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To cite this article: Rohana Ahmad & Mazni Saad (2019): The Impact of Malaysian Public Sector in the Relationship between Transformational Leadership Styles and Career Development, International Journal of Public Administration, DOI: 10.1080/01900692.2019.1627555

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2019.1627555

Published online: 03 Jul 2019.
The Impact of Malaysian Public Sector in the Relationship between Transformational Leadership Styles and Career Development

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**ABSTRACT**
A systematic succession planning program, coupled with solid career development is important to public sector employees. With this in mind, practicing the appropriate leadership strategy may contribute to a good management system. Therefore, this study intends to explore the relationship between leadership styles and career development program. The questionnaires also probed subordinates’ perceptions of leadership styles and expectations for greater career development. Quantitative research design was employed by distributing survey questionnaires to 576 Malaysian Public Sector government servants. The results of this research offer new insights into the importance of leadership values in the succession planning of government organizations.

**KEYWORDS**
Career development; leadership styles; public sector; succession planning

**Introduction**
Public Sector’s competitive edge on a global scale is highly dependent on the efficiency and effectiveness of its delivery system. A high-performance workforce that is capable of delivering outstanding service is pertinent for the sector to survive under an environment of extreme uncertainty. The central characteristics of a high-performance workforce include being customer-focused, an emphasis on quality, establishing a high degree of accountability, being effective, and being efficient. Furthermore, during the Twelfth Premier Civil Servicers Dialogue on 23\(^{rd}\) March 2011, Former Prime Minister Dato’ Sri Najib highlighted the need for changes in public’s perception that civil services are bloated and unresponsive. This can be achieved by creating a performance-centric civil service that is highly effective, efficient, productive, innovative, and creative. The available data demonstrated that the Malaysian Public Sector is made of 1.7 million employees, making it the largest organization in the country. This sector is responsible for the administration of the Malaysian government (Public Service Department [PSD]). Following this, government organizations have been seen as subject to political interference with unprofessional employees. Succession planning is seen as one of the important methods in curbing these issues. One of the components of succession planning is a career development program that aims to hone the administrators’ leadership skills. Such skill set is important in developing and maintaining a successful organizational leadership.

Moving on, Rothwell (2010) defined succession planning as the process of ensuring the existence of adequate leaders in an organization. A succession program is closely related to a leader’s characteristics and failing to create a strong succession plan risk the existence of the organization itself. According to Northouse (2010), leadership values are related to the ability to influence others, for example, when leaders try to influence or lead their followers to achieve institutional goals. Leadership is one of the important factors that can drive an organization forward (Abdulla, Ramdane, & Kamel, 2011). In an institution, leaders are responsible for providing inspiration and maintaining healthy organizational competitiveness. As mentioned by Rothwell (2005), succession planning should encourage everyone in the institution to actively contribute to positive changes in the work community. A way to do this is to chart the employees’ career development. This may motivate them to improve their performance, and this may include sharpening their own leadership skills.

Apart from that, most subordinates have a high expectation for their leaders to be the best role models. As such, leaders need to portray exemplary behaviors to...
gain and retain the confidence and respect of their subordinates. In addition, leaders should be able to choose employees who are able to achieve organizational goals. This requires the highest level of integrity and accountability, indirectly becoming an ethics benchmark for the subordinates. Furthermore, good leaders are capable of implementing change positively and successfully. House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, and Gupta (2004) stated that successful leaders are capable of influencing and motivating others to fulfill the needs of an organization. These characteristics are important aspects of succession planning. Grooming new leaders will include informal and formal learning. The candidates for leadership positions should possess leadership and knowledge management skills and be able to demonstrate all the qualities and the fundamental elements of leadership. In similar vein, there is an overwhelming research demonstrating that leadership style has an important bearing on positive employee work outcomes such as a work performance, organizational commitment, and career development (Ali, Ong, & Elsadiq, 2013). Moreover, Bass (1985) mentioned that leadership can only be sustained through the leader’s characteristics and organization’s commitment. Failure to organize human capital may create an inefficient organization. This is the reason for the succession program is an important mechanism for an executive promotion. Top management or supervisors should, therefore, take the necessary steps in constructing a succession planning program in their institution (McArthur, 2002).

