

Leadership Succession and Organizational Performance: A Strategic Planning Approach to Educational Management

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100300597>

Received: 30 March 2026; Accepted: 04 April 2026; Published: 21 April 2026

ABSTRACT

Leadership succession is increasingly important in educational institutions because it shapes continuity, stability, and strategic alignment. This study examined the status of leadership succession and its contribution to organizational performance in selected tertiary institutions in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), using strategic planning as an institutional lens. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was employed, combining survey responses from 140 participants and qualitative insights from 10 key informants. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Spearman's rank-order correlation, thematic analysis, and triangulation. The findings showed that leadership succession was evident in the participating institutions, although its formalization and regularity varied. Succession planning contributed extensively to organizational performance by strengthening leadership continuity, organizational stability, and strategic alignment. The study further found a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between the status of leadership succession and organizational performance. At the same time, implementation remained challenging because of limited successor readiness, turnover pressures, resource constraints, and resistance to change. The study proposes the Adaptive Participatory Leadership Succession Framework for Schools, anchored on Policy, Pipeline, Participation, and Review. Overall, the findings affirm that succession planning is not merely a replacement mechanism but a strategic, evidence-based institutional function that can improve continuity, resilience, and long-term performance. The study underscores the need for educational institutions to adopt more systematic, inclusive, and development-oriented approaches to leadership succession.

Keywords: leadership succession, organizational performance, strategic alignment, BARMM, tertiary institutions

INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions value leadership, which significantly impacts organizational performance and student achievement (Bush, 2018). Meanwhile, successful succession planning ensures adaptability, seamless continuity, and alignment with the goals and missions of an educational institution (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). Strategic planning integrates resources, objectives, and actions to accomplish long-term goals. In the field of education, it reduces transition-related risks and improves performance. Smith (2022) asserts that integrating succession planning into strategic initiatives enhances cultural transformation and resilience. Thus, integrating succession into strategic planning will enable schools to concentrate on adeptly navigating through the severe challenges of modern education.

Studies on leadership effectiveness often overlook the impact of succession processes on strategic planning, cultural transformation, and organizational performance (Siambi, 2022). Researches predominantly emphasize individual leadership behaviors or case studies. Integrating strategic planning frameworks is essential for enhancing leadership succession efforts, particularly in non-Western educational contexts where cultural and contextual factors are significant.

Effectively managed leadership changes enable schools to address a lack in instructional quality, enhance teacher morale, and align institutional strategy with evolving educational priorities. Nonetheless, despite the clearly established necessity for leadership succession, educational institutions frequently resist transformation due to inadequate preparation of prospective leaders and the absence of a unified strategic vision. These problems highlight the necessity of a research effort that links succession planning to organizational performance through strategic planning (Fuller et al., 2021).

Therefore, this study aims to examine the status of leadership succession in educational institutions in terms of institutional preparation and implementation and to evaluate how extensive is the contribution of leadership succession plans to the organizational performance of educational institutions in terms of leadership continuity, organizational stability, and strategic alignment.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

This review examines leadership succession in educational institutions in terms of institutional preparation and implementation, as well as the contribution of succession plans to organizational performance in terms of leadership continuity, organizational stability, and strategic alignment. Beyond summarizing prior studies, the review identifies convergences, tensions, and contextual limitations in the literature, particularly the gap between globally developed succession models and the realities of higher education institutions in BARMM.

Leadership Succession Status in Educational Institutions

Leadership succession in educational institutions has emerged as a critical topic in contemporary educational management due to its substantial impact on institutional stability and readiness. Santora, Clemens, and Sarros (2011) emphasize the importance of strategic succession planning to guarantee business continuity and mitigate disruptions from sudden leadership changes. Organizational culture is a vital determinant in influencing attitudes and readiness for succession. Hechanova et al. (2019) shown that institutions utilizing polished leadership development models exhibit improved adaptability and preparedness, whereas informal practices like nepotism result in exclusion and inefficiency, as noted by Dahlan (2024) at Saudi universities.

The integration of leadership development programs in higher education is associated with improved succession preparedness and institutional robustness, as these programs intentionally foster future leaders through mentoring, leadership exposure, and organized professional development (Ahmad & Ming, 2020; O'Connor, 2021). These programs prioritize mentorship, coaching, and leadership exposure, so enabling proactive succession planning. Bush (2018) illustrated that governance structures and institutional policies substantially affect leadership continuity, emphasizing that the combination of strategic planning with leadership frameworks enhances succession preparedness.

Technology and data analytics have changed the procedures of succession planning. Furthermore, Williams et al. (2023) contend that institutions can more efficiently identify high-potential leaders by employing data-driven methodologies, including performance indicators, peer evaluations, and professional development documentation. These strategies promote transparency, inclusion, and alignment with organizational goals, hence enabling the creation of more equal and diverse leadership pipelines.

Technological solutions, including AI-driven leadership monitoring software and data analytics platforms, have proven to improve the efficient and inclusive identification and development of potential leaders, hence ensuring successful succession planning (Psico-Smart, 2024; Watson, 2020). Fullan and Hargreaves (2020) assert that digital tools enhance candidate assessment and foster equity through transparent, data-informed decision-making. Moreover, succession planning emphasizing diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) policies is becoming more common, especially at multicultural college campuses (Shields, 2020).

Research underscores the imperative for proactive leadership tactics in succession planning. Jones and Wellins (2021) contend that organizations utilizing scenario planning during leadership transitions demonstrate more adaptability and preparedness for unforeseen events. DeRue and Myers (2020) contend that fostering leadership identity is crucial for equipping successors to take on new academic positions.

It may be inferred that the initiation of leadership transitions at educational institutions is most effective when it is strategically planned, technologically facilitated, culturally relevant, and supported by ongoing leadership development programs.

Leadership Succession Planning and Its Relationship to Organizational Performance

The leadership succession plan is a component of leadership development and is influenced by the organization's culture. Establishing sustainable leadership pipelines is associated with educational philosophies that foster mentorship, collaboration, and professional growth. In these situations, current leaders actively identify and foster potential successors, encouraging a supportive, growth-oriented atmosphere. Conversely, hierarchical or inflexible organizational cultures may exhibit diminished employee engagement, resulting in a disconnect between leadership development initiatives and organizational requirements (Brown & Green, 2023).

The commitment of leaders is a crucial element of succession planning. Leaders who perceive leadership development as a strategic obligation are more inclined to foster a robust succession culture inside their businesses. Management endorsement of succession planning fosters continuity, preparedness, and sustained organizational effectiveness, whilst failing to facilitate leadership changes could compromise institutional stability and performance (Santora et al., 2011; Rothwell, 2020; Ahmad & Ming, 2020).

Educational institutions benefit from a systematic approach to leadership succession planning for personnel and administration. Recent studies demonstrate that effectively organized succession plans are crucial for recognizing and developing future leaders, hence assuring business continuity and alleviating the disruptions associated with involuntary leadership changes (Santora, Clemens, & Sarros, 2011). The organizational culture significantly influences its approach to leadership succession. Progressive leadership development frameworks guarantee sustained pipelines for leadership roles, resulting in diminished disruptions during transitions in leadership. Hechanova et al. (2019) emphasized that these frameworks foster not only stability but also a preparedness for change, hence enhancing organizational resilience to new leadership.

