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Identification of Psychological Factors Related to Succession: A Qualitative Study

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The purpose of this study was to investigate and explain the dimensions and psychological components of Successor Program in higher education. The present research is applied in terms of purpose and qualitative in term of method. The population of research was managers and full-time faculty members of the Islamic Azad University of Tehran. Data were collected using exploratory and semi-structured interview, which after 12 interviews, theoretical saturation was obtained. For analysis of data, the content analysis method was used. Reliability was achieved using the triangulation method at the appropriate level. Results indicated that the succession model consists of six main components including causal factors of succession, contextual factors of succession, intervention factors of succession, central phenomena, succession strategies and consequences of succession. These six main components were measured by 86 indicators. Consequently, all six variables were identified as psychological factors related to succession program in higher education.

Keywords: Succession Program, Psychological factors, Talent management, Higher education.

Introduction

It seems that in the coming years, the competition to find talented and efficient managers in the country will increase day by day and the readiness to fill key leadership positions at the right time is one of the most important challenges facing the higher education system. Succession management in organizations, by providing appropriate contexts, leads to benefits for both individuals and the organization and can affect the psychological empowerment of employees. Succession planning is one of the most important strategies for the development and survival of the organization and seeks to motivate the retention of capable forces in the organization and increase the culture of merit selection and create a healthy competitive environment in the organization (Fusarelli, Fusarelli, & Riddick, 2018). Successful organizations today do not passively wait for the future, but by investing in time and succession planning, they ensure the continuity of the talents of their top leaders and managers and create the future (Abolmaali & Ghaffari, 2007). The issue of succession and talent identification in higher education is especially important, because the output of higher education organizations is used as the input of other organizations. Although there is no industrial competition in educational organizations, there is competition in attracting and retaining talented managers and employees and developing their skills. Also, separation people from different levels of the organization for various reasons such as resignation, retirement, promotion or even death is inevitable, and if no solution has

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been considered to fill the gap caused by the absence of these people in a systematic and planned manner. Higher education organizations and institutions will face issues such as positions in key positions and filling these positions with people who do not have the necessary talent and competence. Therefore, given the current situation, in educational organizations, including higher education, a coherent program is necessary to replace people in key positions and find existing talents in this field (Zeynoddini Bidmeshki, Adli, & Vaziri, 2014).

In recent years, in Iranian organizations, the issue of training and development of human resources as the identification and development of talents, future managers, shadow managers and ..... has been considered. Conducting various researches to model and apply the successful experiences of developed organizations is very important, so much so that the *Human Resources Management Conference* in 2012 chose the subject of succession management as the main axis and won its 17th award of the year allocated the best in this area. Succession management assures organizations that competent people with the necessary skills are in the right job position and are effective in achieving organizational goals (Aminzadeh Darzi, 2017). Due to the important role of the educational system in society, it is necessary to provide a lot of human resources to this system. But these resources are not properly selected or used effectively and efficiently (Hakimi Niasari, Mojibi, Mahdizadeh Ashrafi, & Jahanguirfard, 2020). Therefore, the issue of succession and talent identification in educational organizations is of great importance because the output of educational organizations is used as the input of other organizations (Zeynoddini Bidmeshki et al., 2014).

Succession management is a set of evaluation processes that involves the recruitment, growth and retention of talented people in administrative positions from beginner to senior management (Ali, Mahmood, & Mehreen, 2019). Talent management is part of a cycle of talent assessment, growth, and utilization that includes identifying and developing internal talent as well as selecting new talent outside the organization. Succession management combines a wide range of performance appraisal methods and gathers information about the performance of volunteers and staff in several ways (Beheshtifar, 2010).

Succession management is divided into formal and informal types. Formal succession management involves identifying and fostering highly talented individuals in which talented employees are identified and supported in a way that moves them into future leadership roles. The purpose of this approach is to ensure that leaders achieve strategic organizational goals. Informal succession management seeks to prepare all employees for current and future responsibilities through in-service training (Moradi Shirazi & Khorasani, 2012). Succession management develops knowledge and thinking and encourages personal development. Succession management can identify people who are ready to take on the desired positions in the next few years (Sherrer & Rezania, 2020). As defined by the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) in 2007, succession management requires a strategic and systematic approach to identifying, developing, and retaining talent for those key jobs that are in line with current and projected business goals (Klein & Salk, 2013; Rolfe, 2018).