Currently, there are several concepts of leadership influence in an organization. Imran, Ilyas, Aslam, and Ubaid-Ur-Rahman (2016) founded that transformational leadership has shown positive impact towards organizational management process. Meanwhile, Rasool, Arfeen, Mothi, and Aslam (2015) proved that transformational leadership characteristic influencing the doctor performance in the public sector. Conversely, Bass, Avolio, Jung, and Berson (2003) insist that characteristic of transformational leadership occur the viability management operation. While, Geh (2014) in his research cited that by using a transformational tool bring effected learning orientation in the constitution.

Nonetheless, there has been a lack of research on the influence of the leader’s style towards the implementation of succession planning program. Founded on these ground, this research intends to understand the perspective of government officers in the public sector towards the implementation of succession planning with regard to the transformational leadership characteristic. Thus, the purpose of this study is to ripen a fresh model of career development process through effective transformational leadership characteristic and succession planning elements having the interactive result of organizational performance.

Theoretical background and research framework

There have been several theories on general leadership style. This study attempts to contribute to succession planning literature by assessing subordinates’ understanding and perceptions towards leadership values that influence their career paths. For the purpose of this study, it is assumed that leadership characteristics have a significant influence on the implementation of policies for career development leaders in the public sector in Malaysia. This research focuses on developing a more holistic understanding of the four types of transformational leadership characteristic factors affecting the career leaders in the Malaysian Public Sector.

Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership is based on the idea that charismatic leaders with good intentions can be relied upon by their followers and will always take their followers’ needs seriously. Besides has received a fantastic measure of attention in the last few decades and has prominent emerged as one of the most dominant leadership theories (Mhatre & Riggio, 2014). Originated introduce by Burn (1978), and was upgraded by Bass (1985), who came out critical analysis. Burn (1978), the co-founder of the concept of transformational leadership, defined the concept as “… a relationship, mutual stimulation, and elevations that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents”.

Previous studies have proven that there are positive correlations between organizations’ success and leadership characteristic (Russell, 2013). Since that time, both theoretical as well as meta-analytic theory has benefited reviews (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013), along with an in-depth theoretical and methodological critique. Bennis (1959) argued that transformational leaders are people who possess the ability to touch the hearts of their subordinates. While Bass and Avolio (1990) and Bass and Riggio (2006), leaders are those who encourage and motivate their subordinates by projecting and communicating attractive visions, mutual goals, and configuration-values. Recently, most leaders in public organizations have tried to incorporate transformational leadership in their management style to inspire followers (Mohammad Yasin, Fernando, & Caputi, 2013). This is proven by a research executed by Metcalfe and Metcalfe (2006) which included public sector administrators from higher institutions and government institutions.

Meanwhile, Bass and Avolio (1994) identified four behavioral components in transformational leadership.
Firstly, idealized influence is comprised of conviction and emphasized the importance of determination, dedication and the ethical consequences of decisions made (Boyett, 2006). Idealized influence is embodied by leaders who are exemplary and trusted by their subordinates. These leaders are capable of making decisions that will benefit their organizations. Such behavior promoted the perception that the leaders are powerful, worthy of confidence and are ideal examples to emulate (Abdulla et al., 2011; Yusnita, Aziz, & Shaladdin, 2012).

Another characteristic of leadership style is inspirational motivation. Inspirational motivation is a characteristic of leaders who can motivate their subordinates to accomplish the organizations’ visions (Hall, Johnson, Wysocki, & Kepner, 2008). Motivated leaders can also improve the subordinates’ skills by focusing on their career development and by encouraging them to challenge themselves at work (Ali et al., 2013). In addition, leaders with inspirational motivation characteristic specify their expectations of the subordinates (Bass, 1985). These characteristics are similar to idealized influence characteristic in the sense that the leaders motivate and inspire people around them by giving associated meanings and challenging tasks. On the other hand, these characteristics differ in their ability to influence the organization with new ideas and to motivate the subordinates in becoming committed members of the organization (Abdulla et al., 2011).

