

SUCCESSION PLANNING PRACTICES AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF CAREER ATTITUDES

Ealiya Batool

M.Phil. (Student)

Department of Management Sciences,
Institute of Business Management Karachi, Pakistan
ealiya92@yahoo.com

Dr Sania Usmani

Assistant Professor

Department of Management Sciences,
Institute of Business Management Karachi, Pakistan
sania.usmani@iobm.edu.pk

Syed Aamir Alam Rizvi

PhD Scholar

Department of Management Sciences,
Institute of Business Management Karachi, Pakistan
syedaamiralamrizvi@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Practices of succession planning may be regarded as the backbone of an organization's retention strategy. To boost employee productivity and excitement, succession planning and career planning are intertwined. The objective of the study is to determine effective Succession Planning Practices for Employee Retention in the telecommunication sector of Pakistan using the mediating effect of Career Attitudes. To conduct the research, convenience sampling was used, 363 samples were analyzed by using SPSS 21 to carryout descriptive tests, reliability, and validity. Structural Equation Model (SEM) was conducted using Partial Least Square by utilizing Smart PLS 3. The findings of the study reveal that succession planning practice is a strong factor in employee retention in the telecom sector. We also found that Succession Planning Practices have a direct significant relationship with Career Attitude. This research also suggested that Career Attitude has a significant positive relation with Employee's retention. We also found that Career Attitude mediates between Succession Planning Practices and Employee Retention in the Telecommunication Sector of Pakistan.

Key Words: Career Attitude, Employee Retention, Succession Planning

INTRODUCTION

The major strategic component of any organization is its people. It is very difficult to achieve the goals of the organization without its people. Organizations should more concentrate on their strategic formulations and measures to get higher performances from their strategic components (Lunenburg, 2012). Modern business organizations see succession planning as a critical employee retention strategy (Perera & Edirisooriya, 2021). Moreover, for improving the productivity of any organization employee retention is a crucial element. Organizations put their efforts to design attractive HR policies, for influencing and motivating employees to retain them. Therefore, succession planning practices can be

considered the backbone of an organization toward employee retention (Lempaka, 2018). In addition, employee retention is also used as a strategic tool (Ghani et al., 2022)

Succession planning is a formal process managed by organizations to identify and develop their employees to bring them to leadership positions in their organizations. The primary objective is to develop appropriate and potential managers to fill the vacant posts which are created by future immediate leaves of employees. Ultimately, it is directly related and contributes to making the employee retention rate better (Abbassi & Hollman, 2000). Research has communicated contradictory results with a negative and/or positive relationship between succession planning practices and employee retention (Eshiteti et al., 2013).

The importance of succession planning is increasing with more change and a flexible environment. The war for talent has also posed a big challenge. Therefore, there is a need to attract and retain talented employees. In recent past years, many empirical studies on succession planning and employee retention have been conducted that have tended to focus on the relationship between employee retention and succession planning (*Impact of Effective Succession Planning Practices on Employee 's Retention (With Special Reference to Private Business Organizations in Sri Lanka)*, 2017; Javed & Jaffar, 2019; Lempaka, 2018). Succession planning implementations is a key to moving with talented people but unlikely, that most organizations do not pay attention to getting benefited from this tool. According to the statistics, 70% of the organizations fail to go in the long run because of failure in implementing effective succession planning practices (Prabhakar and Gowthami, 2013). According to another study, 67% of the organizations globally, do not carry out any succession planning for their employees (Khumalo and Harris, 2018). According to a survey conducted in 2004, 60% of the organizations do not contain any succession plan (SHRM, 2004). Another survey conducted in the U.S stated that the owners of the organizations in the U.S have the age of almost 65 years and out of 400 of them, only 25% have succession planning pf their organizations. Considering succession planning a valuable tool for the development and retention of employees, current emerging economies emphasize its fruitful use (Cheng, 2016). Unfortunately, most organizations are not enthusiastically retaining it as a part of their corporate business practices (Odengo, 2016).