In certain institutions, the absence of organized mechanisms for succession planning results in significant disarray. A further investigation into Saudi universities revealed that senior administrators often relied on familial and social connections for appointments rather than implementing an appropriate succession mechanism (Dahlan, 2024). This culture's reliance on informal techniques perpetuates systemic prejudices, particularly against women, and limits the diversity of leadership prospects.

Research indicates that focused interventions, such as leadership development seminars or mentorship programs, effectively cultivate future leaders. Such methods assist higher education institutions in facilitating easier leadership transitions with reduced disruption (O'Connor, 2021). Furthermore, the strategy for diversity in leadership development is not merely commendable but also consistent with international standards in education and restorative inclusivity. Smith and Lee (2020) observed that organizations prioritizing diversity exhibit increased agility and a higher likelihood of long-term success.

Contemporary technologies assume an increasingly significant role in leadership succession planning. Organizations can employ tracking technologies for leadership potential and oversee professional development programs to implement a data-driven strategy for identifying and cultivating their future leaders. Organizations are utilizing AI-driven tools and data analytics to identify high-potential individuals, delineate succession pipelines, and efficiently address skill gaps. This technological connection allows organizations to proactively cultivate future leaders and facilitate a seamless transition during leadership changes (Psico-Smart, 2024). Watson (2020) asserts that technology enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of compromise and sufficiency in succession planning, allowing institutions to maintain their leadership pipelines.

Educational institutions can enhance their leadership succession processes by establishing organized frameworks, recognizing difficulties, adopting best practices, and utilizing technology. These measures foster stability, enhance diversity, and assist institutions in adapting to the evolving academic landscape (Ahmad & Ming, 2020). Despite increased acknowledgement of the necessity for succession planning, few institutions are well prepared for leadership transitions. Addressing resource limitations, cultural opposition, and strategy discord is essential

for improving succession planning initiatives. By acknowledging that leadership turnover is inevitable, institutions can use proactive strategies and innovative tools to identify successors who are optimally equipped to lead in the ever-evolving educational landscape (Taylor et al., 2024; Williams et al., 2023).

Ahmad and Ming (2020) assert that leadership succession planning is an essential element of strategic planning for educational institutions. It functions as a tool to guarantee that leadership transitions do not impede the institution's commitment to academic success, accreditation, governmental recognition, and co-curricular excellence. Effective succession planning fosters stability, improves institutional performance, and maintains the institution's reputation.

Taken together, these studies show that succession planning is widely recognized as a strategic contributor to institutional continuity and performance. Yet the literature also shows that its success depends on whether leadership development systems, organizational culture, and governance structures are aligned. This insight is especially important in settings where formal mechanisms may be present on paper but inconsistently enacted in practice.

Challenges in Succession Planning for Educational Institutions

Succession planning in educational institutions has several problems, notwithstanding its advantages. Leaders demonstrate considerable reluctance to change, viewing succession as a danger to their authority (Taylor et al., 2024). Moreover, the readiness of potential successors is negatively impacted by insufficient access to formal leadership training and mentoring opportunities (Brown & Green, 2023). Leary (2006) elucidated that these organizations are susceptible to leadership voids and deteriorations in performance. Klein et al. (2021) argued that succession efforts are further compromised by a lack of executive leadership support and resource allocation.

Succession planning is crucial for educational institutions to tackle prevalent practices and challenges. Prevalent obstacles encompass insufficient financial resources, a scarcity of training opportunities for prospective leaders, and opposition from existing leadership (Taylor et al., 2024). Some leaders view succession planning as a challenge to their power or worry it could provoke internal rivalry. Moreover, financial limitations often hinder access to professional development programs, thereby undermining the institution's capacity to cultivate a robust leadership pipeline (Dennison, 2024).

Strategic planning is a crucial process that allows firms to define their long-term vision and determine the most effective means of attaining their goals. Recent research has underscored the importance of the planning process, the need to address implementation challenges, the significance of contextual elements in developing countries, and the value of non-financial measures (Al-Shammari & Hussein, 2023). This approach ensures that strategic goals are converted into concrete results. Organizational success requires the application of performance measuring techniques and flexibility.

Higher Education Institutions in BARMM

Higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) function within a unique governance and development framework influenced by regional autonomy, changing educational structures, and disparate institutional capabilities. The Bangsamoro Education Code of 2021 serves as a crucial policy framework, placing both public and private higher education institutions under the authority of the Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education (MBHTE), thus creating a cohesive policy and regulatory landscape throughout the region (Bangsamoro Transition Authority Parliament, 2021). Recent MBHTE estimates suggest a significant rise in tertiary enrolment for SY 2023–2024, attributable to enhanced access initiatives including tuition assistance, scholarship opportunities, and increased security in priority regions (MBHTE, 2024). Simultaneously, the literature and policy documents consistently highlighted enduring institutional constraints, especially in faculty development, information technology infrastructure, and research capacity, that continued to influence governance challenges and performance outcomes within BARMM tertiary institutions (MBHTE, 2024). The circumstances highlighted the importance of leadership succession planning in the region: as higher education institutions evolved and adapted to regulatory and quality assurance

requirements, they increasingly required stable leadership frameworks to ensure continuity, facilitate strategic alignment, and navigate transitions without compromising institutional performance.

Leadership Succession and Educational Management in the Philippines and BARMM

Global Models vs Local Contexts

Global scholarship on leadership succession consistently emphasizes leadership pipelines, mentoring, and structured professional development as essential to institutional continuity and effectiveness. Al Abbas (2021) describes succession planning as a deliberate and proactive process of identifying, preparing, and positioning leaders for critical roles. These models, however, are largely derived from settings with more stable governance structures, stronger human resource systems, and greater access to leadership development resources. Such assumptions do not always hold in the Philippines, and even less so in BARMM, where institutional conditions are shaped by political transition, uneven capacity, and cultural diversity. Global models therefore remain useful as conceptual guides, but they require contextual adaptation before they can function effectively in local educational settings.

Challenges in Leadership and Governance within BARMM

The BARMM context introduces further complexity because leadership operates within evolving governance arrangements, regional autonomy, and varied institutional capacities. Mastura (2025) found that school improvement efforts in BARMM depend heavily on systematic planning, monitoring, and stakeholder engagement. These conditions mirror the stability goals of succession planning and suggest that leadership continuity in the region requires participatory and accountable processes rather than informal replacement practices. Abubakar and Ismael (2024) further showed that leadership styles among middle managers in Basilan significantly affect institutional performance, indicating that succession planning in BARMM must account not only for top-level leaders but also for the readiness of middle-level administrators who often sustain day-to-day institutional functions. In the same way, Lampaco et al. (2024) highlighted the strain experienced by MBHTE super-visors in balancing professional and personal demands, underscoring the need for succession models that consider resilience, workload realities, and long-term leader support.