Gennaro (2018) tested transformational leadership in public service to understand the behavior of public leaders working in unpredictable environments. The finding demonstrated that transformational leaders had intrinsic motivations, encouraged public employees to adapt to changes, and constantly motivated the employees. Transformational leaders have a strong grasp of this situation; they are aware that an unmotivated individual will be less likely to perform positively and will cause the public administration to become inefficient (Şahin, Gürbüz, & Şesen, 2017).

Apart from that, individualized influence characteristic refers to leaders who provide moral support to their subordinates. They also often coach and mentor their followers and are concerned with their subordinates’ career path (Boyett, 2006). Meanwhile, intellectual stimulation comprises leaders’ efforts to challenge subordinates to become forward-looking and creative by framing problems and approaching conventional issues from new perspectives. Limsila and Ogunlana (2008) also stated that these leaders provide intellectual stimulation to their followers by promoting analytical thinking in an effort to improve their organizations (Hall et al., 2008). Subordinates under this type of leadership characteristic are typically not hesitant to offer their ideas, undertake responsibilities and go an extra mile for the organization (Junaida, Mahadir, & Siti Hajar, 2011).

**Succession planning**

Succession planning is important in dealing with the issues related to the succession of organizational leaders, and the process is of a high importance (Church, Rotolo, Ginther, & Levine, 2015). Walker (2005) explained that succession planning is designed to provide a smooth transition of organizational leadership. According to McCauley and Wakefield (2006), succession planning is a mechanism that enables management to establish talent management schemes that address the organization’s development and future human resource needs. In other words, succession planning is a process to enhance individual employees (LaForest & Kubica, 2010) and is considered to be a practical mechanism. Of the many models utilized to examine succession planning, the model introduced by Rothwell (2005) is the most recognized by researchers. Rothwell (2005) explained that succession planning is a method of recognizing managerial positions; from executives to high-level management positions in the department. Succession planning also provides the flexibility of lateral movement across management positions.

Issues of succession planning were also highlighted in other industry such as nursing, health care, and education. McCallin and Frankson (2009) highlighted that the nursing institutions are facing organizational development issues. The current system put too much focus on educating nurses in postgraduate studies rather than strategizing the fulfillment of senior leadership vacancies. Meanwhile, Lusiani and Langley (2018) also discussed the practices of enabling leadership in health care institution. Their study was an ethnographic study of an Italian’s public hospital’s planning and project management practices. Using survey and focus group approaches, Renihan (2012) assessed the succession of leadership succession 838 educators based on their readiness for leadership roles in schools.

In the study, Renihan (2012) reported that leaders in school were frustrated with the administrative work load and the lack of support from the senior leadership. Apart from that, the shortage of qualified principals or heads caused by individuals’ retirement became an external factor to the troubles. The outcomes indicated that there was a greater emphasis on work-life residue. Specific skills for succession planning in top leadership roles focused on three leadership categories: supervisory leaders, middle managers, and executive leaders (Griffith, Baur, & Buckley, 2019).
Moving on, the characteristics of successful organizations include the organizations’ ability to create knowledge, improve skills, maintain staff and provide support for the employees (Malikeh & Mahmoud, 2011). In the Malaysian context, a research on succession planning conducted by Julia (2009) demonstrated relationship between succession planning top leader. It is clear that the succession planning program is not only a mean of grooming future leaders and charting career paths but also as an effective strategy of providing excellent on-the-job training, careful career management, and motivation. Therefore, a human resources leader should be able to build diversified, innovative and skilled workforces in the public sector.

**Career development leaders**

Good succession planning within an organization is based on the ability of the organization to unlock individuals’ potentials for more demanding positions. Industry experts believe that organizations should use performance management as a fundamental mechanism to design a succession plan. One of the dimensions in succession planning is career development leaders. According to Rothwell (2005), replacement planning relates to the immediate filling of a vacant position with someone who is a potential leader. Furthermore, McCauley and Wakefield (2006) defined succession program as a policy that allows top managers to integrate potential leaders into organizational development and future human resource needs. It is important to note that the definition of future leaders may differ among individuals.