In Pakistan, the circumstances are more complex. It is one of the emerging economies, with the target of recording low employee retention (Ghulam et al., 2019). It has been monitored that any skilled workers are leaving Pakistan and going abroad for better career opportunities. Over 10 million Pakistanis are working in a foreign country (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Also, 884,000 workers had left the country between 2018 and 2019. Among them, are majorly engineers, doctors, accountants, and there, in search of stable opportunities. If we compare the statistics with neighboring countries like India and Bangladesh, Pakistan is at a greater extent of increase in immigration which is reported at 15% (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Therefore, organizations are much concerned about employee retention. A few studies have been conducted and published. In those studies, it was concluded that succession planning and practices are the best known to implement in the organization to retain employees in Pakistan (Aman-Ullah et al., 2020). Shoaib et al., (2009) stated that career prospects, managers' care, working atmosphere, rewards, and work-life balance are the basic aspects of succession planning to retain employees. Malik et al., (2013) stated that role overload was a significant determinant of employee retention in PTCL employees. Furthermore, it was found that training, routine evaluation, upgrade practices, reimbursement, employment and criteria of selection, and objection handlings are the key elements of retaining the employees (Janjua and Gulzar, 2014). Many researchers added value to the literature on employee retention and tried their best to make sure of the problem of employee retention. In the context of Pakistan, unfortunately, limited literature has been found that could suggest upcoming research paths for the current problem of succession planning practices and employee retention in Pakistan. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to determine effective succession planning practices for employee retention in Pakistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is an era where the world is in the phase of globalization, and human resource practices are fighting to make them up to the mark, but they are facing challenges. The first is the lack of talent and the second is the emerging trends (Pandey and Sharma, 2014). To compete for the betterment, retaining and developing employees is the priority of the organization's human resources. Rothwell (2010) stated that succession planning is a practical tactic aligned with the organizations' business tactics.

EMPLOYEE RETENTION

Employee retention is referred to as the ability of an organization to retain its employees and do efficacious and sustainable planning for them (Tunje, 2014). The main parameter driving the organization's productivity and efficiency is employee retention. It is simply the means of successfully running and maintaining the human resources (Chitsaz-Isfahani and Boustani, 2014).

Employee retention is a serious issue emerging in industrial growth and the lack of workers is a very fundamental issue for corporate management. The withdrawal of employees is even more costly for a company; it has implications for employee motivation and purchaser happiness (Ballaro & Polk, 2017; Eshiteti et al., 2013). The turnover principle describes the movement of employees among different companies and employment (Abbassi & Hollman, 2000).

It has been seen that positive internal jobs affected the turnover of employees (Abbassi & Hollman, 2000; Groves, 2007). Retaining employees results in output efficiency and customer loyalty (Maalu et al., 2013). It has been said that workforce retention is usually deemed to be able to maintain a stable human capital. Employee retention is influenced by many important variables, which need to be treated congruently, including policy, compensation, profit ideology, corporate culture, and career growth. Some of these problems are closely linked to the retention of employees in the companies (Ballaro & Polk, 2017). In this conservation, it has been seen as one of the obstacles facing organizations and as a reason for the larger movement in a worldwide learning society.

SUCCESSION PLANNING PRACTICES

The major aspect of any organization, for future growth, is dependent upon how it cultivates the value of its people and what resources it needs for the growth. Succession planning is an HR tool that is used to assist the current and future needs of the organization (Mehrabani and Mohammad, 2011). Armstrong (2012) defined succession planning management, as a method to develop competent managers to fill the company's management positions. Rothwell (2011) as cited in Garg and Weele (2012) stated in support of the above author that "succession planning is an organized structure formed by an organization to make sure that there is a continuous progress in the organization with retention, skills, and development for knowledge for the future and progression at the individual level".

Traditionally, succession planning is characterized as a structured method that helps to create a talented management pool. Successful incorporation of management growth and succession planning will maximize the use of managers and support corporate culture (Groves, 2007). Succession planning offers a long-term and strategic vision for employers on their potential talent needs. Besides that, it guarantees management continuity and readiness and promotes workers through constructive corporate culture. This initiative has a positive effect on employee retention (Eshiteti et al., 2013; Hassan & Siddiqui, 2020; Parmar, 2019). Besides, they found that the succession planning phase provided confidence that they will be the next line manager would give more workers a high level of satisfaction (Maalu et al., 2013). According to the literature, the lack of satisfaction among employees has made it difficult to fill vacancies at the management level (Eshiteti et al., 2013). The strongest companies are successfully integrated into both management practices and succession planning practices (Groove, 2007). To achieve certain goals such as retirement, the organization's plans could change, as well as the advancement within the organization and severe illness, losses, or voluntary exit

for other career opportunities. To comply with such changes, businesses will need to have a big workforce replacement strategy. Succession planning for this reason is considered an appropriate endeavor (Ballaro & Polk, 2017; Eshiteti et al., 2013; Shah Rajaram et al., 2019).