Transition, Preparedness, and Resilience

Villamor et al. (2022) identified three recurring concerns in school leadership succession: leadership stages, institutional readiness, and transition difficulties. These themes are highly relevant to the Philippine and BARMM context, where many higher education institutions continue to face limited mentoring systems and uneven leadership preparation structures. Resilience also emerges as a critical leadership attribute in volatile environments. Panganiban and Reyes (2024) documented how school leaders in Mindanao adapted to organizational uncertainty and resource constraints, suggesting that succession planning in BARMM should cultivate not only technical competence but also flexibility, relational trust, and the capacity to lead through transition.

Synthesis and Research Gap

The literature indicates that although succession planning has been widely studied in international settings, substantial gaps remain in relation to Philippine and BARMM higher education institutions. Existing studies explain the influence of institutional culture, governance arrangements, favoritism, resource limitations, and transition readiness on succession processes, yet these factors are often examined separately rather than through an integrated strategic planning perspective. Local and regional studies provide valuable insights into administrative competence, leadership styles, and supervisory conditions, but they do not yet offer a contextualized account of how succession planning shapes organizational performance in BARMM tertiary institutions.

A key contradiction in the literature is that succession planning is frequently promoted as a strategic mechanism for continuity and performance, yet in transitional or resource-constrained settings it is often weakened by informal appointments, weak policy institutionalization, limited leadership pipelines, and competing organizational pressures. This tension suggests that the effectiveness of succession planning depends not only on the

existence of formal models but also on their responsiveness to local realities. The present study addresses this gap by examining leadership succession in BARMM higher education institutions as a strategic and context-bound institutional process and by proposing a framework that is better aligned with regional governance, culture, and resource conditions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored in Transformational Leadership Theory, which provides a strong lens for explaining how succession planning influences leadership continuity and organizational performance in educational institutions. Originally introduced by Burns (1978) and later expanded by Bass and Riggio (2006), transformational leadership emphasizes vision-building, motivation, empowerment, and the alignment of individual growth with institutional goals. These principles are especially relevant to succession planning because successful leadership transition depends not only on filling positions but also on developing future leaders who can sustain trust, inspire stakeholders, and guide the institution through change.

According to Zepeda et al. (2021), transformational leadership promotes the ongoing presence of effective leadership by nurturing internal talent through structured development initiatives, mentorship opportunities, and clear succession pathways. Taking initiative in cultivating future leaders minimizes disruptions during transitions and strengthens the long-term stability of the organization. Kotter (1996) highlights the importance of transformational leaders in managing change by promoting collaborative cultures, reducing anxieties related to leadership transitions, and promoting shared responsibility in governance.

Furthermore, transformational leadership combines personal abilities with the strategic goals of the institution, as proposed by Harris and Jones (2010). This approach is fundamental in designing succession plans that not only fill vacancies but also enhance overall organizational performance. Alignment guarantees that leadership transitions uphold the institution's mission, strengthen stakeholder confidence, and sustain strategic progress. Research shows that institutions with transformational leadership are more likely to achieve improved student performance, greater employee commitment, and enhanced operational effectiveness (Nguyen & Chou, 2023).

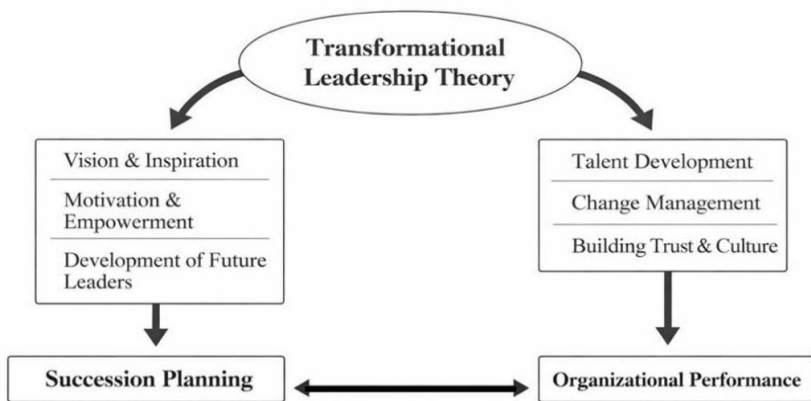


Figure 1. Transformational Leadership Theory in Leadership Succession

This theory plays a crucial role in examining how leadership succession, backed by strategic planning, can act as a driving force for achieving institutional excellence within the realm of educational management. This framework offers a foundational understanding of how leadership continuity operates, the importance of empowering stakeholders, and the necessity of incorporating a long-term vision to enhance organizational performance via successful succession planning.

Source: Adapted from Burns (1978), Kotter (1996), Harris and Jones (2010), Zepeda et al. (2021), and Nguyen and Chou (2023)

Accordingly, the theory is especially relevant to this study because it explains why succession planning becomes more effective when leaders do more than identify replacements. They must also build vision, cultivate readiness, empower potential successors, and embed leadership development within the institution's long-term strategic direction.

To strengthen the alignment between the study variables and Transformational Leadership Theory, this study conceptualizes leadership succession planning as a process enabled by transformational leadership principles. While succession planning and organizational performance are treated as the core variables, transformational leadership provides the mechanism through which these variables interact. Leadership behaviors such as vision-building, mentoring, empowerment, stakeholder engagement, and readiness for change support the development of future leaders and sustain institutional effectiveness during transition.

Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework explored the relationship between strategic planning, organizational performance, and leadership succession in educational institutions. It integrated theories from strategic management, organizational development, and transformational leadership to comprehend the ways in which effective succession planning contributes to the sustainability and success of schools.

The framework assists educational leaders in evaluating the readiness of their institutions for leadership transitions by evaluating the current status of succession plans, which includes the identification of future leaders and the establishment of explicit policies. It also assesses the extent to which these strategies influence performance indicators such as stakeholder trust, academic outcomes, innovation, and staff retention.

It considers common challenges, such as policy issues, limited funding, or resistance to change, and collects recommendations from stakeholders to enhance succession strategies. These insights are employed to inform data-driven, strategic planning that is consistent with the actual requirements and objectives of the institution.

The framework offers school leaders a practical guide for enhancing leadership continuity, enhancing performance, and promoting long-term success.

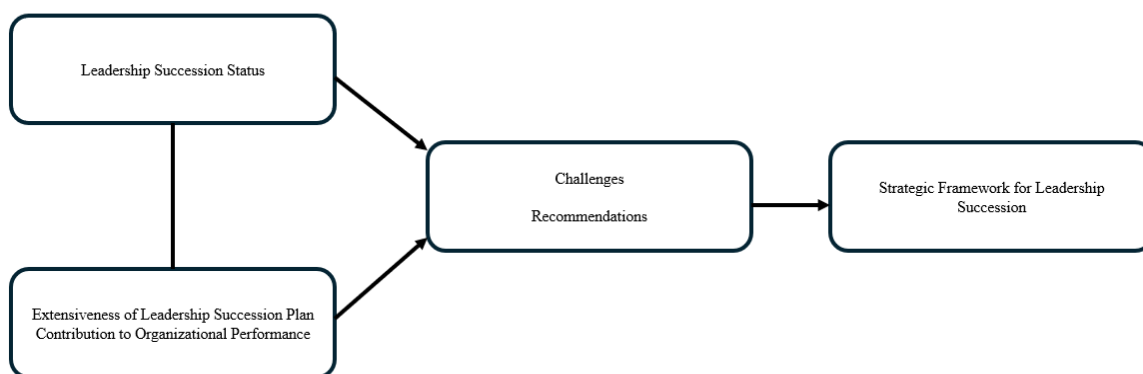


Figure 2. Schematic Diagram of the Conceptual Framework of the Study

Statement of the Problem

The study explored the status of leadership succession status and the extensiveness of the leadership succession plan to the organizational performance of educational institutions in the context of educational management, using the lens of strategic planning. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the status of leadership succession in educational institutions in terms of institutional preparation and implementation?
2. How extensive is the contribution of leadership succession plans to the organizational performance of educational institutions in terms of:
 - a. Leadership Continuity
 - b. Organizational Stability
 - c. Strategic Alignment
3. Is there a significant relationship between the status of leadership succession plans and their extensive contributions to the organizational performance of the school?