For instance, Dessler (2004) argued that the process of finding suitable candidates for current and future senior key posts will be based on the organizational strategy adopted. Therefore, the career paths of individuals can be planned and properly managed, not only to achieve organizational needs but also to fulfill staff aspirations. The identification and selection of potential future leaders must be facilitated by the process that enables them to be identified and selected (Rothwell, 2010). According to Winterton (1999), career coaching from the supervisor and job training are needed for career development. Succession planning will be unsuccessful without a full commitment from the higher-level management (Rothwell, 2010).

Looking from another angle, previous researches have shown that highly successful organization combines leadership development and career development. A study by Adnan and Mubarak (2010), Syeda and Abida (2014) demonstrated that the transformational style is strongly associated with career success. Research conducted on personality leadership characteristics and their impacts on succession planning had shown the importance of leadership behavior on the development of future leaders. Nonetheless, there are organizations that unintentionally replace effective succession planning with replacement planning.

The conceptual framework used in this research is shown in Figure 1 and was adapted from Bass and Avolio (1994). Transformational leadership is comprised of four characteristics, which are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. These characteristics are the independent variables, while career development leader is the dependent variable.

All four of transformational leadership dimension has been clearly conceptually and empirically linked to career development. Based on the existing gaps identified above, we propose the following competing hypotheses:

**HIa.** Idealize influence assumptions will be positively significant influent on career development.

**HIb.** Motivational influence will have higher significant expectation influence for career development

**HIc.** Idealise influence will have strongly significant expectation influence for career development

**HId.** Intellectual stimulation provide a dominant significant contribution to the career development process in organization

![Figure 1. Research Framework.](Source: Bass & Avolio, 2004)
Methods

Design and sample

The respondents were selected based on their understanding of leaders’ career development in succession planning. The respondents were comprised of civil servants from Grades 48 to Grade 54. Using stratified random sampling, 576 participants were chosen from 21 public departments as respondents for this research. Of the distributed questionnaires, 425 were received, and only 394 of the questionnaires were selected to be used for the analysis after multivariate outliers screening was applied on the questionnaires. This displayed a feedback rate of 68.4%. Most of the respondents are between 40 and 55 years of age (67.8%). In addition, 52.3% of the respondents had a master’s degree. Most respondents also had 11 to 20 years of working experience.

Instruments

The independent variable in this study was transformational leadership, and the dependent variable was succession planning. There were two sets of instruments used to measure every variable. In addition, a Five-point Likert scale was used on the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire to measure top management and leadership style as presumed by followers. MLQ was created and developed by Bass and Avolio (2004) and is regularly used in leadership research. In other words, this method has been tested and proven to be suitable for this type of research and the content of leadership dimensions is differ from other leadership questionnaire (Avolio, Gardner, & Walumbwa, 2007) or the Authentic Leadership Inventory (Neider & Schriesheim, 2011). However, there is no conceptual overlap between transformational leadership theory and authentic leadership theory (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). The followers would expect leader with idealized behavior will be their role model to inspire them in work performance. Therefore, from a conceptual concept and measurement perspective, transformational leadership characteristic and career development seem to be related.

Furthermore, there were 20 items on the instruments with the following ranges; Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4) and Strongly Agree (5). The MLQ was comprised of items representing Idealized influence (8 items), Motivation inspirational (4 items), Individualized influence (4 items) and Intellectual stimulation (4 items). This instrument has been used extensively by many scholars in the fields of organization, business, education and private (Bass & Avolio, 2004). A preliminary study assessing the underlying four dimensions of leadership was conducted to validate the instruments. Furthermore, the Cronbach’s alpha reliability fits the scales ranging from .714 to .890, which was an acceptable level of internal consistency (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & William, 1998). Instruments to measure succession planning were taken from the questionnaire for effective Succession Planning and Management (SP&M) by Rothwell (2005). There were 10 items that represented career development leaders. Again, a Five-point Likert scale was used. The Cronbach’s alpha ranged between 0.699 and 0.904, which was an acceptable level of internal consistency (Hair et al., 1998).

