

The Impact Of Succession Planning On Employee Retention And Job Satisfaction- The Mediating Effect Of Leadership Support

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Abstract

Healthcare organizations face their most critical challenge when their personnel who possess essential expertise depart from their positions. The particular problem of employee retention and job satisfaction stems from two main factors which affect developing nations such as Pakistan through their ineffective talent management procedures and insufficient professional development pathways. Succession planning has developed into an effective solution for organizations that need to address their upcoming leadership requirements. The study wants to find out if workforce stability and employee performance improvement through succession planning exists while studying how leadership determines its success. The current research project examines employee retention and job satisfaction for succession planning while testing leadership support as the main variable that affects those two outcomes. The research team used quantitative research methods to gather information from 100 employees who work as managers at both middle and lower levels across clinical and administrative functions. Researchers utilized a structured questionnaire containing a five-point Likert scale to gather participant feedback. The research used SPSS (Version 29) to conduct statistical analysis, reliability testing through Cronbach's Alpha, correlation and regression analysis, and mediation testing through Hayes PROCESS Macro (Model 4). The research findings demonstrate that organizations which implement succession planning achieve positive results through increased employee retention and enhanced job satisfaction. The research demonstrates that succession planning practices lead to better leadership support, resulting in higher employee retention rates and improved job satisfaction. Mediation analysis demonstrates that leadership support serves as a partial mediator because supportive leadership enhances succession planning effectiveness.

Keywords: Succession Planning, Employee retention, Job satisfaction, Leadership Support, Healthcare Sector, Strategic HR practices

Introduction**Background:**

The healthcare sector functions as an essential component which maintains vital health services throughout developing nations that experience major limitations in both financial resources and workforce capacity. The situation becomes more challenging because there is an increasing requirement for high-quality healthcare services while organizations have restricted access to both financial resources and staffing capabilities. Healthcare organizations encounter their most critical challenge when they need to keep trained workers while ensuring their employees stay satisfied with their jobs. The combination of high employee turnover and insufficient career advancement paths plus ineffective talent management systems creates disruptions that harm organizational efficiency while endangering service delivery.

Organizations adopt strategic human resource management practices which support their long-term sustainability goals to overcome existing challenges. Organizations practice succession planning because it serves as an effective method for developing their internal workforce and preparing future leadership positions. The succession planning process provides organizations with a systematic method to discover their top-performing workers and evaluate their abilities while developing the competencies necessary for executive positions. The process establishes a connection between personal career growth and organizational objectives while creating permanent staff solutions that decrease the need for outside recruitment (Rothwell, 2016; Armstrong, 2020).

An effective succession planning system creates a skilled workforce which strengthens organizational performance through its implementation. The system boosts employee connection to the company because it provides them with distinct career development routes together with opportunities to advance in their professions. Recent studies suggest that when employees perceive fair and transparent development opportunities, they are more likely to remain with the organization and exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction (Ali & Mehreen, 2019; Khan et al., 2021).

The process of succession planning needs to be implemented properly because it holds significant value yet developing countries show inconsistent progress with this practice. Healthcare organizations fail to establish proper leadership development programs which leads to weak talent pipelines and insufficient leadership transition training. The operational processes of the organization break down because competent leaders are missing which results in decreased healthcare service quality. Employees lack access to structured development programs which hinders their ability to develop

leadership skills and creates organizational risks during time of change (Nawaz & Pangil, 2023; Yaseen, 2018).

Previous research has shown that effective succession planning establishes strong employee engagement links which increase organizational loyalty and decrease employee turnover (Adebola, 2019). Organizations face difficulties in developing their internal talent because they lack proper leadership development systems which leads to their unpreparedness during leadership transitions. The healthcare sector experiences a critical shortage of competent leaders because their absence leads to decreased service quality and operational performance.

The effectiveness of succession planning programs depends on both planned approaches and support from leadership personnel. Leadership participation enables staff members to obtain required mentorship and guidance and professional development opportunities that support their career advancement. Leaders need ongoing training and support because technical skills do not provide sufficient ability to lead organizations. Leadership support serves as the primary method through which succession planning affects employee behavior and job satisfaction and retention (Kim, 2020; Amah, 2018).

Employee turnover creates major financial and operational difficulties for companies. The process of replacing skilled workers becomes expensive because it requires both recruitment and training expenses and results in decreased productivity during the transition period. The organization experiences two negative effects when experienced employees leave: their knowledge base takes a hit and the stability of the workforce decreases. The process of succession planning operates as a strategic solution that provides organizations with trained personnel who can take over important positions while maintaining business operations and service delivery (De Winne & Sels, 2020; Ghazali et al., 2021).