4. What challenges do educational institutions face in implementing succession plans?
5. What are the recommendations on succession planning for educational institutions?
6. What strategic planning approach can be developed as an institutional framework for schools?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to examine the relationship between leadership succession and organizational performance in educational institutions through a strategic planning lens. This design was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to establish general patterns quantitatively and then explain those patterns qualitatively through the lived experiences and institutional insights of key informants. Consistent with Creswell and Creswell (2018), the study began with the collection and analysis of survey data, followed by qualitative inquiry to clarify, deepen, and contextualize the statistical results. The design therefore provided both empirical breadth and contextual depth, which were necessary for understanding succession planning in the complex setting of BARMM higher education institutions.

Locale of the Study

The research was conducted in 10 higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Three of these institutions were public, while seven were private. They were selected through purposive sampling to represent a variety of governing systems, missions, and resource allocations. Two tertiary institutions, one private and one public, served as pilot institutions, while the other tertiary institutions were utilized for initial data collection.

BARMM Map with Selected Higher Education Institutions

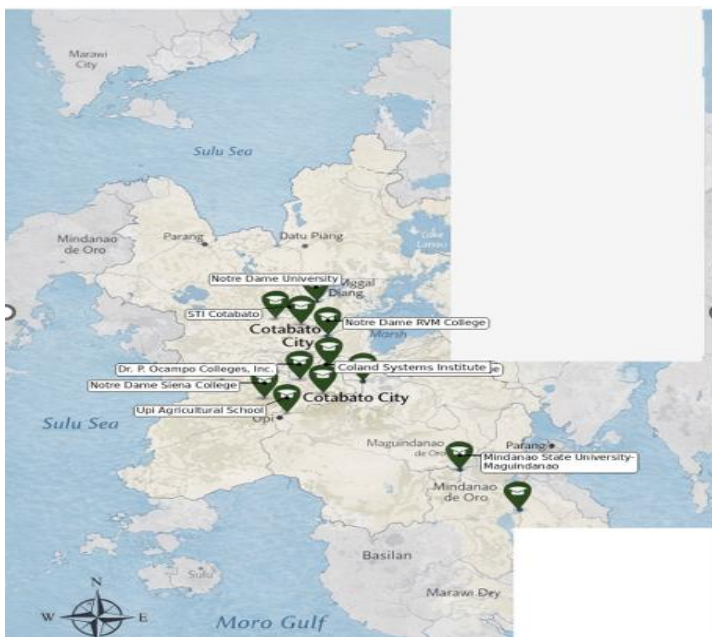


Figure 3. Locations of the identified tertiary institutions in BARMM

Respondents of the Study

Ten higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) served as respondents for the study. Three public and seven private higher education institutions comprised the final group of participants. The quantitative component of the study sought 150 participants from the institutions. 140 of them completed and returned the survey questionnaires because one school did not meet the required number of qualified respondents. Ten interviews with critical informants were conducted for the qualitative component of the study.

Sampling Technique

This study employed purposive sampling because it required participants who possessed direct knowledge of institutional leadership processes and were in a position to provide informed judgments about succession planning and organizational performance. The selected higher education institutions reflected variation in governance structure, institutional mission, and resource conditions, allowing the study to capture a broader range of succession practices across BARMM. For the quantitative phase, respondents were selected on the basis of their familiarity with school leadership processes and institutional operations. For the qualitative phase, key informants were intentionally chosen because of their active involvement in leadership, administration, or policy implementation, enabling the study to gather deeper explanatory insights that complemented the survey findings.

Instrumentation

This study utilized two primary tools: a survey questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide. Statistical testing yielded an overall Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.990, indicating excellent internal consistency of the survey items (George & Mallery, 2003).

Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection procedure was conducted in two phases, consistent with the explanatory sequential approach. In the first phase, the researcher administered the survey questionnaire onsite to the intended participants and retrieved completed responses for quantitative analysis. In the second phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected key informants to explain and deepen the interpretation of the survey findings.