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUCCESSION PLANNING PRACTICES AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION

Succession planning is a retention program that increases the capacity of the organization to retain its employees or to prevent employees from leaving the organization (Abbassi & Hollman, 2000; Javed & Jaffar, 2019). As a result, companies now need educated employees to become successful assets of the organization, to recruit, grow and maintain the future employees. Each business seeks to retain the talents, potential, and skills necessary to bring value to the organization. Succession planning is a core practice for many organizations to retain employees (*Impact of Effective Succession Planning Practices on Employee 's Retention (With Special Reference to Private Business Organizations in Sri Lanka)*, 2017). Succession planning provides effective performance and helps organizations replace key individuals over time and further applications of the key individuals accordingly (Rothwell, 2001). Similar to Rothwell (2001), it was again stated that, through succession planning, one can secure the right people, to fill the vacancy resulting from employee retirement, promotion, and the resignation of the individuals (Armstrong, 2003). Eshiteti et al., (2013) stated that succession planning is positively affected by employee retention among sugar companies. Nzuve (2010) emphasized that employee retention covers all organization's hard work including succession planning essential to safeguard the employees and make sure they do not leave the organization. Additionally, succession planning plays a vital role in the organizational decisions, on how to handle retirement, death, and resignation (Mhlongo and Harunavamwe, 2017). Phillipps et al., (2018) stated that future leaders can be made by effective succession planning. Based on these findings, it is hypothesized:

CAREER ATTITUDE

In today's era, where business is very competitive, it is an individual's responsibility to take advantage of the opportunities offered by employers to self-improve and engage in professional discussion to meet customer demands. A career means linkage between the employee and the organization. Career attitude has three scopes found in the literature. First is career victory, elaborated by Greenhaus and Callanan (2006) as positive physical and spiritual consequences of work experiences and actions. The second is the pleasure of upgrading well-defined emotional and cognitive assessments of promotional measures, opportunities, and strengths of promotions (Sanborn and Berger, 1990). The last, the perception plateau is defined by Feldman and Weitz (1988) as an option of accepting the duty and more obstacles for upcoming responsibilities. Thus, the saturation and maturity of the labor force, reduced availability of the labor force, and competitive labor markets have revolutionized the employment of new workers. It demands independent and flexible responsibilities providing more knowledge and a developmental view (Naris and Ukpere, 2010; Cascio, 2006). Therefore, organizations must implement an employee retention and engagement tactic to emerging career attitudes (Piip, 2019)

Succession planning and career planning are interconnected with each other to increase productivity and enthusiasm among employees (Heiden, 2007; Atwood, 2007). Careers are driven by succession planning that effectively nails the employees' attitude toward their work, their training and development, and learnings (Rothwell, 2010). Farashah et al., (2011) stated that if the activities in the organization are molded in terms of succession planning, they retain the employee. Also, they form a positive attitude towards the individuals and are useful to build lasting relationships leading to career growth. Thus, it is hypothesized:

2.5. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Agency theory proposes that employees are driven by self-regard and might involve in adverse choices or moral threats with leaders or owners, rightly known as agency cost (Eisenhardt, 1989). According to this theory, this cost can be eased by integrating the worker benefits with those owner benefits. In this research, employee growth is an essential part to retain them in the telecom sector. Such regular performances ultimately cost less. Development activities modify and inhibit the employee's intention to resign from the job which surely leads to lessening the causes of agency cost (Valenti, 2014; Vogli, 2006; Cummings et al., 2007).