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In the succession system, after talented individuals' identification, the training programs required to prepare these individuals are designed. These training programs are divided into two categories. 1. In-service training programs include job rotation methods, coaching and supervision methods, temporary replacement methods, and case study methods. 2- Out-of-environment training programs include management games, lectures and role-playing training methods (Tabeli, Nobary, Nikpour, & Chamani, 2014).

The most important dimensions of psychological factors in succession planning are the sense of competence (self-efficacy), sense of independence, sense of effectiveness, sense of significance and sense of trust (Ahmad, Keerio, Jameel, & Karem, 2020; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Mohammadi, 2002). Succession planning is an ongoing and systematic process of identifying, evaluating, and developing talent to ensure continued leadership in all key positions in an organization (Shipman, 2007). Fostering succession is ensuring that high-level managerial talent is available to the organization. Succession also includes the search for highly qualified employees, and the personality traits needed (McNamara, Watson, & Wittmeyer, 2009). In general, the main goals of succession programs are identifying important managerial jobs in the organization, identifying important non-managerial management jobs in the organization and identifying managers who are potentially appropriate for these non-managerial position jobs (Kowalewski, Moretti, & McGee, 2011). Succession can motivate the organization's human resources, create a capital of talented and capable people in the organization, create a guarantee to prepare talented and motivated managers to get key positions and train talented and capable groups for leadership and superficial tasks (Beheshtifar, 2010). In various studies, succession program has been studied. Davali, Zamaheni, Darvish, and Adel (2017) in a study entitled "Designing a qualification model for the heads of centers and units of Payame Noor University" which was conducted by mixed research method (qualitative-quantitative), identified the final model of qualification in the target community in the form of 54 indicators and it was classified into six dimensions (managerial intelligence, empirical knowledge, social skills, organizational ability, professional attitude and transcendent value). Amin Beidokhti, Nemati, and Karimi (2014) in a study entitled "The moderating role of organizational commitment in the relationship between organizational learning and succession management (Case study: selected universities in Tehran)" indicated that the organizational learning and organizational commitment have been the best predictors of succession management of managers and employees working in universities of Tehran. Further analysis showed that among the organizational learning dimensions, organizational culture, team learning and systematic thinking, and among organizational learning dimension, participative leadership, systematic thinking and competence development were the best predictors.

Findings of Zeynoddini Bidmeshki et al. (2014) also showed that there is a significant difference between all aspects of the current and favorite status of the succession program in public universities in Tehran. Also, the commitment to systematic succession in both the current and favorite situation was recognized as the most important component.

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Amin, Naderi Khorshidi, and Vahed (2017) in their study entitled "Study of succession program model of Iran Water Resources Management Company found that the current and favorite situation is different in all components. In the ranking of components it was found that individual performance is the highest priority and planning evaluation of succession has the lowest priority. (Donner III, Gridley, Ulreich, & Bluth, 2017) conducted a study entitled "Succession Planning and Management" and stated succession planning and leadership development will be essential for the success of business relationships and the financial benefits of companies in the future.

Sharma and Sengupta (2018) stated succession planning plays a key role in the existing talent market and competitive environment and directly affects organizational growth. They focused on the experiences and practices of succession planning in the industry in India and believe that the development of talents is a necessity for the development of the organization.