Timeline of Data Gathering Procedure

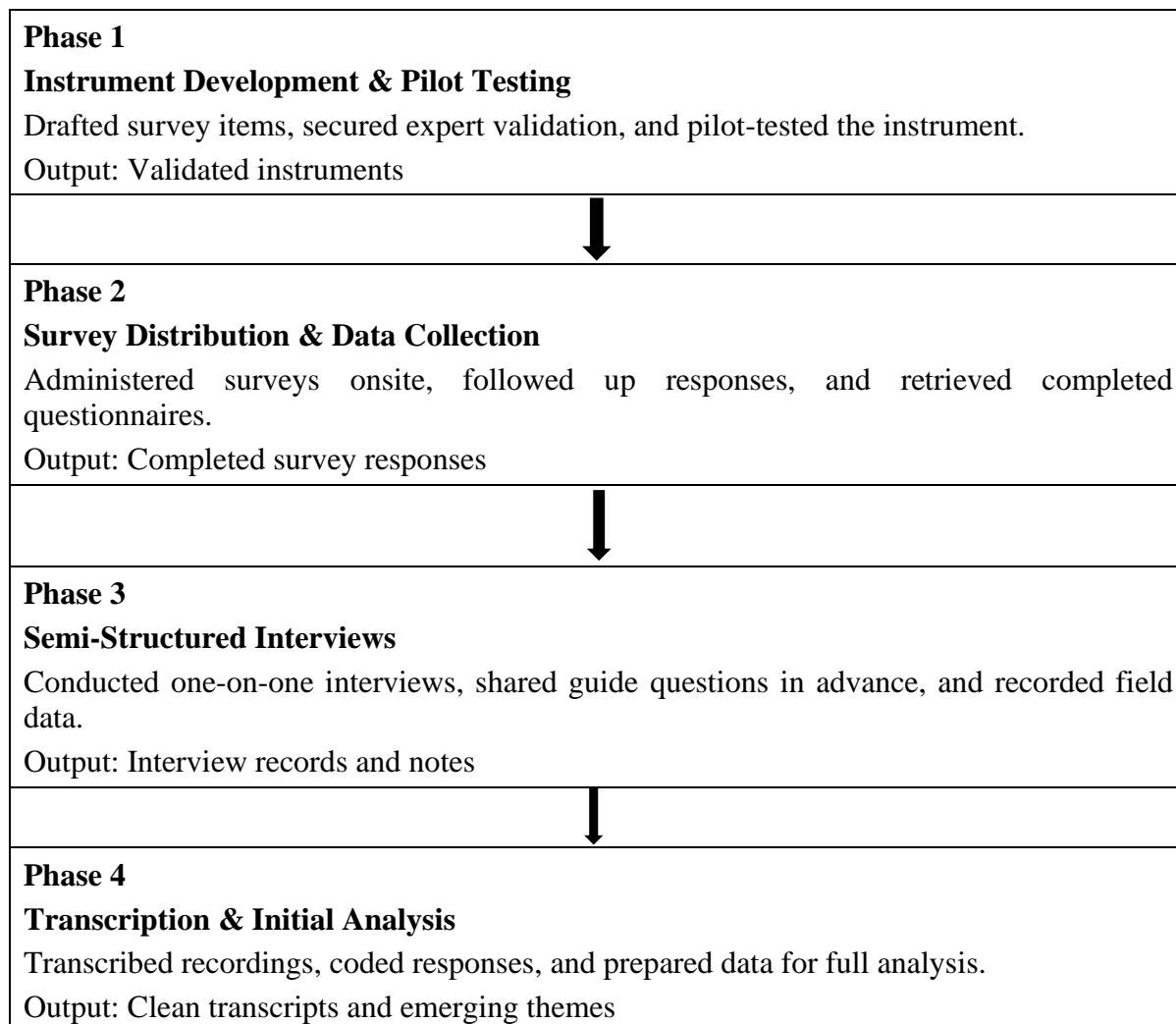


Figure 4. Phases and timeline of Data Collection Activities

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

The survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, particularly the mean and standard deviation. Spearman's rank-order correlation (Spearman's rho) was employed for inferential analysis to determine the impact of leadership succession planning on organizational performance.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data underwent thematic analysis to identify patterns, categories, and emergent themes from the interview replies.

Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Data

During the interpretation phase, triangulation was used to integrate the findings from the quantitative and qualitative strands. The quantitative data established the overall status of leadership succession, its contribution to organizational performance, and the strength of their relationship. The qualitative findings then clarified how these patterns were experienced within institutions and why specific challenges and recommendations emerged. By comparing and linking results from both strands, triangulation strengthened validity, reduced the limitations associated with a single method, and produced a more comprehensive understanding of succession planning in BARMM tertiary institutions.

Ethical Considerations

Before gathering data, the researcher got permission from the appropriate Research Ethics Committee (REC) and was granted certificate of approval with protocol number 2025-032. All participants were given an informed consent form that clearly explained the study's purpose, that participation was voluntary, that they could leave at any time without penalty, and that steps had been taken to keep their information private.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Status of Leadership Succession

The findings revealed that leadership succession was evident in the participating institutions, although the degree of formalization and regular review varied across schools.

Table `1. Status of Leadership Succession

Statement	\bar{x}	s	Description
1. The school has a written leadership succession plan.	2.99	1.02	Evident
2. There is a formal leadership succession program and processes established in the school.	3.08	0.98	Evident
3. Key leadership positions are clearly identified for succession planning.	3.03	0.95	Evident
4. The school provides well-structured programs for leadership development opportunities to potential successors.	3.04	0.93	Evident
5. The school is adequately prepared for unexpected leadership vacancies.	3.03	0.91	Evident
6. The succession plan is regularly reviewed and updated as facilitated by top management.	2.89	0.97	Evident
7. Trainings, coaching, and mentorship programs are consistently offered to potential successors.	3.06	0.85	Evident

8. There is clear communication among stakeholders regarding the objectives and processes of the succession plan.	2.94	0.99	Evident
9. Succession planning is aligned with the long-term goals and strategic vision of the school.	3.10	0.89	Evident
10. Stakeholders, including teachers and staff, are actively involved in the succession planning process.	2.88	0.97	Evident
Overall	3.00	0.95	Evident

Legend

Scale Range of Means Description

4	3.50 - 4.00	Very Evident
3	2.50 - 3.49	Evident
2	1.50 - 2.49	Slightly Evident
1	1.00 - 1.49	Not Evident

Organizational Performance

Succession planning has considerably improved the organization's performance by ensuring leadership continuity, organizational stability, and strategic alignment.

Table 2.1. Organizational Performance in terms of Leadership Continuity

Statement	\bar{x}	s	Description
1. The leadership succession plan guarantees a smooth transition during leadership changes.	3.14	0.75	Extensive
2. The succession plan ensures the transfer of expertise and institutional knowledge to new leaders.	3.11	0.79	Extensive
3. The program provides leadership development opportunities to prepare potential successors.	3.21	0.80	Extensive
4. Succession planning contributes to organizational stability by ensuring continuity in decision-making and the smooth flow of everyday activities.	3.22	0.81	Extensive
5. The leadership transition process is structured to prevent performance gaps.	3.21	0.86	Extensive
6. Leadership continuity helps maintain organization's momentum which allows to stay focused on its goals and objectives.	3.29	0.76	Extensive
7. Succession planning conveys an impression of stability and consistent performance, so strengthening stakeholders' confidence and maintaining the credibility of the organization.	3.22	0.81	Extensive
8. A succession plan helps ensure that new leaders are aligned with the organization's objectives promoting continuity and progress towards goals.	3.27	0.81	Extensive
9. A clear succession plan reduces uncertainty and anxiety among employees, clients and students which may contribute to excellent performance of the institution.	3.17	0.80	Extensive
10. The organization can institutionalize strategic thinking and ensure a long-term vision is preserved.	3.31	0.77	Extensive

Table 2.2 Organizational Performance in terms of Organizational Stability

Statement	\bar{x}	s	Description
1. The succession plan ensures the consistent implementation of institutional policies, programs, and initiatives, thereby increasing organizational stability.	3.29	0.69	Extensive
2. Leadership succession fosters employee confidence and trust in institutional stability.	3.26	0.72	Extensive
3. The program helps reduce turnover rates and associated costs by preparing internal candidates.	3.09	0.81	Extensive
4. Leadership transition efforts enhance collaboration and coordination across different levels of the organization.	3.21	0.81	Extensive
5. The school's leadership succession plan strengthens relationships with stakeholders and partners.	3.26	0.84	Extensive
6. Succession planning enhances organizational stability by reducing issues and risks associated with leadership transitions.	3.24	0.80	Extensive
7. Succession plan identifies and develops future leaders that enhance skills and performance ultimately contributing to the organization's overall performance.	3.26	0.80	Extensive
8. The human resource is more likely to be engaged, motivated and committed to the organization's success when they see a clear path for advancement, promotion and development.	3.14	0.80	Extensive
9. Succession plan provides opportunities for compliance of requirements from different authorities (DepEd, CHED, TESDA etc.).	3.26	0.80	Extensive
10. Succession planning promotes a culture of mentorship and knowledge transfer, ensuring that critical skills and expertise are retained within the organization.	3.22	0.87	Extensive
Overall	3.22	0.80	Extensive