Organizations encounter expensive problems due to employee turnover because they need to spend money and time for employee replacement. According to research organizations face replacement costs which can reach 50 percent of an employee's annual salary hence organizations must implement proper retention methods (De Winne & Vanormelingen, 2019). The organization faces operational disruptions because it loses skilled employees which also affects its capacity to develop a competent workforce (Ghazali et al, 2021). Succession planning emerges as a forward-looking solution which helps organizations overcome their challenges by maintaining a pool of trained personnel who can fill essential positions.

The study will investigate how succession planning affects employee retention and job satisfaction while testing if leadership support functions as a mediator for these

effects in healthcare organizations situated in developing countries. The study establishes a knowledge gap which it resolves by delivering practical solutions that organizations can use to improve their talent management systems and increase employee satisfaction while they build sustainable business operations.

Literature review:

Succession Planning and Practices:

The countries that develop organizations need to function within their current conditions because institutional restrictions and financial shortages and developing human resource systems limit their operational capacity. In these environments organizations must develop their talent management systems to achieve successful results according to the healthcare industry standards which depend on human resources. Succession planning has developed into a primary method that organizations use to develop their future leaders. Modern research views succession planning as an ongoing process through which organizations identify their top potential employees and create development plans to train them for future key positions (Nawaz & Pangil, 2023; Tetteh & Asumeng, 2022). The method develops into a more advanced system because it connects replacement planning with methods that ensure organizations will maintain their workforce and executive positions throughout time.

Succession planning in developing economies remains at an early development stage. Organizations need to establish internal talent identification systems because their current approach creates leadership transition risks between Ali et al. (2022) and their existing personnel. The situation becomes more urgent in healthcare facilities because any changes to leadership positions or essential staff members will impede their capacity to deliver services and achieve positive effects on patients. Recent research shows that organizations that implement structured succession planning methods can better navigate uncertain situations while maintaining their business operations (Rahman et al., 2022). The success of these programs relies on two factors which include their execution process and the active backing from the higher management of the organization.

The research findings show that organizations need to develop succession plans which cover all levels of their workforce because these plans protect their business operations during emergencies (Gulzar & Durrani, 2024). The organization implements systematic initiatives which include leadership development programs and mentoring and job rotation and performance evaluation systems to prepare employees for their upcoming duties (Khan et al., 2021). Developing countries experience challenges with executing these practices because they face resource limitations and

need to focus on their strategic goals and their leaders do not show commitment (Ali et al., 2022).

From a practical perspective, effective succession planning is closely linked with organizational sustainability and long-term performance. Organizations that invest in identifying internal talent and preparing them for leadership roles are better positioned to handle unexpected workforce changes and reduce dependency on external recruitment (Nawaz & Pangil, 2023). Conversely, the absence of structured succession systems often results in talent gaps, reduced employee morale, and increased turnover intentions, particularly in critical sectors such as healthcare (Rahman et al., 2022).

Employee Retention and Its Impact on Succession Planning:

Employee retention constitutes a primary challenge for organizations in developing countries because skilled workers continuously pursue employment in more stable work environments which offer higher salaries. Organizations achieve their retention goals by creating positive work environments that enable them to retain employees who decide to stay with the organization (Nguyen et al., 2020). The research process has moved beyond investigating turnover reasons to study the factors that make employees stay with their companies. The three essential factors that determine employee retention in organizations include career development opportunities and organizational support and leadership behavior (Iqbal et al., 2021).

The process of succession planning establishes a vital link between its implementation and the improvement of employee retention because it helps organizations fulfill their employees' expectations for professional advancement. Employees tend to develop loyalty toward their organization when they observe that their company invests resources into their professional development while creating distinct career paths for their future growth (Hassan & Siddiqui, 2020). This situation occurs mostly in developing nations because their workers' professional development pathways remain restricted which creates problems for organizations to maintain their employees. Through its implementation of open promotion procedures together with professional development tracks, succession planning procedures create organizational stability that strengthens employee dedication to their workplace (Tetteh & Asumeng, 2022).

In large organizations, succession planning is implemented through a well-structured talent induction system, which trains employees on advanced modules to ensure market leadership within the industry. Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM)/ Globoforce, (SIA, 2018), 47% of HR Professionals have identified employee retention as one of the foremost challenges in Human Capital Management.