Mateso (2010) in a study about Succession and Management and Planning (SPM) at the University of Midwest" concluded that although the subject university seems to informally implement a few SPM practices in certain administrative units and colleges, the status of SPM struggles at the university is generally insufficient. Participants indicated the need for enhancing SPM efforts through an critical introduction of a systematic SPM program. Abdullah, Samah, Jusoff, and Isa (2009) research findings revealed that succession program has an impact on the performance of faculty, students and university stability and can be used to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage in educational organizations. Based on the findings of previous researches and the theoretical literature of Succession Planning, in the present study, an attempt has been made to formulate a suitable model of Succession Planning in Islamic Azad Universities of Tehran and to identify *Causal Conditions, Context of the Phenomenon, Intervening Conditions, Central Phenomenon, Actions and Strategies, and Consequences* of succession planning in higher education.

Material and Methods

The present research has been done qualitatively in two stages. In the first part, the content analysis method was used. In this section, by reviewing the literature related to succession in higher education, the dimensions and basic components of succession were identified. Then, to examine their suitability with the needs and indicators of succession, psychological factors affecting succession in the higher education system were identified. In the second part, questions for semi-structured interviews were developed and 12 questions were finally approved in consultation with the supervisors. The number of interview sessions lasted until the theoretical saturation, which was achieved after 12 interviews. The research population was managers and full-time faculty members of the Islamic Azad University of Tehran. The retrieved texts were reviewed and finally the components and criteria were extracted. Reliability was achieved using the triangulation method (documents, research background and semi-structured interviews with experts in the field of management (Delphi method) at the appropriate level. Finally, the proposed model was developed (Figure 1). .

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Results

Table 1 presents the specifications of the sample of research. After conducting the interviews and conducting them, by conceptualizing, categorizing and classifying them into main and sub-categories, the results of open, axial and selective coding are presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Research sample specifications

Variable	Group	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	4	33.33
	Male	8	66.67
Age	30-40 years	2	16.67
	40-50 years	5	41.67
	Above 50 years	5	41.67
Employment years	10-19 years	4	33.33
	20-29 years	5	41.67
	30-35 years	3	35
Organizational position	Faculty member	7	58.33
	Manager	5	41.67

Table 2. Results of open, axial and selective coding

Open coding	Axial coding	Selective coding	Theoretical coding (conditions)
Make a commitment	Measuring responsibility	Conscience and responsibility	Causal factors
obligation			
Individual performance evaluation	Identify and assess talented people	Talent management	
Assess individual talent			
Determining the talent model			
Identify people with abilities	Select talented people		
Replacing people with abilities			
Evaluation of selected individuals			
Filling the educational gap			
Program evaluation	Assess the internal environment	Organization environment	
Evaluate current work			
Strategic intelligence			
Identify talented people	Selection of people based on competency	Establishment of human resource management system	Organizational strategies
Identify basic competencies			
Competency gap analysis			
Create a talent capital			
Design competency development opportunities			
HR training	Strengthen and fostering capable human resources		
Continuous staff empowerment			
Preparing a team of successors			
Assessment the current skills			
competent selection based on goals			
Develop and strengthen future talented managers			
Recognize opportunities for progress	Progress	Organizational affairs management	
Progress Opportunity Solutions			
Review work progress and determine new plans			
Ensure progress			
Check new tasks	Specify roles		
Determine tasks and time			
Determining the goals of the organization	Planning and evaluation		
Giving the information of indicators to staff			
Staff continuous evaluation			

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Engage in the change process	Participation	Participation in change	Consequences
Changes in supervision			
Participate in a new perspective			
Documenting and communicating criteria based on succession	Evaluate human resource performance	Improve the performance of talented leaders	
Demonstrate people's achievement of change			
Creating common criteria for better performance and capability in the organization			
Create a talent source template	Strengthen talented leaders		
Adapting the promotion path to the succession needs of the organization			
Organization promotion			
Organizational sustainability			
Structure	Organizational characteristics	Organizational factor	Contextual factors
Organizational Culture			
Self-efficacy			
Evaluate individual and group development plans			
Cooperation and working group			
Utilizing optimal methods of evaluation and performance measurement			
Provide the necessary grounds to create a fresh, active and civic environment in the university	Environmental features	Environmental factor	
Provide appropriate conditions for human resources to participate in innovative projects			
Environmental awareness			
flexibility	Individual characteristics	Individual factor	
responsibility			
Emotional stability and self-control			
Effective verbal communication			
Customer Oriented style	Negotiation skills		
Persuasion and negotiation			
Effective listening and empathy			
Individual skills (individual skills and abilities, motivation and personality traits)			
Analytical thinking	Thinking centered manner	Individual restriction	Intervening factors
Strategic thinking			
Professional experience and skills	Personal features centered manner		
Knowledge and expertise			
Judgment and decision making			
Professional growth and personal growth			
Having a team spirit			
creativity and innovation			
Organizational awareness			
Assertiveness			
Planning and organizing	Management skills	Organizational restrictions	
Monitoring and control			
Evaluate succession management program			
Creating a succession committee			
Tendency to change	Intra-organizational features		
Team-building			
Staff training			
delegation of authority			
Influence on others			
Conflict resolution			