Based on transformational leadership literature, to possess more accurate results, demographic items were controlled for age, grade level, education and study experience. However, worked experience and age may effect subordinate assumptions because determining years in working may involve and lead to explicit assumptions regarding leadership style (Pastor & Mayo, 2008). Education level of subordinates may cause an effect on subordinates thinking towards leadership trends. Holton and Lynham (2000) indicated that conventional teaching (e.g. MBA) plays a central function in manager development. Written reports on leadership style have also indicated to the influence institutional elements (e.g. size) on leadership (House & Aditya, 1997).

More precise, previous research (Cogliser & Schriesheim, 2000; Schriesheim & Yammarino, 2000) mentioned that when increases size in workplace will affect the relationships between managers and their staff. Since exposure to the cultures offers individuals the chance to experience a wider range of fashions and values to motivate subordinates (Carpenter, Sanders, & Gregersen, 2001), international experience may induce an issue on leadership styles, and thus, effectiveness.

Findings

Reliability analysis

To measure the internal consistency, alpha cronbach’s internal consistency value was applied, and the result is found that maximum scales in between 0.6 and 0.98 which is considered sufficient and acceptable by George and Mallery (2003) regarding internal consistency of construct.

Descriptive statistics

As shown in Table 1 includes means, standard deviations, reliability coefficients, and correlations among all variables in this study. Inter-correlations showed that career development significantly and positively correlated with transformational leadership (Idealise, r = .26, p < .01,
Motivational, \( r = .29, p < .01 \), Individual, \( r = .313, p < .01 \) and Intellectual, \( r = .296, p < .296 \). Transformational leadership had strong significant positive correlations with intellectual stimulation (\( r = .29, p < .01 \))

**Test of hypothesis**

The objective of studying the relationship between transformational leadership characteristic and career development leaders was fulfilled by looking at each contact dimension’s influence on leadership. The findings of this study presented relevant analysis for hypothesis H1a, H1b, H1c and H1d. Each analysis in this hypothesis used multiple regression analysis to observe any significant correlation among the variables. Also, base along with the recommendation of Yamamoto (2006), several demographic variables were controlled since this variable might exert certain influences on career development.

The finding of the study was in line with MLQ, as shown in Tables 2 and 3 after taking consideration of the control variable. Table 2 shows that the relationship of four Independent Variables and Dependent Variables was moderate (\( R = .375 \)). Also, all independent variables could describe 18.9% of the variance in career development. As illustrated in Table 2, \( R^2 \) showed a value of 14.1%. This means that this factor accounted for 14.1% of the variance in career development and that the model fits the data and was valid. A beta value was the benchmark for the strongest predictor (Hair et al., 1998). As portrayed in Table 3, the dependent variable was found to be fit (\( F = 7.871; \text{sig} = .000 \)). The \( R^2 \) showed the correlation of ascertainment of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

H1a predicted that leader Idealize influence character assumptions will be positively significant influence on subordinate career development. As an explanation in Table 3, the result shown that the relationship between idealize influence style was not significant (\( \beta = .81, \text{sig} = .193 \)). Therefore, H1a was not supported. H1b stated that leader with Motivational influence style will have higher significant expectation influence for career development. The result revealed is negatively related to career development with \( \beta = .093, \text{sig} = .160 \). This result contradicts with the previous research. H1b was rejected. H1c predicted leadership who deploy idealized style will have a strongly significant expectation influence for career development. As appeared in Table 3, the result indicated a positive significant and a main effect to implementing succession planning in the public sector (\( \beta = .165, \text{sig} = .007 \)). The result provides support for H1c. Last, H1d predicted that Intellectual stimulation provides a dominant significant contribution to the career development process in the organization. Result shown in Table 3, the relation between intellectual stimulation styles was not significant. (\( \beta = .105, \text{sig} = .103 \)). Therefore, H1d was not supported. As appeared in Table 3, individualized influence which is hypothesis H1c showed the biggest beta value of .165, which was significant at .007 levels and was consistent with the MLQ norm. This result provides empirical evidence that idealized influence variable was the most predictive characteristic of the career development program as perceived by subordinates.