2.6. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

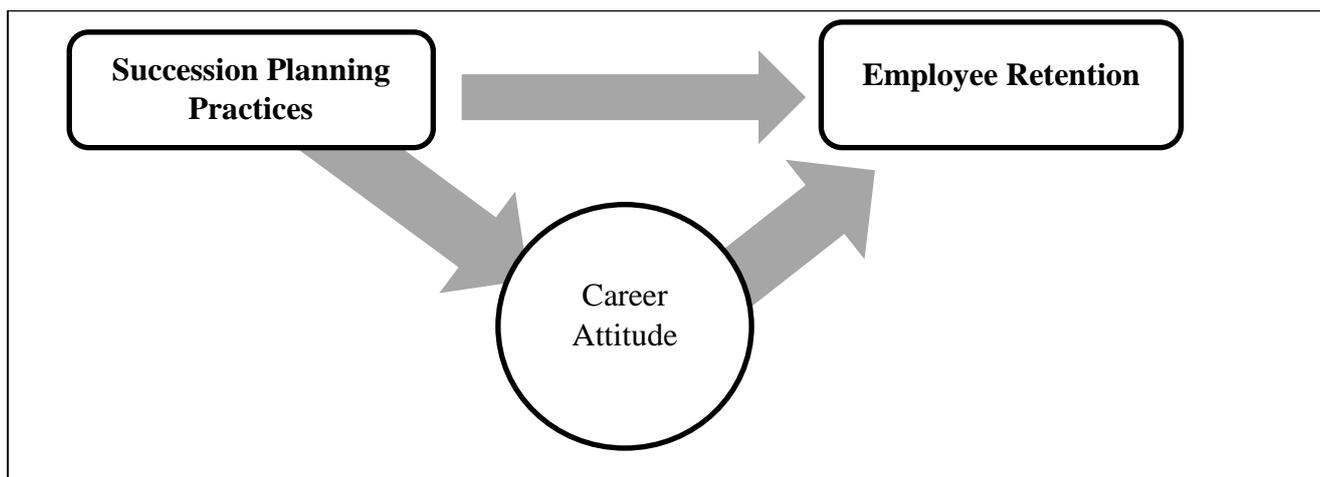


Figure 1: Research Framework

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

H1: There is a significant relationship between succession planning and employee retention.

H2: There is a significant relationship between succession planning and career attitude.

H3: There is a significant relationship between career attitude and employee retention.

H4: Career attitude mediates the relationship between succession planning and employee retention.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This was a quantitative study wherein empirical testing of speculation was conducted and was appropriate. Studies design, sampling method, sample length, an instrument used for statistics series, reliability, validity, and different to be mentioned strategies had been adopted for trying out the speculation. This research was conducted in the telecommunication industry of Pakistan.

INSTRUMENT:

The instrument was developed and consisted of 3 constructs, succession planning practices (6 items), employee retention (9 items), and career attitude (10 items). The questionnaire was comprised of 2 parts. The initial part was the demographic profile of the respondents (Table. 1). The subsequent part was comprised of questions related to the constructs. It was anchored by a five-point Likert scale in which "1" "represents strongly disagree" and "5" represents "strongly agree" (Appendix 1).

MEASURES:

Succession Planning Practices. are the competent and talented employees being ready to perform a vital part in the event of a sudden decline in performance due to retirement, death, serious illness, or promotion (Mathur, 2011). The scale of succession planning was adapted from research work by Tetteh (2015). The measure of succession planning was comprised of six items.

Employee Retention. is the capability of a firm to retain its personnel and do efficacious and sustainable planning for them (Tunje, 2014). The scale of employee retention was adapted from the research work of Govaerts et al. (2011). The measure of employee retention was comprised of nine items.

Career Attitudes. can be improved by improving career growth and promotions within the organization. It can be done by succession planning to retain the employees (Fenner, 2005). The scale of career attitude was adopted from Staines and Quinn (1979) and Milliman (1992). The items measured were ten in number.

SAMPLE DESIGN AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE:

The study population was the employees of the telecommunication sector of Pakistan. The convenience-based sampling technique was used. This was due to the ease of access and nearness of respondents (Etikan et al., 2016). The questionnaire was adopted. Initially, a telephonic conversation was made with HR personnel. Confidentiality was ensured to all the respondents. A pilot study was accompanied in an order to make sure that the item's speeches are properly understood by the respondents.

DATA COLLECTION:

Approximately 500 questionnaires were circulated amongst the respondents belonging to the telecommunication sector, to collect the data. Head of the departments and HR personnel were in touch and this follow-up was continued for three months. In the end, 392 questionnaires were received and filled. After removing the missing data, a total of 363 questionnaires was in hand for data analysis that is adequate to conduct this research (Memon et al., 2020)

RESULTS

According to the demographics of the study, there were 282 (76.2 percent) males and 81 (21.9 percent) females, out of which 31 were aged less than 21, 121 were between 21 to 30, 189 were between 31 to 40 years, 16 were between 41 to 50, and 13 were above 50 years. 161 respondents were having work experience of 1 to 3 years, 173 of 4 to 6 years, 11 of 7 to 10 years, and 25 of more than 10 years. At the level of management, 166 were lower-level managers, 161 were middle-level managers, 23 were seniors level managers, and 13 were at the executive level, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographics of the Study