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Table 3 presents the results of open coding related to the 12 interviews conducted along with their frequency. Figure 1 presents the research model.

Table 3. Results of open coding related to 12 interviews and frequency of codes

	Number	Open source	Frequency
Causal factors	1	Make a commitment	3
	2	Evaluate current work	5
	3	Individual performance evaluation	5
	4	Performance evaluation	5
	5	Assess individual talent	5
	6	Filling the educational gap	8
	7	Program evaluation	7
	8	Obligation	5
	9	Determining the framework pattern	9
	10	Identify people with abilities	8
	11	Replacing people with abilities	7
	12	Evaluation of selected individuals	9
Contextual factors	13	Self-efficacy	8
	14	flexibility	8
	15	responsibility	8
	16	Emotional stability and self-control	6
	17	Effective verbal communication	4
	18	Cooperation and working group	4
	19	Effective listening and empathy	8
	20	Customer Orientation	6
	21	Persuasion and negotiation	4
	22	Environmental awareness	3
	23	Individual skills that include individual skills and abilities, motivation and personality traits	5
	24	Organizational factors include organizational structure and culture	7
	25	Process factors that lead to the identification of individuals	4
	26	Provide the necessary grounds to create a fresh, active and civic environment in the university	8
	27	Provide appropriate conditions for human resources to participate in innovative projects	9
	28	Evaluate individual and group development plans	4
	29	Utilizing optimal methods of evaluation and performance measurement	5
Intervening factors	30	Evaluate succession management program	5
	31	Organizational awareness	8
	32	Professional experience and skills	6
	33	Knowledge and expertise	9
	34	Judgment and decision making	7
	35	Strategic thinking	5
	36	creativity and innovation	7
	37	Analytical thinking	5
	38	Influence on others	3
	39	Conflict resolution	9
	40	Assertiveness	7
	41	Tendency to change	6
	42	Team-building	8
	43	Staff training	4
	44	delegation of authority	9
	45	Planning and organizing	8
	46	Monitoring and control	3
	47	Forming a succession committee	3
	48	Pay attention to competency	7

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	49	Professional growth and personal growth	6
	50	Having a team spirit	6
	51	Identify the talents of individuals in choosing a successor	9
Central Phenomenon factors	52	Vision for the future and mission of higher education	5
	53	Goals and strategies of higher education in the field of human resources	4
	54	The area of human resource strategy in the succession system	5
	55	The field of higher education and its structure	7
	56	Area of occupation	8
	57	Career management and planning	4
	58	Management and supervision of the succession plan	4
Actions and Strategies	59	Identify talented people	5
	60	Recognize opportunities for progress	3
	61	Progress Opportunity Solutions	5
	62	Ensure progress	3
	63	Check new tasks	7
	64	Determine tasks and time	7
	65	Identify basic competencies	6
	66	Competency gap analysis	3
	67	Design competency development opportunities	7
	68	Create a talent treasury	8
	69	Assess current skills	4
	70	Develop and strengthen future talented managers	7
	71	Review work progress and identify new programs	6
	72	Determining the goals of the organization	7
	73	Competent selection based on goals	6
	74	Giving information of indicators to staff	4
	75	Manpower training	3
	76	Continuous staff empowerment	7
	77	Preparing a team of successors	8
	78	Their continuous evaluation	7
Consequences	79	Create a talent capital model	9
	80	Adaptation of the leadership promotion model to the needs of succession	4
	81	To determine the performance and capabilities of the organization	3
	82	Documenting and communicating criteria based on succession	4
	83	Changes in supervision	5
	84	Engage in the change process	7
	85	Participate in a new perspective	4
	86	Demonstrate people's achievement of change	4