Furthermore, leadership characteristic plays the most important role in predicting the grooming of future leaders. Deploying Idealized influence character, a manager will care and offer personal support to the subordinates for their career paths. They delegate responsibility, passing on authority, retain their followers and are responsive to individual needs (Boyett, 2006). The multiple regression result confirms that leadership has an important method for employees’ work outcomes, such as a work performance, career satisfaction, management commitment (Lian & Tui, 2007; Zahari & Shuguri, 2012).

The result is consistent with the finding of Shin and Zhou (2003) which was adumbrated in the Asia Countries. In this study, they observed that subordinates

**Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idealized</td>
<td>3.648</td>
<td>.422</td>
<td>.590**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivational</td>
<td>4.028</td>
<td>.508</td>
<td>.457**</td>
<td>.502**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized</td>
<td>3.844</td>
<td>.532</td>
<td>.525**</td>
<td>.577**</td>
<td>.555**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td>3.974</td>
<td>.466</td>
<td>.303**</td>
<td>.362**</td>
<td>.345**</td>
<td>.344**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td>3.423</td>
<td>.444</td>
<td>.267**</td>
<td>.290**</td>
<td>.313**</td>
<td>.296**</td>
<td>.653**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: \( n = 394 \). The Cronbach’s \( \alpha \)’s are indicated diagonally. \(*p < .05, **p < .01 \) (two-tailed)

**Table 2. Model summary.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>( R )</th>
<th>( R^2 )</th>
<th>Adjusted ( R^2 )</th>
<th>Std error of the estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.111†</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.375‡</td>
<td>.141</td>
<td>.123</td>
<td>.416</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( a: \) Predictor: Idealize influence, Motivation, Individualize, Intellectual

\( b: \) Dependent Variable: Career Development

**Table 3. Summary of multiple regression analysis: independent variable and future leader.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variable</th>
<th>Standardized beta</th>
<th>( t )</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>1.304</td>
<td>.193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivational Influence</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>1.409</td>
<td>.160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized Influence</td>
<td>.165</td>
<td>2.718</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>1.633</td>
<td>.103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Value</td>
<td>7.871</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( R^2 )</td>
<td>.141</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted ( R^2 )</td>
<td>.123</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and followers were loyal to a leadership style to persuade them to perform new tasks. Meanwhile, by portraying Individualized characteristics, the leader can persuade the subordinate to emphasize the importance of having a collective sense of mission with positive thoughts. The leaders must delegate authority to the subordinates and fulfill their needs as part of their continuous involvement in the coaching process (Zaidatol Akmalih, Sdeghi, & Habibah, 2011). This finding is supported by previous researches conducted in different disciplines in Malaysia (Sadeghi & Zaidatol Akhmaliah, 2012; Voon, Lo, Ngui, & Peter, 2010). As such, it can be concluded that followers rely on their leaders to provide clear guidance on the ways to utilize the resources available for the progression of their career. In addition, the transformational leadership characteristics and relation’s support have been found to exert a strong influence on subordinates’ career paths. The model showed that all independent variables (the exception being Idealized influence) were positively associated with satisfaction with cultivating future leaders.

**Discussion and conclusion**

The increasing recognition of the crucial role of leaders in organizations leads to a higher priority on the development of subordinates. A more systematic, top-down, and highly structured leadership development approach has replaced the original model. This research found that succession planning is affected by the characteristic of leaders. More importantly, there is a need for management developers to place greater focus on the development of a manager with necessary tools and leadership style. It is the perceived reciprocity between leaders and subordinates that lead to cues being formed in the workplace environment. Leaders need to understand that prejudice and subjective performance rating could elicit undesirable responses from subordinates. Therefore, carrying out assessments of subordinates in an objective and honest manner facilitates the grooming of future leaders within the governing body. This is essential to get the desired behavioral and attitudinal work responses from them.

Consequently, every organization should ensure the preservation of its knowledge and existence. A solid talent pipeline must be maintained by matching skills available internally with those possessing higher degrees. This agrees with Spendlove (2007) and Emma, Christina, and Emma (2015) who stated that the success and achievement of individuals and their organization rely on the leadership style. Vincent-Hoper, Muser, and Janneck (2012) also supported this idea, saying that leadership style is an emerging paradigm that highlights the dynamic interaction among leader cultural lifeway, leader–follower relationship, and context. The recommendations offered in this paper should be understood from the social view perspective where subordinates’ behavioral and attitudinal responses and reactions are shaped by the stimuli in the work environment that they are in. For top management to get the appropriate responses from their subordinates, they must take into consideration the work environment of their subordinates. From this, subordinates could feel that their contributions in accomplishing better career paths are reciprocated accordingly.