The matter of succession planning is getting the necessary attention in business circles, yet still, the formal strategies for succession are missing in a majority of the healthcare industries. The aforementioned problem generally leads to the consequences of talent shortages, lack of development of employees, and dissatisfaction with jobs. Consequently, the quality of both the organization and the services provided is reduced. Hence, it is a must to research the area of succession planning's impact on employee retention and job satisfaction in this industry.

Job Satisfaction and its Influence on Succession Planning:

Job satisfaction acts as a fundamental result that succession planning affects because organizations need to maintain employee retention rates. Employees use job satisfaction as a measure to analyze their complete work experiences which include their job duties and their work environment and their place in the organization (Nguyen et al., 2020). Job satisfaction in developing countries occurs through three main elements which include job security and recognition of employees' work and chances for professional development. Through its succession planning process organizations provide their staff members with essential organizational direction and purpose which employees need to succeed (Khan et al., 2021).

Succession planning programs demonstrate that organizations value their employees when they involve workers in succession planning activities which results in higher job satisfaction rates for those employees (Ali et al., 2022). Employees who access training and development programs gain enhanced self-confidence which enables them to perform better at work while achieving more professional success. High-performing employees who want to advance their careers will experience dissatisfaction because organizations lack official career development programs.

Organizations that invest in succession planning will have lower turnover intent and increased morale among employees because employees view succession planning as a reflection of the stability and long-term growth potential of the organization (Hassan & Siddiqui et al., 2020). Therefore, effective succession planning provides leadership continuity and an increase in employee job satisfaction through an increase in trust, employee development opportunities, and opportunities for advancement in their careers.

Leadership Support and its relationship with Succession Planning:

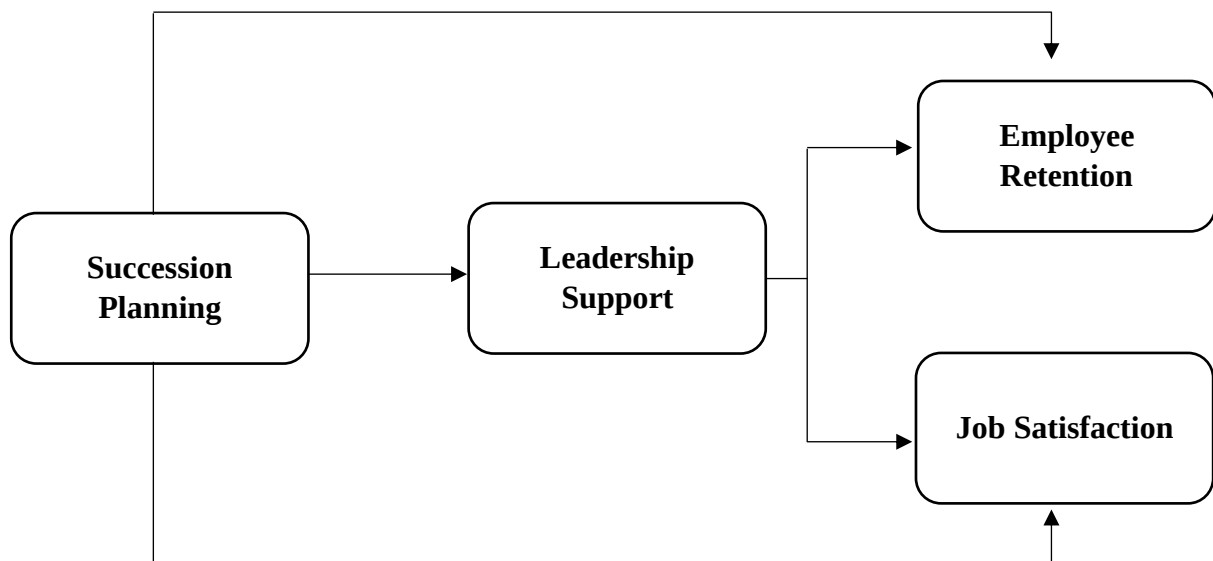
Leadership support has emerged as a vital factor which determines how well organizations in developing countries execute their succession planning processes. It measures how much leaders offer their subordinates guidance together with encouragement and opportunities for professional growth (Iqbal et al. 2021). Employees in organizations that lack formal HR systems will experience their work

environments according to how leaders behave. Supportive leaders create an environment where employees can share knowledge and receive mentoring while developing their skills necessary for effective succession planning (Nawaz and Pangil, 2023).