Table 2.3. Organizational Performance in terms of Strategic Alignment

Statement	\bar{x}	s	Description
1. The leadership succession plan aligns with the school's vision, purpose, objectives, and strategic priorities.	3.33	0.79	Extensive
2. The program cultivates prospective leaders capable of promoting institutional development, innovation, and competitiveness.	3.29	0.80	Extensive
3. Succession planning equips leaders to effectively address new difficulties in the education sector.	3.20	0.86	Extensive
4. The leadership pool cultivates individuals who exemplify and advocate for the institution's mission and basic values.	3.23	0.84	Extensive
5. The succession plan aids in attaining and maintaining Institutional accreditations, certificates, and recognitions (DepEd, CHED, TESDA, etc.).	3.21	0.82	Extensive
6. Succession planning is consistently evaluated and revised to remain congruent with the school's goal and external advancements.	3.04	0.89	Extensive
7. Successors are identified and selected based on the ability to improve decision-making and strategic initiatives.	3.06	0.89	Extensive
8. Leadership succession initiatives are included into institutional growth	3.09	0.87	Extensive

strategies, policies, and long-term plans.			
9. The initiative for cultivating future leaders promotes ongoing enhancement and alignment with organizational priorities.	3.12	0.84	Extensive
10. The institution monitors and evaluates the extent to which succession planning enhances organizational performance and strategic influence.	3.07	0.85	Extensive
Overall	3.16	0.85	Extensive

Legend

Scale	Range of Means	Description
4	3.50 - 4.00	Very Extensive
3	2.50 - 3.49	Extensive
2	1.50 - 2.49	Slightly Extensive
1	1.00 - 1.49	Not Extensive

The findings indicate that succession planning extensively enhanced organizational performance in terms of strategic alignment, organizational stability, and leadership continuity. Respondents particularly associated succession planning with sustained institutional direction, consistent policy implementation, employee trust, and stronger stakeholder relationships. Leadership continuity was most evident in the preservation of long-term vision, maintenance of organizational momentum, and alignment of new leaders with institutional objectives. These results suggest that succession planning serves not only as a personnel mechanism but also as a strategic function that protects institutional coherence during transition.

Viewed through Transformational Leadership Theory, these findings imply that succession planning becomes more effective when institutions intentionally develop future leaders through vision-building, mentoring, and empowerment. The contribution of succession planning to strategic alignment, for example, reflects the transformational task of linking emerging leaders with the mission, values, and long-term priorities of the institution. Likewise, the positive results for organizational stability and leadership continuity indicate that succession planning works best when current leaders cultivate trust, support professional growth, and prepare successors to sustain collective direction rather than merely assume vacant positions.

Relationship Between Leadership Succession and Organizational Performance

The correlation between the status of leadership succession plans and their influence on organizational performance is presented in the next section. This presents the Spearman rank correlation coefficient (r_s), the p-value, a descriptive interpretation, and the null hypothesis that was selected.

Table 4. Relationship Between Status of Leadership Succession Plans and Their Extensive Contributions to the Organizational Performance

Outcome	Predictor	r_s	p-value	Description	Interpretation	Decision
Organizational Performance	Status of Leadership Succession	0.734	0.000	Strong Correlation	Significant	Reject H_0

Legend

Scale	Range of Correlation Coefficient (r)	Description
5	$\pm 0.89 - \pm 0.99$	Very Strong Correlation
4	$\pm 0.68 - \pm 0.88$	Strong Correlation
3	$\pm 0.38 - \pm 0.67$	Moderate Correlation
2	$\pm 0.10 - \pm 0.37$	Weak Correlation
1	$\pm 0.01 - \pm 0.09$	Negligible Correlation

The study found a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between the status of leadership succession and organizational performance. This means that institutions with clearer, more organized, and more consistently implemented succession practices also tended to report stronger institutional performance. The finding reinforces the view that succession planning is not peripheral to school management but closely associated with continuity, stability, and strategic alignment. It also supports the argument that leadership preparation contributes to performance when it is treated as a deliberate institutional responsibility rather than a reactive response to vacancy.

Challenges in Implementing Succession Planning

The challenges faced by selected tertiary institutions in implementing succession plans are presented in the following table. The analysis describes each indicator using the mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (s) of the respondents' evaluations.

Table 5. Challenges Faced in Implementing Succession Plans

Statement	\bar{x}	s	Description
1. There exists a lack of understanding and dedication among both leadership and workers concerning the significance of succession planning.	2.76	0.86	Challenging
2. Succession planning lacks an all-encompassing and clear institutional strategy or framework.	2.59	0.86	Challenging
3. Financial limitations hinder the effective execution of succession planning programs.	2.77	0.88	Challenging
4. Insufficient time and priorities are allocated to the design, development, and implementation of succession plans.	2.71	0.92	Challenging
5. There is a shortage of qualified and prepared individuals to assume leadership positions when required.	2.72	0.91	Challenging
6. Opportunities for training, mentorship, and leadership development for prospective successors are constrained.	2.64	0.84	Challenging
7. The institution's culture inadequately facilitates leadership transition, resulting in ineffective execution.	2.59	0.93	Challenging
8. The opposition from existing leaders interferes with the development and endorsement of prospective successors.	2.58	0.91	Challenging
9. Succession planning frequently adopts a reactive approach instead of a proactive one, rendering the institution subject to abrupt leadership gaps.	2.62	0.86	Challenging
10. External concerns, such as accreditation requirements, government rules, or competition, are inadequately included into the succession planning process, resulting in more challenges.	2.59	0.86	Challenging
Overall	2.66	0.88	Challenging

Legend

Scale	Range of Means	Description
4	3.50 - 4.00	Very Challenging
3	2.50 - 3.49	Challenging
2	1.50 - 2.49	Slightly Challenging
1	1.00 - 1.49	Not Challenging

Implementation remained challenging because of limited successor readiness, turnover pressures, insufficient time and funding, resistance to change, and weak policy institutionalization. These challenges should be understood not only as generic succession issues but also as reflections of the institutional realities of BARMM higher education institutions.

In practical terms, the shortage of qualified successors may indicate that some institutions have only a small pool of personnel who have been given leadership exposure, mentoring, or formal preparation for higher responsibilities. Resource constraints may also limit the regular conduct of training, coaching, and succession review, especially when institutions must simultaneously respond to compliance demands, accreditation requirements, and day-to-day operational pressures. Resistance to change may further stem from organizational cultures in which leadership transition is closely tied to trust, legitimacy, and long-established informal practices. Taken together, these findings suggest that succession planning in BARMM must be treated as a strategic and culturally situated governance concern, not simply as a technical human resource procedure.

Recommendations on Succession Planning

The recommendations for succession planning at selected tertiary institutions are shown in the table that follows. The interpretation is descriptive and corresponds to the mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (s) of the respondents' evaluations for each indicator.