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	81	21.9
	Male	282	76.2
	Prefer not to say	0	0
Age	Less than 21 Years	31	8.4
	21 to 30 Years	121	32.7
	31 to 40 Years	189	51.1
	41 to 50 Years	16	4.3
	Above 50 years	13	3.5
Education	Matriculation	0	0
	Intermediate	0	0
	Undergraduate	46	12.4
	Graduate	317	85.7
	Doctorate	0	0
Work Experience	Less than 1 Year	0	0
	1-3 Years	161	43.5
	4-6 Years	173	46.8
	7-10 Years	11	3.0
	More than 10 Years	25	6.8
Level of Management	Junior Staff	0	0.0
	Lower-Level Manager	166	44.9
	Middle-Level Manager	161	43.5
	Senior Level Manager	23	6.2
	Executive Level	13	3.5

N=282

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The descriptive statistics are comprised of mean, standard deviation, reliabilities, and the correlation among the variables shown in Table 2. The total three variables were broken down into the following manner; Succession planning practices (SPP) is an independent variable, career attitude (CA) is a mediator and employee retention (ER) is a dependent variable. The Mean value for SPP is 3.295 (SD=0.760, Alpha=0.79), the mean value for ER is 3.110 (SD=0.921, Alpha=0.92), and the mean value for CA is 3.320(SD= 0.784, Alpha= 0.872). Cronbach's alpha ensures the reliability of the data, which should be greater than 0.7. Satisfying the condition of reliability analysis i.e. alpha > 0.7 (Hair et al., 2015), Table 2 shows the results of reliability analysis and all the constructs are reliable, showing the

values of Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.7. All the correlations between the variables are significant at 0.01.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha	SP	ER	CA
SPP	3.295	.7607	.7910
ER	3.110	.9218	.9130	.623**
CA	3.320	.7847	.8720	.504**	.642**	..

N= 363; p<0.05*; p<0.01**

Partial Least Square was used by us (PLS) using the Smart PLS 3 (Ringle et al., 2015) to test the measurement and structural model as it has been evident that normality of the data is not needed (Chin et al., 2003). We regressed all variables against a common variable and the Variance inflation factor (VIF) was tested. Table 3 shows the results of the full collinearity test in which all variables' VIF is ≤ 3.3 means that there is no bias from the single source data (Kock, 2015).

Table 3: Full Collinearity Test

SPP	ER	CA
1.685	2.142	1.755

Note. SPP= Succession Planning Practices, ER= Employee Retention, CA= Career Attitude

MEASUREMENT MODEL

The measurement model was tested by PLS software to check the convergent validity and discriminant validity of the constructs. According to Carmines and Zeller (1979), convergent validity is being shown via correlations among the constructs. To test the Convergent Validity, item loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were identified. Composite Reliability must be greater than or equal to 0.7 (Gefen, Straub, & Boudreau, 2000). Average Variance Extracted should be greater than or equal to 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 4 shows that the values of CR are > 0.7 , AVE > 0.5 , and the loadings are acceptable > 0.6 (Hair et al., 2015). Loadings that were less than 0.6 were excluded from the model are; SPP3, ER3, CA1, CA8, CA9, CA10. After the removal of these loadings from the model, the model was found fit and we further tested the discriminant validity.

Table 4: Convergent Validity

Constructs	Items	Loadings	CR	AVE
SPP	SPP1	0.741	0.850	0.531
	SPP2	0.700		
	SPP4	0.709		
	SPP5	0.752		
	SPP6	0.739		
	ER	ER1		
ER2	0.814			
ER4	0.783			

	ER5	0.798		
	ER6	0.769		
	ER7	0.862		
	ER8	0.806		
	ER9	0.799		
CA	CA2	0.739	0.899	0.599
	CA3	0.762		
	CA4	0.789		
	CA5	0.732		
	CA6	0.779		
	CA7	0.837		

Note. SPP= Succession Planning Practices, ER= Employee Retention, CA= Career Attitude

Discriminant Validity was assessed using the criteria of Fornell and Larker (1981) and Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). According to Fornell and Larker (1981), all diagonal values must be greater than non-diagonal values. Table 5 shows all diagonal values must be greater than non-diagonal values. HTMT criterion is suggested by Henseler et al., (2015). The HTMT values should be ≤ 0.8 . Table 6 shows that HTMT values are ≤ 0.8 which fulfills the criteria of HTMT Ratio. Hence, we can say that discriminant validity did exist among the constructs.