The recent literature indicates that leadership support functions as a mediator between succession planning and employee outcomes. Organizations need active leader support for employee development to achieve their desired outcomes through succession planning initiatives. Leaders function as intermediaries who connect organizational policies with employee experiences while they oversee the effective execution of succession planning procedures which match employee requirements (Hassan and Siddiqui 2020 Khan et al. 2021). In developing countries where organizations lack formal structures leadership becomes a more critical factor.

The strategic HR practice of succession planning has gained recognition yet there is insufficient research which investigates how succession planning affects employee retention and job satisfaction through leadership support in developing country environments. The existing literature has concentrated on direct relationships but it has not investigated the fundamental processes which drive these specific results. Workforce challenges in the healthcare sector create a need for comprehensive HR solutions because of their complex nature.

The study investigates the relationship between succession planning and employee retention and job satisfaction while testing leadership support as a mediating factor. The study offers specific insights about developing countries which advance both theoretical understanding and practical application. The organization needs to integrate succession planning into leadership development because this approach will establish sustainable workforce strategies which improve employee performance and organizational success.

Conceptual Framework:***Hypothesis*****Direct Effects**

H1: Planning for succession has an impact that is very cost-effective and at the same time productive on the retention of employees.

H2: Employee retention is largely influenced by succession planning in a positive manner.

H3: The presence of succession planning is very critical in the support of leadership positively affecting the whole organization.

Mediator Effects

H4: Support from the management plays a crucial role in keeping the best talents in the company.

H5: Management support significantly enhances the level of satisfaction among employees.

Mediation Hypotheses:

H6: Leadership support acts as a mediator in the connection between succession planning and employee retention.

H7: Leadership support acts as a mediator in the connection between succession planning and job satisfaction.

Research Methodology:***Nature of Research***

This research is intended for the health care sector with regards to their organization within the areas of workforce and retaining their phenomenal staff. The type of scientific approach that was used for this investigation of the impression of succession planning (SP) on employee retention (ER) and job satisfaction (JS) & leadership support (LS) by way of quantitative research methodology. The data from this quantitative inquiry was collected through a survey, which consisted of 100 respondents to a closed-ended questionnaire containing questions concerning: succession planning, employee retention, job satisfaction, and leadership support (for example, using Likert-style questions). A five-point Likert scale was used to assess the responses. To facilitate ease of distribution, the closed-ended questionnaire used for this research project was converted into an online form and provided on www.google.com/survey. This made it simple to circulate the (now) online questionnaire among those individuals who represent middle and lower management throughout several departments in the health care/humanitarian health services organizations located in Karachi, Pakistan. The purpose of this research project was primarily illustrative as the research variables had already been identified and established by previous researchers; we simply intended to illustrate these variables through a Developing Countries lens.

Sample Size Calculation:

The study established its sample size through statistical guidelines and the practical needs of quantitative research. The study needed at least 66 participants because it used multiple regression and mediation analysis according to (Joseph F., Hair Jr., 2019) and his team who recommended using a sample size of at least 50 plus 8 times the number of predictors for regression studies. The research required a minimum sample size of 66 participants because it used one main independent variable and one mediating variable.

$$n = 50 + 8(2) = 66$$

Questionnaire Design:

The questionnaire is prepared in such a manner to capture a broad spectrum of information regarding succession planning, Employee retention, Job Satisfaction & Leadership support in healthcare sector, while remain the interpretation of questionnaire more simple and easy enough to understand easily for the participants who fills it. First of all, the questionnaire introduces its self by explaining its worth and need, which indicate the participants to understand the relevancy and the need of their

participations. After that the questionnaire is divided into 2 main parts the first part includes the demographic information regarding their gender, age, education level, experiences. These questions enhance the data by allowing us to do descriptive analysis in the analysis part.

The multiple closed-ended questions that are aimed at gathering the main data suited to the research purpose are included in the following section. The research presented a widely accepted and effective public opinion assessment tool, the 1-5 point Likert scale, as its means of measurement. The responses to a question that collected information on a five-point Likert-scale were in the range of 1= strongly disagreed and 5= strongly agreed.