Table 6. Recommendations on Succession Planning

Statement	\bar{x}	s	Description
1. Establishing formal leadership training programs can enhance succession planning.	3.69	0.56	Strongly Agree
2. Mentorship and coaching programs are effective strategies for preparing future leaders.	3.74	0.53	Strongly Agree
3. Regular workshops and seminars on leadership skills are essential for leadership development.	3.68	0.55	Strongly Agree
4. Developing a system to identify high-potential individuals early improve succession planning.	3.68	0.55	Strongly Agree
5. Encouraging teachers and staff to take on leadership roles prepare them for future responsibilities.	3.71	0.54	Strongly Agree
6. Career path planning within the school supports the leadership pipeline.	3.66	0.57	Strongly Agree
7. Developing a clear and comprehensive succession planning policy is crucial.	3.55	0.64	Strongly Agree
8. Incorporating succession planning into the school's strategic plans enhance its effectiveness.	3.56	0.61	Strongly Agree
9. Regular evaluation and updating of succession planning models ensure their relevance.	3.59	0.61	Strongly Agree
10. Involving various stakeholders, including teachers and parents, strengthens the succession planning process.	3.55	0.65	Strongly Agree
Overall	3.64	0.583	Strongly Agree

Legend

Scale	Range of Means	Description
4	3.50 - 4.00	Strongly Agree
3	2.50 - 3.49	Agree
2	1.50 - 2.49	Disagree
1	1.00 - 1.49	Strongly Disagree

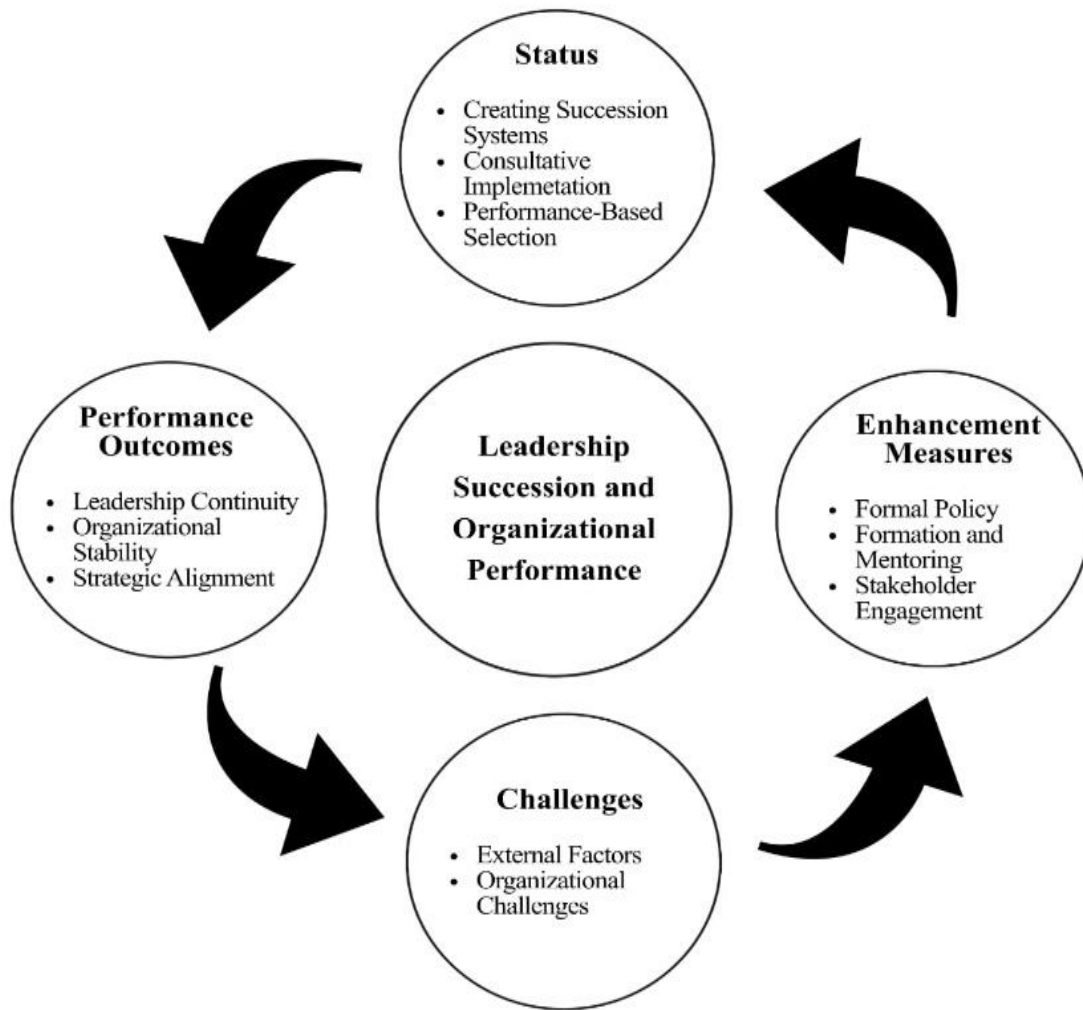


Figure 5. Simulacrum of Themes

The simulacrum highlights the thematic relationship between leadership succession and the effectiveness of educational institutions. The primary emphasis of the study is "Leadership Succession and Organizational Performance," positioned centrally within the figure. This central concept emphasizes that leadership succession

transcends mere replacement of leaders; it represents a strategic institutional concern that significantly influences the long-term stability and effectiveness of schools.

The central idea is supported by four key themes: Status, Performance Outcomes, Challenges, and Enhancement Measures. The arrows indicate that these themes are interrelated and recur, highlighting that succession planning is a continuous process within an organization rather than a singular task for the administration.

This cyclical relationship also suggests that succession planning is not a one-time administrative event. Rather, it is a continuing institutional process in which present conditions, perceived outcomes, implementation barriers, and improvement measures inform one another over time.