Theoretically, the study has managed to contribute to the growing literature on succession planning based on the most relevant leadership style with good intention and shared understanding. The findings show that grooming subordinates for future leadership roles should be led by charismatic transformational leadership. In addition, the finding implies that preparing subordinates as future leaders should be positively led by charismatic individualized influence of transformational leadership. This observation is in line with Floyd (2010), Lian and Tui (2007) and Ngang (2009). According to Bass and Avolio (1990), a leader who shows a clear vision and facilitates achievement will increase the positive perception of followers in the organization. These findings are consistent with other researches (Voon, Lo, Ngui, & Ayob, 2011; Hinduan, Wilson, Moss, & Scannell, 2009). When a leader coaches a future leader, treats his staffs as individuals, and pays attention to special and specific needs, the leader is positively grooming the future leaders. A great leader helps future leaders in developing the latter’s strengths whenever possible by involving them in management activities and ideas. The leaders not only understand what they are doing but are also capable to realize it.

Furthermore, ideas are not only shaped and influenced. Future leaders also require Intellectual capacity in directing and leading the public service sector. This can be embodied by a leader who is highly intellectual in shaping a decision and working on a problem. A wise man is always critical and looking forward to solving problems from different perspectives. Being creative at reaching an intellectual inspire the groups. Transformational leaders should be capable of utilizing top-down and bottom-up management and connecting activities both at horizontal and vertical levels.

Nonetheless, such guidance can only effectively driven by strong supports from transformational leaders. Based on the findings, the attribute of transformational leaders is suitable for high demanding jobs. This is because in these cases, the employees are in the hands of an employer who is willing to provide more support for the employees’ career establishment (Bass, 1998). These observations can be implemented in Malaysia’s
Public Service Department’s succession planning programs and in promoting the effective organization. Nevertheless, the act of leading must be efficiently driven by the firm support provided by transformational leaders. Following this, the attributes of transformational leaders must be emphasized to meet the workplace demands; especially during their career course. This is because subordinates could be requested by the leaders to be more willing to support the organization, in return for the support given in expanding the subordinates’ careers (Bass, 1998).

The findings demonstrated that the head of the department’s leadership style in public sector associated with succession planning is best practiced. Having the privilege of interacting with participants involved in this study, we have understood how leadership has affected the process of implementing succession planning. Therefore, the Public Service Department may consider crafting relevant ordinance based on this research. In addition, since leaders influence the process of subordinates’ career paths, the public sector may consider some investments in human capital training for the managerial level. Eventually, managers will be promoted to enhance networking support, e.g., to consider subordinate innovation and ideas, placing greater confidence in themselves and giving them more autonomy.

Thus, it can be concluded that successful leadership can enhance the mental and intellectual capacity of the public sector as both the management and subordinates embody the cultural attributes that they share. Gould’s (1979) research has substantiated that an individual’s awareness of self and environment, and the action to set career goals would influence the individual’s motivation for career planning. He also mentioned that the involvement strategy would facilitate individual towards the road of success. In other words, career planning is correlated with career strategies and career success.

A competent and capable leader should be able to deliver a strong definite sense of aim, vision and strategic design for the long run. At the same time, they necessitate the power to transmit a sense of imagination and purpose meaningfully to the whole organization. In particular, those with Grades 48 to 54 in this study with at least 10 years working experience agreed that career development requires transformational leadership to ensure the success of the succession plan. As stated by Griffith et al. (2019) based on the Zenger/Folkman database, a potential leader must undergo immersive leadership training after an average of 10 working years. The findings strongly implicate that the selection of the transformational leadership style should be adopted for public sector career development. The findings reveal both theoretical and practical implications that are useful for public management services to promote and plan successful succession planning.

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