This questionnaire was designed with modifications in questionnaires from previous studies (Syed Najam ul Hasan & Danish Ahmed Siddiqui, 2019; Jonathan Tetteh, 2015; Tunje Grace Salama, 2014; and Zeytinoglu et al, 2010)

Sampling method

A sample of 100 respondents in which includes both male and female employees of the various departments of healthcare organization, i.e. Medical, Diagnostic, Nursing, Surgical and all other supportive departments including HR, Finance, Supply-chain, IT, administration of different healthcare organizations. Data collection was in process before one month of questionnaire design. All employees got fair chance to be participated in the survey due to use of random sampling method, this was done to increase the participations of the samples, due to which the intradepartmental biasness is prevented, advantage in time efficiency, cost saving and directly implementation. However, the data were designed and created to enhanced the understanding of studies with the context of Pakistani based healthcare sectors.

Measurement of variables

The study includes four variables, measured using adopted scales from previous studies. First, succession planning (SP) was measured on 11 items, Employee Retention (ER) was measured on 12 items, Job Satisfaction (JS) was measured on 8 items and lastly, Leadership Support (LS) was measured on 6 items.

Statistical Analysis & Results

Data were analyzed using SPSS (29). The following statistical techniques were employed including Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation), reliability analysis (via Cronbach's Alpha), Pearson correlation analysis, regression analysis, mediation analysis through the use of Hayes PROCESS Macro (Model 4).

Table 1
Demographic characteristics of respondents

Characteristics	Measuring Group	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	26	26%
	Female	74	74%
Age	18-25	17	17%
	26-35	52	52%
	36-45	25	25%
	46 above	6	6%
	Bachelor's	37	37%
Qualification	Masters	51	51%
	MPhil/MS	11	11%
	PhD	1	1%
Year Of Service	Less than 1 year	18	18%
	1-3 year	29	29%
	4-6 year	19	19%
	More than 7 years	34	34%
Job Level	Entry-Level	18	18%
	Mid-Level	40	40%
	Senior Management Level	39	39%
	Top Management	3	3%

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used in summarizing and describing the basic features of the data collected from respondents. This technique gives an overview of the perceptions of respondents through the use of reporting measures, such as mean and standard deviation. The mean values give the central tendency of the responses, while the standard deviation indicates the dispersion of responses. Descriptive statistics help in understanding the general trend of data before applying inferential statistical analyses.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis		
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
SP_mean	100	1.45	5.00	3.5900	0.78358	-0.324	0.241	0.081	0.478
ER_mean	100	1.33	5.00	3.4533	0.85889	-0.361	0.241	-0.594	0.478
JS_mean	100	1.00	5.00	3.6013	0.89395	-0.495	0.241	-0.194	0.478
LS_mean	100	1.17	5.00	3.2117	1.03036	-0.395	0.241	-0.993	0.478
Valid N (listwise)	100								

Descriptive statistics revealed that the mean score for succession planning was 3.59 (SD = 0.78), indicating a moderately positive perception among employees. Employee retention showed a mean value of 3.45 (SD = 0.86), while job satisfaction recorded a mean of 3.60 (SD = 0.89). Leadership role demonstrated a moderate mean score of 3.21 (SD = 1.03). Overall, the results suggest acceptable variability and normal distribution of data, confirming suitability for further inferential analysis.

Table 3
Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	Variance	St. Deviation
Succession Planning	11	0.919	39.49	74.293	8.619
Employee Retention	12	0.935	41.44	106.229	10.307
Job Satisfaction	8	0.931	28.81	51.145	7.152
Leadership Support	6	0.911	19.27	38.219	6.182

The alpha coefficients for all instruments exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, suggesting great internal reliability of the constructs.

Correlation Analysis:

The relationship of strengths and directions between the study variables was analyzed by Pearson correlation analysis. This method considers the extent of the linear relationship between two continuous variables. One of the purposes of the correlation analysis was to verify some preliminary hypotheses about the existence of significant associations among the factors of succession planning, leadership support, employee

retention, and job satisfaction. A strong positive correlation means that not only one variable increases with the other but also the other variable increases with the first one.

Table 4
Correlation

Sr. No	Constructs	1	2	3
1	SP			
2	ER	0.625		
3	JS	0.562	0.743	
4	LS	0.450	0.465	0.502

According to the findings, succession planning had a positive and strong connection with employee retention ($r = 0.625$, $p < 0.001$), job satisfaction ($r = 0.562$, $p < .001$), and leadership support ($r = 0.450$, $p < .001$). In addition, the variable of leadership support revealed considerable positive correlations with employee retention ($r = 0.465$, $p < .001$) and job satisfaction ($r = 0.502$, $p < .001$).