Table 5: Fornell-Larker Criterion

	SP	ER	CA
SPP	0.729		
ER	0.688	0.795	
CA	0.461	0.563	0.774

Note. SPP= Succession Planning Practices, ER= Employee Retention, CA= Career Attitude

Hence the respondents understood three constructs were different from each other, we summed up that the items were both reliable and valid.

Table 6: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	SPP	ER	CA
SPP			
ER	0.806		
CA	0.550	0.627	

Note. SPP= Succession Planning Practices, ER= Employee Retention, CA= Career Attitude

4.3. PATH ANALYSIS

H1 hypotheses represent the direct relationships in the model which are shown in Table 7. There is a significant positive relationship between Succession Planning Practices and Employee Retention as the p-value is 0.000 with $\beta = 0.544$, therefore *H1* is accepted. Past research also supports our results

(Eshiteti et al., 2013; Tunje, 2014). There is been seen, a significant positive association between Succession Planning Practices and Career Attitude. The p-value is 0.000 with $\beta=0.461$, therefore *H2* is accepted. This is consistent with the previous research work (Ali et al., 2019, Najam Ul Hasan & Siddiqui, 2020). There is a significant positive relationship between Career Attitude and Employee Retention as the p-value is 0.000 with $\beta=0.312$, therefore *H3* is accepted. Past research also supports our results (Nasir and Mahmood, 2016; Shoaib et al., 2009).

Table 7: Direct Relationship Results

		β	Mean	SD	T Statistics	P Values
H1	SPP -> ER	0.544	0.541	0.043	12.593	0.000
H2	SPP -> CA	0.461	0.469	0.048	9.505	0.000
H3	CA-> ER	0.312	0.314	0.047	6.628	0.000

Note. SPP= Succession Planning Practices, ER= Employee Retention, CA= Career Attitude

The indirect effect or mediation effect of the model consists of *H4* shown in Table 8. Which has consisted of *H4*. The hypotheses test the mediating effect of Career Attitude between Succession Planning Practices and Employee Retention. The result shows that there is a significant mediating role of Career Attitude between Succession Planning Practices and Employee Retention. This is supported by past research (Tetteh, 2015). Table 9 shows the hypotheses assessment summary

Table 8: Specific Indirect Results

		β	Mean	SD	T Statistics	P Values
<i>H4</i>	SPP -> CA -> ER	0.144	0.147	0.028	5.172	0.000

Note. SPP= Succession Planning Practices, ER= Employee Retention, CA= Career Attitude

Table 9: Hypotheses Assessment Summary

<i>H1</i>	There is a significant relationship between succession planning and employee retention.	Supported
<i>H2</i>	There is a significant relationship between succession planning and career attitude.	Supported
<i>H3</i>	There is a significant relationship between career attitude and employee retention.	Supported
<i>H4</i>	Career attitude mediates the relationship between succession planning and employee retention.	Supported

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study tested the relationship between Succession Planning Practices and Employee Retention. A direct relationship between both variables was found with significant p values. It is supported by the findings of Eshiteti et al. (2013) which suggested that succession planning practice is a strong factor for employee retention. The findings are also supported by the research work of Najam Ul Hasan & Siddiqui. (2020), which suggested that the higher the succession planning practices the greater impact it has on employee retention. We also found that Succession Planning Practices have a direct significant relationship with Career Attitude. Ali et al. (2019) also found that succession planning is a direct significant factor for an individual's career in the organization.

This research also suggested that Career Attitude has a significant positive relation with Employee Retention and this is also supported by the research work of Nasir & Mahmood. (2016) and Shoaib et al. (2009). We also found that Career Attitude mediates between Succession Planning Practices and Employee Retention. This mediation is also supported by the past research work Tetteh. (2015), who

suggested that Career Attitude moderates Succession Planning Practices and Employee Retention. It makes a stronger relationship between Succession Planning Practices and Employee Retention.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study focuses on the impact of succession planning practices on employee retention. It is well known that HR managers are keenly interested in helping potential leaders grow their careers by taking the lead in identifying future leaders in their teams. The telecommunication sector can also take the advantage of this study to make succession planning practices so strong enough to retain employees focusing on their career attitudes. Succession planning practices should be known to all the employees of the company. Career goal plays an important role to retain employees of the company focusing on future leaders. For this, a clear career pathway should be elaborated to the employees, and it should be more focused to retain talented employees in the organization.