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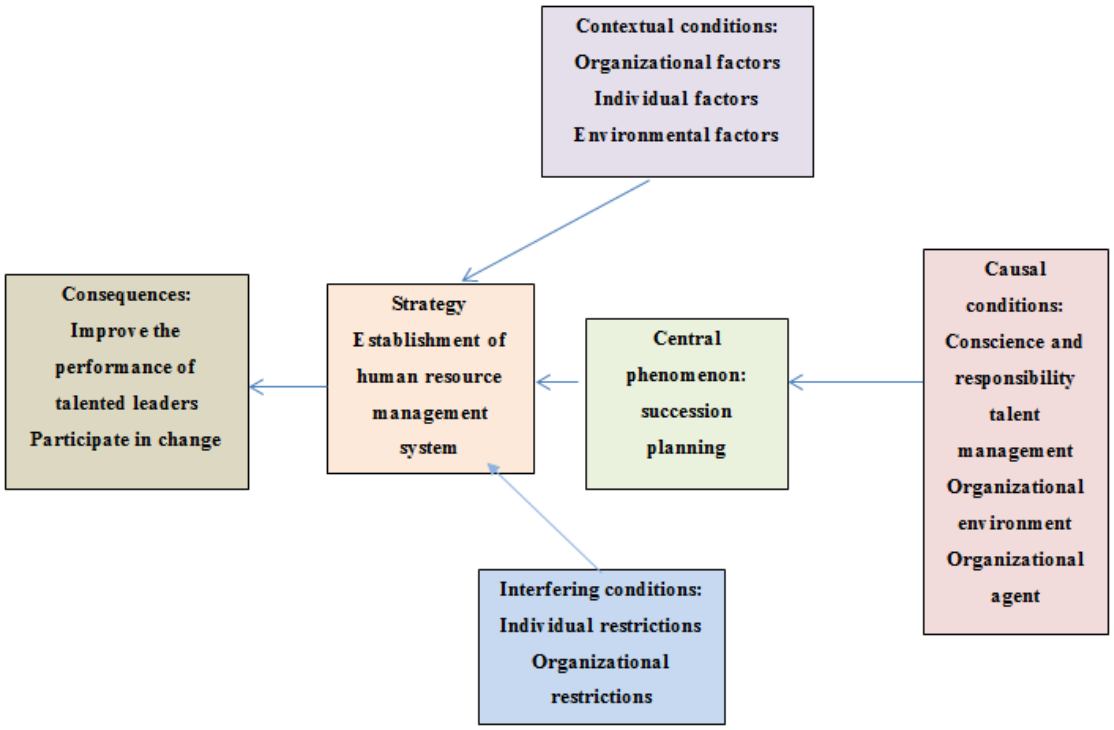

Figure 1. The research model

Discussion

Results revealed that the succession model consists of six main components including causal factors of succession, contextual factors of succession, intervention factors of succession, central phenomena, succession strategies and consequences of succession. These 6 main components were measured by 86 indicators. The findings were consistent with studies of Zeynoddini Bidmeshki et al. (2014), Amin et al. (2017), Ahmad et al. (2020), Donner III et al. (2017) and (Klein & Salk, 2013). For example, Ahmad et al. (2020) showed that the national culture of university employees influences succession planning and indicates the importance of implementing succession planning in public universities in Malaysia.

In explaining the findings, it can be said that it should be noted that the career interests of the individual are influenced by the organizational environment, including opportunities for promotion and the type of performance management. Therefore, in succession management, one's interest can be given a lower priority. In order to create a perception of distributive justice among employees and their satisfaction with the promotion process, it is necessary to formally develop the procedure and process of promotion and succession and inform the employees. Employee promotion and turnover according to a pre-defined plan is not enough. Therefore, by replacing people with capabilities and evaluating selected people, it is possible to develop succession in the university.