Regression Analysis:

Through the use of linear regression analysis, the cause-and-effect links between the independent and dependent variables were established. In a linear regression analysis, this study determined whether succession planning had a significant statistical effect on both employee retention and job satisfaction. Researchers are enabled by linear regression to predict not only the magnitude but also the nature (positive or negative) of the independent variables effect in a model and to receive a signal regarding the fit of the model to the data. Linear regression is suitable for implementation when there is a single independent variable predicting several continuous dependent variables.

Regression Model 1:

Succession Planning → Employee Retention:

Table 5
Impact of SP on ER

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
SP	0.686	.086	0.625	7.935	0.001

Linear regression analysis revealed that succession planning noteworthy predicted employee retention ($\beta = .625$, $p < .001$), explaining 39.1% of the variance in employee retention.

Regression Model 2

Succession Planning → Job Satisfaction

Table 6

Impact of SP on JS

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
SP	0.641	.095	0.562	6.728	0.001

The results further stipulate that succession planning significantly influenced job satisfaction ($\beta = .562$, $p < .001$), accounting for 31.6% of the variance in job satisfaction.

Mediation Analysis (Process Macro – Model 4):

Analysis of mediation was performed through Hayes PROCESS Macro (Model 4) to decide if leadership support was the mediating factor between succession planning and the outcome variables. The bootstrapping method coupled with a regression-based approach used by PROCESS Macro is regarded as a sturdy method for testing indirect effects. Indirect effect was confirmed when the bootstrapped confidence interval did not cover the zero. One of the reasons that succession planning has a positive impact on employee retention and job satisfaction was explored through this analysis.

Mediation Impact on Employee Retention:

The outcome exhibit that succession planning had a significantly positive influence on leadership support, with $B = 0.5914$ and $p < 0.001$, explaining about 20.23% of the variance in leadership support. This suggests that good succession planning practices strengthen employees' perceptions of leadership support.

Further analysis showed that, with the inclusion of succession planning as a control variable, leadership support exerts an important positive effect on employee retention: $B = 0.1916$, $p = .0085$. With the addition of leadership support to the model, succession planning retained an important direct effect on employee retention: $B = 0.5722$, $p < .001$.

The indirect effect of succession planning on employee retention through leadership support was statistically significant (Indirect Effect = 0.1133). Bootstrapped confidence interval ranged from 0.0350 to 0.2187, and as this did not contain zero, mediation effects were confirmed. Due to the significance of the direct and indirect effect, the results point out that leadership support partially mediates the influence of succession planning over employee retention.

Meditation Effect on Job Satisfaction:

A mediation analysis indicated a strong relationship between succession planning and leadership support, $B = 0.5914$, $p < .001$. Afterwards, leadership support was found to be a significant factor that increased job satisfaction, $B = 0.2707$, $p = .0006$. The succession planning was still a strong predictor of job satisfaction, even when the leadership support was considered, $B = 0.4812$, $p < .001$.

Moreover, it was concluded that the indirect end result of succession planning on job satisfaction via leadership support was significant at the statistical level, because the indirect effect was equal to 0.1601. The confidence interval obtained by the bootstrap method was between 0.0695 and 0.2782 and did not cross the zero point, thus corroborating mediation. Given that both the direct and indirect effects were significant, it was concluded that leadership support partially mediated the knot between succession planning and job satisfaction.

Overall Interpretation of Mediation Analysis:

The overall results from the PROCESS Macro, Model 4, show that leadership support is a partial mediator in the link between succession planning and employee outcomes. Succession planning impacts employee retention and job satisfaction not only in a direct way but also in an indirect way through the support of a strengthened leadership. This conclusion emphasizes supportive leadership as one of the avenues through which succession planning generates positive employee opinions and actions in the healthcare industry.

Hypothesis Testing Results

The hypothesis testing outcomes for the present research, which examined the effects of succession planning on employee retention and job satisfaction and also made a clear statement about the mediating role of leadership support in healthcare, are presented in Table 7.

The findings for H1 indicated that succession planning affected retention of employees positively to a significant extent, as the p-value was under 0.05. Therefore, the result denotes that the initiation of practices in succession planning which are considered to be top-notch will result in employees becoming more motivated to remain in the company. Hence, H1 was accepted. In other words, when the succession planning systems are organized and transparent, employees experience career progression and stability and, as a result, they have strong feelings about remaining with the healthcare organizations.