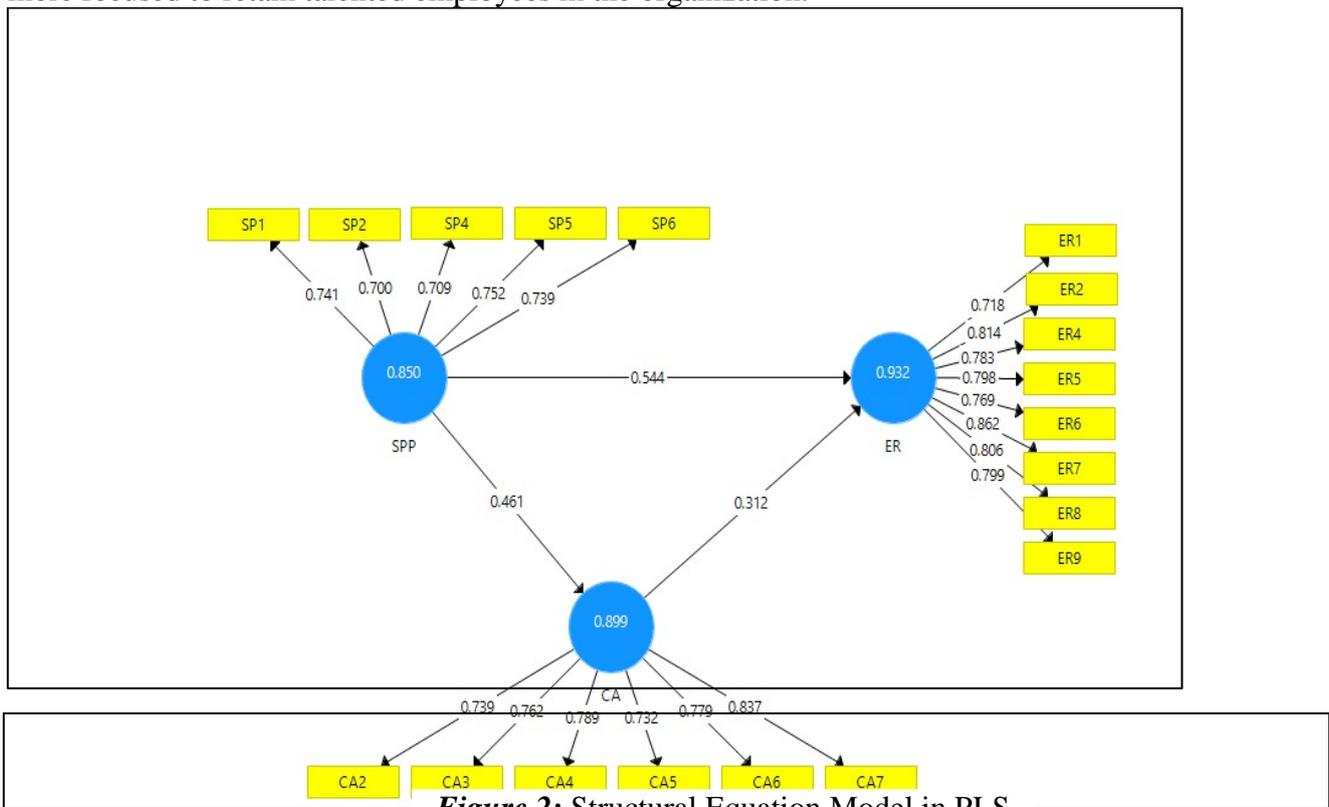


Figure 2: Structural Equation Model in PLS

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study was completed in Karachi City Pakistan which may result in low generalizability. It can be done on a national and international basis to get a more generalized finding of the study. This study is limited to the telecommunication sector of Karachi while other studies can be done on other public or private sectors for example banking sectors or insurance sectors. Future studies can use more variables in the present model of the study i.e., moderating effect can be tested to predict employee retention. Furthermore, other personality traits can be incorporated to test the relationship between succession planning practices and employee retention.

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