

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP STYLES AND SUCCESSION PLANNING IN THE IRANIAN MINISTRY OF SPORT AND YOUTH

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### Abstract

The present study aimed to determine the relationship between leadership styles and succession planning in the Iranian Ministry of Sport and Youth. The statistical population of the study consisted of all employees of the Ministry of Sport and Youth in 2018 (890 in total, 569 males and 321 females). Based on the Morgan and Krejcie table, we selected 268 persons via random convenience sampling. The research tools consisted of Likert surveys for leadership styles (1998) and Kim's succession planning survey (2006). Results of One-Sample T-Test indicated that the participants believed the succession planning management to be unsatisfactory. Further, the Person's correlation test indicated a positive, significant relationship between directive and delegative leadership styles with succession planning management; however, it showed no significant relationship between supportive and participative leadership styles with succession planning management. Therefore, we propose the sports directors to enhance their succession planning, as a leadership style suited to the organizational circumstances can contribute to improved succession planning.

**Key words:** Leadership Styles, Succession Planning, Ministry of Sport, Iran.

### Introduction

In today's competitive environment, organizations have to look beyond simply replenishing their manpower to benefit from their talents. Efficient, specialized, and motivated human resources play a key role in an organization's attainment of its objectives. Moreover, the loss of manpower at different organizational levels for different reasons (e.g. resignation, retirement, or promotion) is inevitable (Mehrtak et al. 2016). Organizational vacuums and the loss of manpower in organizational posts, especially key positions such as management levels can seriously disrupt an organization's operations. Therefore, many organizations employ particular plans to recruit competent manpower for different positions to prevent disruptions in their progress. Succession planning management is one such plan, implemented to recruit experienced manpower for key positions when necessary (Dehghapoorfarashah 2011; Davodi & Yaghoobi, 2018).

Succession planning strategies need to both empower the employees toward their career objectives and focus on developing them toward organizational objectives. In recent decades, organizations have used succession planning programs to identify the next generation of directors and organizational leaders. Such programs emphasize finding the successors for particular positions and perform efficiently when management positions are stable and managers change positions along predefined, certain career progress paths. In today's world, different careers, especially management careers and positions, have become more dynamic and fluid, whereas organizations have become temporally flatter and more short-term. Today's organizations require talented persons from whom the candidates for

management and leadership positions can be elected (Ahmadi & Salehi, 2016). Succession planning is the process in which the human talents of an organization are identified to occupy its key careers and positions in the future, and then are prepared via different training programs to occupy the said positions (Zeinaldinibidmeshki et al. 2014). The rapid, extensive alterations in today's organizations have led to a shortage of skilled managers for key positions. Hence, as a critical factor, succession planning in organizations must relate to their strategic objectives and directly engages the line managers. We could argue that following the organizational leadership, succession planning is the next important organizational concern faced by managers (Gharibpoor et al. 2014). Without competent leadership and direction, huge human and material resources quickly deteriorate. Succession planning is the process in which the employees suited for senior-management and key positions of an organization are elected from qualified, talented persons. Today's employee benefit from higher education whereas professions have become more specialized; therefore, they cannot be employed the same way as in the past. Today's organizations are in greater need for employee participation in organizational management. Arguably, moving from a directive management style to a participative style contributes to greater organizational prosperity. An organization requires a specified leadership and all managers are well-aware that their success relies on the manpower of the organization. This has led managers to seek the proper leadership style for organizations (Mohammadi & Sharafi, 2016). Leadership is a key component in managing an organization. Studying different organizations reveals that great leaderships make great

differences and that effective leaders are those who produce results in a definite timeframe so they can be effective for their organization. In management science, organizational leadership is a key responsibility next to other management responsibilities, thus carrying significant weight in organizational effectiveness. The secret to management success is the ability to lead the subordinate manpower (Ahmadi Baladehi & Salehi, 2016). Novel management theories argue that a manager's role as a leader also includes their mutual relationships with their subordinates. The importance of organizational management has motivated management theorists and scholars to seek the characteristics of successful organizational leaders. Such efforts in recent decades have produced numerous leadership schools and theories, which have been introduced to the academic community. Proper leadership style simplifies the tasks for the employees, thus affecting them directly and indirectly. Moreover, today's pioneering organizations are well-aware of the importance of the constant preparation and development of their employees for the future growth of the organization. Such organizational awareness and acknowledgement, as well as the need for succession planning management, have motivated pioneering organizations to assign particular personnel to this task. Numerous empirical studies indicate that despite the necessity of new management approaches and ideas in organizations (via recruiting extra-organizational managers), successful organizations have a significant emphasis on endogeneity, thus attempting to identify and train the intra-organizational talents to ensure their future employees will turn out competent and effective managers (Ghelichli et al. 2017). Therefore, a review of the literature on sports organizations reveals that sports management requires determining the competencies needed by the managers for succession planning. In Iran's Ministry of Sport and Youth, the nature of its activity and its particular mission in the field of