Table 7
Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Decision
H1: Planning for succession has an impact that is very cost-effective and at the same time productive on the retention of employees.	Accepted
H2: Employee retention is largely influenced by succession planning in a positive manner.	Accepted
H3: The presence of succession planning is very critical in the support of leadership positively affecting the whole organization.	Accepted
H4: Support from the management plays a crucial role in keeping the best talents in the company.	Accepted
H5: Management support significantly enhances the level of satisfaction among employees.	Accepted
H6: Leadership support acts as a mediator in the connection between succession planning and employee retention.	Accepted
H7: Leadership support acts as a mediator in the connection between succession planning and job satisfaction.	Accepted

The regression outcomes related to H2 confirmed that there is a strong and positive correlation between succession planning and job satisfaction since the p-value is also below 0.05. In addition, this means that employees in those organizations where succession planning practices are highly effective tend to feel more satisfied with their jobs. Therefore, H2 was accepted. This proves that succession planning has a role to play in eliciting positive attitudes among workers through the provision of opportunities for growth and future career prospects.

Regarding Hypothesis 3 (H3), the results prove that succession planning significantly predicts leadership support because the p-value was less than 0.05. This shows that when succession planning is well-designed, the responses in terms of leadership support and involvement are greater in health care institutions. Therefore, H3 was accepted.

Results of H4 showed that leadership support significantly positively influenced employee retention, with the p-value less than 0.05. This reflects that employees are more apt to stay with organizations where the leaders guide, encourage, and support them. Thus, H4 was accepted.

Similarly, the findings for Hypothesis 5 (H5) show that LS positively influences job satisfaction with a p-value of less than 0.05. This implies that supportive leadership behaviors will enhance satisfaction levels among their employees by

creating trust, recognition, and psychological safety in the workplace. Thus, H5 is accepted.

The mediation analysis, through PROCESS Macro (Model 4), supports Hypothesis 6, which was that the relationships connecting succession planning and employee retention are mediated by leadership support. The indirect effect was statistically significant because the bootstrapped confidence interval did not contain zero, which means leadership support does transmit the effect of succession planning on employee retention partially. Thus, H6 is accepted.

Results for H7 indicate that leadership support significantly mediates the relationship connecting succession planning and job satisfaction. The bootstrapped indirect effect was found to be significant with confidence intervals excluding zero, which confirms the existence of mediation. Therefore, H7 was supported. Overall, the hypothesis testing results provide strong empirical evidence that succession planning directly improves employee retention and job satisfaction and indirectly influences these outcomes via leadership support. Such findings point to supportive leadership as one mechanism by which succession planning achieves these positive employee outcomes within the healthcare sector.

Discussion

In environments where continuity of leadership is critical and workforce stability directly influences service quality, understanding these relationships becomes particularly important. The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the proposed research model and offer meaningful insights into how strategic human resource practices can address persistent HR challenges in healthcare organizations.

The research study's main objective is to investigate the effect of succession planning on the retention and job satisfaction of employees during a leadership change, in the healthcare sector where leadership support acts as a mediator. The outcome of the research is evidence that strongly supports the proposed research model in connection with HR issues in the healthcare sector.

Data analysis has shown that one of the main reasons for the retention of employees is succession planning. Succession planning is a practice whereby proper planning is done for the next generation of leaders in the healthcare organizations. The process tells the workers the paths of their careers and thus removes the ambiguity about their positions in the firm, moreover, it enhances the job security of the employees. The results are in line with the earlier research results on succession planning that state it is a major factor in maintaining an organization's skillful staff, thus affording a lifetime relationship built on loyalty between employee and employer.

The study also found a remarkable positive link connecting succession planning and job satisfaction. This measure that employees in the organizations where the planning for successors is clear and fair have the highest level of job satisfaction. The recent literature demonstrates that transparent promotion systems which offer access to developmental opportunities create better employee motivation and satisfaction results (Khan et al., 2021; Ali et al., 2022). Succession planning opens up for the employee channels of growth and recognition. As a result, job satisfaction of the employees is enhanced because of the fact that they have been given the opportunity for growth and recognition through succession planning. The result supports different findings that have shown the significance of having career development opportunities, which improves job satisfaction, mostly within the healthcare industry.

Moreover, results show that succession planning exerts a significant impact on leadership support. These results imply that good succession planning practices motivate leaders to mentor and coach their employees to prepare them for future opportunities. Organizations that implement succession planning practices create an environment which encourages leaders to practice mentoring and coaching and develop their staff members. The findings demonstrate that talent development needs active leader involvement during succession planning implementation (Iqbal et al., 2021). In the healthcare sector, where leadership continuity is considered important, succession plans improve leadership behaviors for building trust and support within the organization among its employees.

