudi Arabia used to establish talent pipelines to create sustainable growth. The research process addressing the business problem included: a rigorous review of academic literature, semistructured interviews of participants possessing talent and performance management successful experience, and review of company records were essential. In addition to addressing the business problem, the study may also have positive social implications including improving unemployment rates among Saudi nationals, improving the skills and capabilities of Saudi workers, and improving Saudi families' income and standard of living.

I found four main strategies business leaders in Saudi Arabia used to develop talent pipelines. According to the findings of this study, business leaders in Saudi Arabia agreed that hiring the right people is one essential strategy for developing a talent pipeline. An effective recruitment process to hire the right people must consider identifying appropriate sources for hiring the right people into the company. HR leaders also believed that developing an attractive employer brand is an important element of a

recruiting process. Finally, an effective recruiting process requires business leaders to identify the right skills that match their business need.

Another strategy essential for talent development was the establishment of a robust performance management system. According to the findings of this study, firms must align employee goals with firms' objectives to ensure that employees' performance generates value and drive the organizations toward their visions. Managers participating in this study believed that employees could only contribute to the firm's business objectives if they have a clear line of sight tying their daily tasks with the firm's objectives. Moreover, I found that successful performance systems include steps that ensure frequent assessment and clarity of objectives. The third emergent strategy was the differentiation of employees based on performance. Firms applying this strategy must differentiate high performing employees' financial and career planning from other employees. In addition, firms must establish a proactive coaching program to ensure the success of the high performer.

A final strategy emerging from this study entails protecting organization talent. Business leaders believed that talent like any other firm resource needs protection from completion. Therefore, employee retention strategies are essential to talent development. According to this study, retention strategy includes fulfillment of financial and career promises made to employees, engaging job characteristics, adequate workload, and motivating supervisor leadership style.

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Appendix A: Open-ended Interview Questions

1. What processes do you use to develop a talent pipeline that supports your organization's business needs?
2. How do you determine your organization's future talent requirements?
3. How do you select candidates for your talent pipeline?
4. How do you develop a talent pipeline that contributes to developing a constant flow of leaders for the organization?
5. How do you align your talent pipeline development process with your organization goals?
6. How do you develop the technical and soft skills of your talent pipeline candidates?
7. What recruitment processes do you use to attract talent that can contribute to establishing your talent pipeline?
8. What processes do you use to reduce the loss of organization talent?
9. How do you maintain the talent pipeline to ensure that your organization's talent meets your future business needs?
10. How do you assess the effectiveness of your organization's talent pipeline?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Guiding Steps	Interview Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin with an introduction of myself to the participant • Thank the participant for contributing to this study. • Explain the consent for to ensure that the participant understands her/his rights • Introduce the research topic • Explain the interview flow • Begin asking the interview questions. • Probing question: How often do you use this process? 	<p>What processes do you use to develop a talent pipeline that supports your organization's business needs?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for non-verbal communication signals and connect with verbal communication • Follow all ethics procedure • Probing question: do you use specific tools for determining the future needs? 	<p>How do you determine your organization's future talent requirements?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probing question: How do you recruitment sources influence the quality of you selection results? 	<p>How do you select candidates for your talent pipeline?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probing question: how you do compensate for unplanned departure of employees holding critical positions? 	<p>How do you develop a talent pipeline that contributes to developing a constant flow of leaders for the organization?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probing questions: how do you measure the contribution of you employees? • Probing question: how does the quality of your work environment influence the performance of your employees 	<p>How do you align your talent pipeline development process with your organization goals?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probing questions: how do you develop the leadership skills of your employees 	<p>How do you develop the technical and soft skills of your talent pipeline candidates?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probing questions: Do you have a program that proactively develops your employer brand? 	<p>What recruitment processes do you use to attract talent that can contribute to establishing your talent pipeline?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probing questions: What programs do you have in place to reduce employee turnover? • What are the factors influencing employee turnover in your firm? 	<p>What processes do you use to reduce the loss of organization talent?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probing questions: how does your pay and benefits system influence retention? 	<p>How do you maintain the talent pipeline to ensure that your organization's talent meets your future business needs?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probing questions: Can you link the performance of your employees to the firm's profit • At the end of the discussion ask the participant if she/he has any questions • Explain the process of member checking • Confirm that accuracy of the contact information of the participant • thank the participant for her/his time 	<p>How do you assess the effectiveness of your organization's talent pipeline?</p>
End of Protocol	