Strategic Framework For Leadership Succession

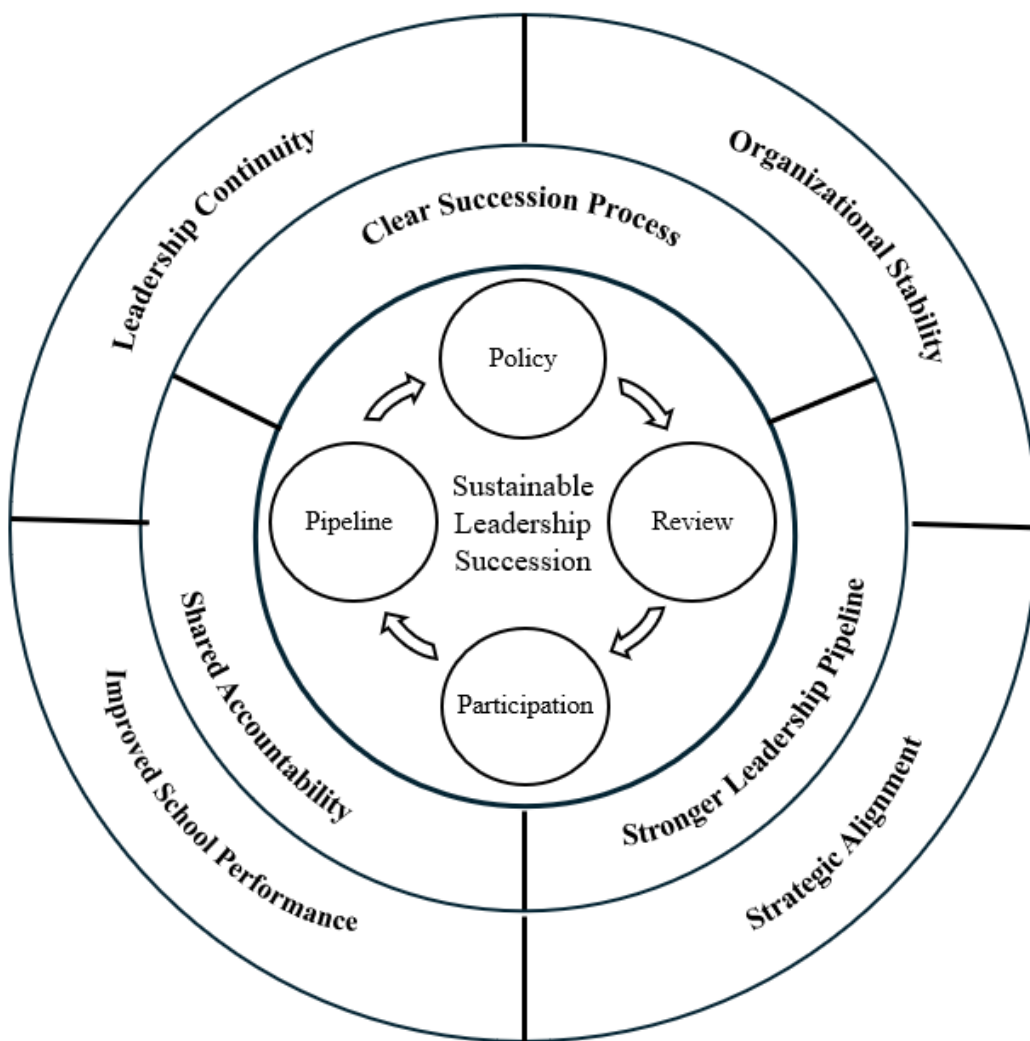


Figure 6. Strategic Framework for Leadership Succession

The study proposes the Adaptive Participatory Leadership Succession Framework for Schools, which is built on Policy, Pipeline, Participation, and Review. To strengthen its practical application, the framework may be operationalized through four interrelated stages.

Under Policy, institutions establish formal succession planning guidelines, identify critical leadership positions, and define competency-based criteria for selecting and developing potential successors. Under Pipeline, schools create leadership development pathways through mentoring, coaching, role exposure, professional development,

and guided administrative experience. Under Participation, the framework encourages the involvement of administrators, faculty, staff, and relevant governing bodies so that succession planning becomes transparent, inclusive, and institutionally owned. Under Review, institutions periodically assess succession readiness, evaluate leadership development efforts, and revise policies and processes in response to internal changes and external demands.

In terms of scalability, the framework can be adapted according to institutional size, resources, and governance structure. Smaller institutions may begin with succession mapping for key positions and low-cost mentoring arrangements, while larger institutions may establish formal leadership pools, structured development systems, and succession review committees. At the policy level, the framework may also guide governing bodies and educational leaders in integrating succession planning into strategic planning, quality assurance, and institutional development processes.

Implications for Educational Leadership and Management

This research has substantial implications for educational leadership and management because it demonstrates that succession planning should be treated as a strategic institutional responsibility rather than a routine replacement procedure. Institutions are more likely to demonstrate leadership continuity, organizational stability, and strategic alignment when succession planning is implemented with greater clarity, structure, and consistency. For educational leaders and managers, this means that formal policies, mentorship, leadership development, and guided exposure are not optional add-ons but central mechanisms for sustaining performance during transition.

The study also shows that succession planning becomes more effective when it is integrated into the school's broader strategic planning processes. Academic leaders, administrators, and human resource officers therefore need to align succession systems with long-term institutional priorities, performance expectations, and development goals. In practical terms, institutions may use these findings to strengthen leadership pipelines, clarify leadership criteria, and establish more regular review and evaluation of succession practices.

The results further highlight the need for clearer written policies, stronger stakeholder engagement, and greater transparency in succession processes. For institutional governance and policy development, the findings support the adoption of competency-based leadership preparation, formal mentoring systems, and periodic succession audits. In the BARMM context and in comparable transitional settings, succession planning should be recognized as a governance priority that supports institutional resilience, continuity, and long-term performance.

Theoretical and Practical Contributions

This research contributes to Transformational Leadership Theory by applying it to leadership succession planning in higher education institutions within the BARMM context. Transformational Leadership Theory, as articulated by Burns (1978) and Bass and Riggio (2006), emphasizes vision-building, motivation, empowerment, and readiness for change. The present study demonstrates that these leadership functions are central not only to current leadership practice but also to the preparation of future leaders and the preservation of institutional performance during transition.

The findings show that succession planning supports leadership continuity, organizational stability, and strategic alignment when leaders cultivate mentoring relationships, communicate institutional vision, encourage participation, and prepare others for greater responsibility. These patterns reflect transformational leadership behaviors such as inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence. Conversely, the challenges associated with weak policy implementation, limited successor preparation, and resistance to change illustrate what may happen when transformational leadership processes are not yet deeply institutionalized.

Practically, the research offers higher education institutions a context-sensitive rationale for treating succession planning as a strategic institutional function rather than a routine administrative response to vacancy. The proposed framework is particularly useful for educational leaders, planners, and policymakers in BARMM and similar settings because it links policy direction, leadership development, stakeholder participation, and

continuous review. In this sense, the study extends the use of transformational leadership from the level of individual leader behavior to the level of institutional design and succession governance.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited by its exclusion of basic and higher education institutions from beyond the BARMM region, perhaps limiting the findings' applicability to other settings. External influences, such as national policy shifts, economic situations, or community dynamics, are outside the scope and control of the study. The findings are limited to a given timeframe and do not account for changes that may occur after the data collection period. Furthermore, because the data is based on self-reported replies, there is a possibility of response bias. Even when rigorous validation procedures are used, researcher interpretation may still influence how qualitative data is analyzed. Differences in institutional culture, leadership style, and size may all have an impact on the consistency of results. Despite these constraints, the study seeks to provide useful insights into how strategic succession planning might enhance leadership continuity and increase performance in educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

The study emphasizes the importance of educational institutions adopting more methodical, inclusive, and development-focused approaches to leadership succession. Succession planning emerges as a strategic and evidence-based institutional function capable of improving continuity, stability, and alignment over time. In the context of BARMM higher education institutions, the findings further show that succession planning is most meaningful when it is formalized, context-responsive, and linked to leadership development, stakeholder participation, and strategic planning processes.

Recommendation for Future Research

1. Conduct comparative study in various educational contexts.
2. Confirm the results in regions beyond the BARMM.
3. Evaluate the efficacy of the proposed framework in actual educational environments.
4. Examine retention challenges, external draw factors, and attrition.
5. Evaluate the impact of organizational culture on succession planning.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author gratefully acknowledges the support of the Graduate School of Notre Dame University, Notre Dame of Cotabato, and the Cotabato Regional and Medical Center Research Ethics Committee for their academic, institutional, and ethical support during the conduct of this study. The author also sincerely thanks the dissertation adviser, reader, validators, panel members, external assessors, participating institutions, and all survey and interview respondents for their valuable guidance, feedback, and contributions.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval

This study received ethical approval from the Cotabato Regional and Medical Center Research Ethics Committee with protocol number 2025-032.

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