The support of leadership was also positively associated with employee retention. When workers from different levels of the organization are treated in their best interests by the management, they are more retained in the organization. This tactic has been successful in other work organizations, and now it has been implemented in the healthcare industry and has had positive effects.

Moreover, leader support also significantly improved job satisfaction. Leaders who offer guidance, feedback, and recognition affect employees' psychological well-being and motivation. Indeed, a leadership dimension once again supported the pre-existing literature that regarded leadership as one of the most influential constructs determining employee job satisfaction. Employees who perceive their organization invests in their career development through established training programs tend to remain with the company while showing less interest in seeking employment with other organizations (Tetteh & Asumeng, 2022; Nawaz & Pangil, 2023). Leaders who offer their employees backing through guidance and positive acknowledgment and emotional support create a favorable workplace atmosphere which boosts employee motivation and retention. Supportive leadership becomes crucial for preserving

employee performance and morale in healthcare environments which rely on effective teamwork and coordination.

Most importantly, the results obtained from the meditational analysis highlighted that the relationship between succession planning and employee retention, and succession planning and job satisfaction, was partially mediated by the-support factor. This indicates that the success factor not only impacts the stated dependent variables, the employee retention and satisfaction, directly, but the success factor also results in improving these dependent variables indirectly, that is, by increasing the-support factor, which impacts employee retention and satisfaction positively. The research demonstrates that leadership backing brings about positive outcomes for employee retention and job satisfaction. The result of this study matches current research which shows that leadership conduct determines how workers perceive their jobs and their level of dedication to their organization (Nawaz & Pangil, 2023). Recent empirical studies demonstrate that HR practices produce superior results when leaders exhibit supportive behaviors (Hassan & Siddiqui, 2020; Khan et al., 2021). In developing nations where businesses do not fully implement formal HR systems leadership backing functions as an essential link between organizational strategies and actual employee experiences.

In general, the results of this research prove that succession planning and leadership support combine and significantly impact a positive outcome for employees. In the case of the healthcare industry, since employee turnover and job stress are considerable problems that existing healthcare institutions currently face, this process assumes even greater importance.

Conclusion and Practical Implications:

The succession planning is an important human resources strategic tool that add a significant value to enhance employee retentions and job satisfaction in the healthcare sector. The findings having the strong evidence that by providing well-structured career pathways with developmental opportunities, the succession planning system add positive changes to employee attitude, which reduce uncertainty and Promoting organizational stability.

Furthermore, the research also proofs that leadership support play a vital mediating role in strengthening the succession planning on employee outcome. Supportive Leadership acts as a bridge through which succession planning translate into higher retention and satisfaction levels by ensuring that employees receive the guidance, mentoring, and recognition necessary for their professional growth and development. The findings underscore the importance of aligning Succession planning practices with leadership behavior to achieve optimal organizational outcomes.

Therefore, it is definitely clarifying that succession planning initiatives are more effective when indulged with strong leadership support mechanisms.

From practical perspective, the results offer several important implications for healthcare leaders and policy makers, first the healthcare industry should have to move beyond informal or ad-hoc approaches, healthcare should have to adopt or prioritize succession planning as a strategic tool, that are integrated with talent management strategies, rather than a purely administrative approaches. Secondly, creating transparent career progressions strategies for employees can help reduce employee dissatisfaction and improve motivation. Thirdly, healthcare industries should have to invest in leadership development programs to equip their leaders or future leaders with the skills needed to mentor and support employees effectively.

Additionally, Policymakers, in under-developing countries should help healthcare institutions make workforce development a priority. This is part of making the whole health system better. Healthcare institutions need to help their workers keep learning and growing as leaders. By fostering the healthcare institutions, they can also build teams that can handle tough situations.

Limitations:

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations, First the use of cross-section research design limits the ability to establish causal relationship among the variables. Future studies could adopt longitudinal approaches to better understanding how succession planning and leadership supports influence employee outcomes over time.

Secondly, The Healthcare sector was the domain of this research, yet still other studies can be and are being conducted in the private sector (Other than healthcare) to discover the link between succession planning effectiveness and the mediating effects. Furthermore, this research can be considered on a broader level, with larger sample size, and extra mediating or moderating variables to investigate the interactions of succession planning with employees' outcomes more thoroughly.

Its findings carry practical implications for future researchers that are thrilled to add value to the same chosen topic as well as for the healthcare managers and policymakers desiring to foster a stable, satisfied, and committed workforce amidst an increasingly challenging health sector environment.

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