sports demand for management skills (e.g. teamwork, communication, making snap decisions, etc.) and therefore, require to consider leadership styles and design the skill criteria and standards for a competency model, particularly for management levels. Considering the above arguments in favor of the significance of succession planning for sports managers, the current study aims to investigate whether leadership styles affect succession planning?

## Research Methods

This is a descriptive study on the correlation between its research parameters. The statistical population of the study consisted of all employees of the Ministry of Sport and Youth in 2018 (890 in total, 569 males and 321 females). The authors used Morgan and Krejcie sample table and random sampling to select 268 participants as the statistical sample. The research tools were a Likert leadership style survey (1998) and Kim's succession planning survey (2006); both standard surveys which were evaluated regarding their reliability and validity for further certainty. The face validity and content validity of the surveys were verified by sports specialists and academic experts. The respective reliabilities of the said surveys were obtained as 0.82 and 0.89 based on Cronbach's Alpha. To analyze the descriptive statistics data, we used a frequency table, frequency percentage, mean value, standard deviation, and additional tables. To investigate the variable correlations, we utilized Pearson's correlation test and the One-Sample T-Test, with a p-value of  $\alpha=0.05$ .

## Results

According to the demographics of the study, 66% of participants were male. More than 24% of the participants had received master and PhD degree, the majority of them had less than 10 years of work experience, and the majority of the participants were aged 31–40 (Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Individual characteristics of subjects.

Variable		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Man	177	%66
	Women	91	%34
Education	bachelor's degree	204	%76
	Master and PhD degree	64	%24
Age	Less than 30 years	55	%20
	Between 31 to 50 years	143	%54
	More than 51 years	70	%26
Work experience	Less than 10 years	145	%54
	Between 11 to 20 years	110	%41
	More than 21 years	13	%5

Table 2 lists the mean value and standard deviation for different leadership styles in the Ministry of Sport and Youth.

Table 2. Description of the leadership styles variable.

Leadership styles	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Max	Min
Directive leadership style	2.28	.65	268	4.80	1.20
Supportive leadership style	3.26	1.02	268	4.80	1.00
Participative leadership style	3.14	.71	268	4.80	1.20
Delegative leadership style	2.24	.92	268	4.80	1.20

As Table 3 shows, the leadership planning variable had a mean value of 1.88, with a standard deviation of 0.87. The one-sample t-test indicated a difference between the mean value of the participant opinion and the hypothetical mean

value. A negative difference between the said mean values indicated that the participants judged succession planning management in the Ministry of Sport and Youth to be less than expected.

Table 2. Results of One-Sample T-Test of the succession planning variable.

	Test Value = 3					
	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Mean Difference	Sig.
Succession planning	1.88	.87	-20.82	267	1.22	.000

Table 4 lists the findings of testing the research hypotheses (i.e. the relationship between leadership styles and succession planning). The findings indicated a positive and significant relationship between directive and delegative

leadership styles with succession planning management; however, they showed no significant relationship between supportive and participative leadership styles with succession planning.

Table 4. The correlation coefficient between the leadership styles variable and succession planning.

		leadership style			
		Directive	Supportive	Participative	Delegative
Succession planning	Pearson Correlation	.445**	.065	.038	.475**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.289	.535	.000
	N	268	268	268	268

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## Discussion and conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, participants believed that succession planning management in the Ministry of Sport and Youth was less than satisfactory. These findings are consistent with the findings of Ashoori (Identifying the Parameters and Designing a Model for Succession Planning in Select Iranian Sports Federations). However, our findings run counter to those of Azar and Soleymani (Investigating the Succession Planning Program for University Directors: The Case of Islamic Azad University of Ardabil), which claimed a proper situation for succession planning in the studied organization (Ashoori, 2015; Azar and Soleymani, 2017).

Concerning the effect of leadership styles on succession planning, the findings of this study are consistent with those of Ahmadibaladehi and Salehi (2016), Gharipour et al. (2015), Binti Ahmad et al. (2017), Danson and Omwenga (2017), Ishak and Kamil (2016).