The findings showed that the following factors were identified as causal factors: commitment making, current job evaluation, individual performance evaluation, performance evaluation, individual talent

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evaluation, gap analysis, program evaluation, commitment, determining the framework model, identifying capable people, replacing qualified people and evaluating selected people. Findings indicate the need for a plan for succession training of higher education staff and also the need for commitment and attention of senior managers in providing the conditions for the implementation of succession planning such as informing employees about their current and future job responsibilities in educational institutions.

Also, the results of the present study show that the contextual factors include self-efficacy, flexibility, responsibility, emotional stability and self-control, effective verbal communication, cooperation and teamwork, effective listening and empathy, customer orientation, persuasion and negotiation, environmental awareness, skills individual, motivation, personality traits, organizational factors, organizational culture, process factors, providing necessary areas for creating a fresh, active and civic environment in the university, Providing Appropriate Conditions for Human Resources Participation in Innovative Projects, evaluating development of individual and group projects and using the desired methods of performance evaluation and measurement.

The results of the present study showed that intervening factors include the evaluation of succession management program, organizational awareness, professional experience and skills, knowledge and expertise, judgment and decision making, strategic thinking, creativity and innovation, analytical thinking, influencing others, conflict resolution, assertiveness, tendency to change, team making, staff training, delegation, planning and organizing, monitoring and control, forming a succession committee, paying attention to meritocracy, professional and personal growth, having a team work spirit and identifying the talents of individuals in choosing successors.

Accordingly, organizations, especially universities, can resolve conflicts, provide job awareness and a good perspective, as well as create skills and provide opportunities to gain experience, create opportunities for employee participation in the areas of decision-making, and strengthen group and participatory activities in succession.

According to the research findings, future vision and mission of higher education, goals and strategies of higher education in the field of human resources strategy in the succession system, higher education and its structure, job, career management, planning and management and supervision of succession planning was identified as central phenomena and identification of talented people, recognition of opportunities for progress, solutions for opportunities for progress, assurance of progress, review of new tasks, determination of tasks and time, identification of initial competencies, competency gap analysis, design of competency development opportunities, creation of talent treasury , current skill assessment, development and strengthening of future talented managers, reviewing work progress and determining new plans, setting organizational goals, proper selection based on objectives, giving information of indicators to employees, HR training, continuous staff empowerment and successor team preparation was identified as succession strategies. According to these findings, academic organizations can define effective succession strategies, identify talents, strengthen and foster their

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characteristics and empower them, as well as promote a suitable job and create opportunities for achieving effective succession careers in the university.

Finally, the research findings showed the creation of a talent capital model, adapting the promotion path model to the succession needs of the organization, creating a common goal to determine criteria for performance and capability in the organization, documenting and communicating criteria based on succession planning, change in supervision, involvement in the process of change, participation in the new perspective and showing the achievement of individuals of change were identified as the most important consequences of succession planning.

The study has some limitations that should be addressed. First, the research population limited to the universities of Tehran. Based on this, the generalization of research findings to other universities should be done with caution. Second, this study was conducted in an Asian country, which limits its generalizability to other countries and third, the research model not examined via quantitative data and it is suggested the model should be tested via quantitative data in the future studies.

In general, and based on the research findings, higher education administrators should constantly seek to understand the environmental conditions inside and outside the organization in order to improve the situation of universities in the field of succession planning. For this reason, in order to face the challenges, it is suggested that universities and higher education centers focus on creating and strengthening the organizational commitment of individuals, as well as evaluating current work in individual areas, efficiency and programs. It is also suggested that the necessary changes in the organizational structure and culture be made in universities and higher education centers, and by creating a fresh, active and civic environment in the university, the field of human resources participation in various projects be created. Finally, interested researchers are recommended to explore the concept of succession in other organizations and institutions in future studies.

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