Hence, we could argue that leadership styles can lay the foundations for developing a succession planning culture in an organization. Our findings also revealed that one of the primary tasks of a succession planning system is to provide an explicit definition of the key leadership skills required for different management tiers. By defining a leadership promotion path, companies would be able to select the best individuals and provide them with the most appropriate training, thus aiding their promotion to higher positions. Accordingly, Sabokroo et al. (2013), Analysis of the Force Field for Succession Planning) concluded that the contributing factors to succession planning are the enrichment of knowledge, management support, and individual motivation. On the contrary, the limiting factors of succession planning are feelings of insecurity, information non-transparency, cost-based perspectives, and envious attitude toward the colleagues; which would hinder a succession planning program. The findings also indicated the significant effect of a directive leadership style on succession planning management.

Directive leadership is highly focused on work and quite neglecting of the employees, hence the employees exactly know the organization's expectations and receive clear orders by the leader toward the said goals. Further, this leadership style aims at immediate obedience by the subordinates. The management has a "do exactly as I say" attitude, the employees are strongly controlled, and are motivated through regulation and coercion. The findings indicate the significant effect of the delegative leadership style on succession planning management. The primary aim of this style is to provide employees with a long-term vision and direction, with the leader avoiding any interference in the operations and completely delegating its privileges to the subordinates. Because the dominant mindset believes the subordinates to be sufficiently competent in recognizing the situations and performing their duties. Moreover, in the delegative style, the leader is strong and yet, friendly. They would show the employees a right and clear direction while motivating them by rewarding their achievements (Hersey & Blanchard, 1993).

Hence, succession planning management is the process in which an organization's human talents are identified to occupy its key positions in the future; and then prepared for such positions via the necessary training programs. The delegative leadership style can be considered a training program which provides individuals with hands-on training experience. Therefore, as in its future an organization would face increasing competitive challenges and would need more competent and effective managers than its current managers; the delegative leadership style enables the employees to gain more experience in decision-making and the analysis of an organization's internal and external environments. Therefore, delegative leadership styles are becoming increasingly important in prospective, and prosperous organizations (Robinson, 2005).

The findings indicated no significant effect by supportive leadership style on succession planning. In this style, the leader pays strong, simultaneous attention to both the task and the employee. The advantage of a supportive leadership style is that it both provides a framework for the performance and the privileges, and allows the employees to make decisions and adopt and implement operational strategies within their authority.

Our findings showed no significant effect by participative leadership style on succession planning. This leadership style mainly focuses on the employees while neglecting the task. Its primary goal is participation and consensus among the employees, wherein the leader extensively asks for the employee opinion and proposals; hence, there is no delegation of authorities for making the final decisions.

In any case, senior managers are aware that the organization's survival relies on having the right

employees at the right times. The strategic position of an organization greatly depends on a competent leader. To leave succession planning to chance in hopes of finding qualified successors within or outside an organization when needed might work occasionally; however, it cannot always deliver. Ensuring that an organization systematically identifies and prepares prominent, talented candidates for the key positions demands effort. Consequently, while observing and correcting their leadership style and behavior, leaders must act in such a way that makes them effective leaders, who in turn elect competent successors.

Brook (2006) defined succession planning as, "the effort to plan for having the required number of qualified managers and key, skilled employees for cases such as retirement, death, severe illnesses, or promotions; and also, for additional positions in an organization's future plans" (Dehghanpoorfarashah, 2011). If organizations wish to survive in a dynamic, competitive environment, they have to consider many requirements. One such primary requirement is the succession of personnel in key management positions. Nevertheless, so far succession planning programs have failed to bear fruit or produce desirable results in Iran's sports organizations. Sports organizations are among the service organizations wherein improved succession planning can enhance knowledge-sharing and organizational learning, thus leading to a sustainable organizational development. However, large organizational alterations after management changes, the indifference of managers to succession planning programs, and the role of political deals in the occupation of directing positions in Iranian sports organizations have resulted in them failing to accomplish their organizational programs and strategies for succession planning. Informing the managers and the athletic community, in addition to obligating the government to use capable managers in sports organizations and the Ministry of Sport and Youth, may be the primary requirements for promoting succession planning in sports organizations.

Therefore, as the leadership style adopted by a manager depends on the situation of the organization, its personnel, and the characteristics of the said manager—and considering the consensus among organizational behavior theories that there is no particular "best" leadership style. When adopting a proper leadership style, one needs to consider numerous factors, and there is no particular prescribed approach. As such, the findings of this study indicate that if sports managers desire to enhance succession planning in their organization, adopting a leadership style suited to their organizational circumstances can aid the succession planning process.

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