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SUCCESSION PLANNING AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION; A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Organizations in the world over are facing a talent crunch. In the current competitive era, this has put pressure on HR managers to attract, develop and ensure that the best talent stay. This review examined the array of literature available in the local context about succession planning and employee retention. The review revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between Succession Management Practices and Employee Retention. It is clear therefore that, Succession management practices should always be considered as a key component and outcome of strategic human resource management for enhanced employee retention and performance. Organizations should consider Succession management practices as core HR practices if they are to retain their employees. The study recommended a longitudinal research for an in-depth examination of the succession Management Practices and employee retention.

Key words: *Succession Planning, Employee Retention*

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INTRODUCTION

Succession planning and employee retention besides HR planning are related to staffing and both the terms have a direct impact on eliminating the staff turnover (Ruthwell, 2005). The major motive of succession planning is to make sure that there is the presence of preferred managers to fill the job vacancies made by promotions, retirement etc. makes sure that a corps of manager is present to fill the jobs that might be created in future (Armstrong, 2011). Employee retention has been one of the top workforce management challenge highlighted by 47% of the HR leaders in the survey done by Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)/Globoforce employee recognition report (SIA, 2018). The employee retention challenge has been successively coming on the top of the list for the last three years. According to the survey, one of the major challenges that came across was employee turnover and succession planning. Given the survey, it can be demonstrated that succession planning needs to be looked upon by the companies under every industry and the issue needs to be solved as soon as possible.

According to Berthal (1999), succession planning practices involves having a support system with senior management and involving the line managers in recognizing potential candidate and integrating the succession management plans with the business strategies (Stadler, 2008). In another study, it was identified that succession planning practices must be implemented after recognizing the individual needs and then incorporating it (Aswathappa, 2013). Some of the most common practices identified by previous studies under succession planning include self-development, talent development, diversity management, and job rotation. It has been founded by one of the scholars that seeking for the preferred replacements comes under the procedure which needs a complex design along with an accurate strategy (Mathur & Agarwal, 2013). It has been further suggested that there must be the three-stage model for the companies in terms of categorizing their succession planning and development practices. The first phase over here is recognizing the primary roles for the succession and replacement planning and then identifies the skills and competencies needed to fulfill that role. The second phase involves the evaluation of people under the criterion. The last stage is addressing the talent pool that will help to fill those roles and establish the employees to get into the advance stage of their career. In view of these stages, it has been asserted by other scholars that some other practice scan also be adapted in attaining the succession planning that are adequate enough for the firm (Ramthun & Matkins, 2014). These practices include making the aims clear and demonstrating the needs of the present performance of the employees.

The four different types of employee turnover include involuntary turnover, voluntary turnover, avoidable and unavoidable turnover. In a study, it was stated that factors of retention are recognized by the outcome of labor turnover and risk assessment that must be conducted timely (Jaffar, 2019). The employee retention strategies are taking a rise as being the most important workforce organizational challenge in the contemporary world. From the early nineteenth century, the previous scholars have been demonstrating not just about the findings based on why the employees are leaving the organization, they have also highlighted that how the employees should be made engaged with the company and in what way they would stay with the company. This can be done through the well-implemented employee retention practices that as a result raise the tenure of employee more as compared to the remuneration for themselves by reducing the turnover costs and raising the productivity of employees.

Studies acknowledge that the most essential predictors of retention involve the intrinsic fulfillment and the working conditions instead of focusing on the financial rewards (Jafar, 2019; Eshiteti *et al.,* 2013). Moreover, the lack of professional growth and development often impacts the turnover rate rather than creating a balance among the life and work. The past studies based on the concept of employee retention have explained that employees that are giving the central focus to their jobs and more towards looking at doing the good add in improving the satisfaction level of clients in the workplace (Iqbal & Hashmi, 2015). Linking to this, it has been added by other scholars that a business is needed to encourage its employees in terms of retaining them. This can be done by means of various strategies (Mendes & Standler, 2011). It has also been studied by Hong *et al* (2012) that employees in regards to giving importance to the career development, skills attainment and effective performance management are looking forward for their career progression from their company. The study found that training and development followed with performance management and compensation is very important for retaining the employees. However, it can be observed that multiple studies have explained the importance of higher participation of the workers and the way it could enhance in retaining them. While summing it up, it can be stated that the previous studies have described the concept of retention as a constant relation amongst the workers and the workplace.

Although Succession management practices are applied by companies in Kenya, they can only contribute optimally to business performance if both top management and employees are aligned on its objectives and implementation in the organization (Mwendwa, 2014). Business Review Management (2013) reports that Kenya faces the challenge of shortage of talent. These challenges include hiring, retaining, training and motivating professional talent. Moreover, shortage of talent management is felt in both professional and nonprofessional management in Kenya. In the current competitive business environment in Kenya, many companies have failed to give talent management the attention it deserves (Chemaiyo, 2016), and it is only in the recent past that companies have integrated talent management to its human resource practices and talent management is silent and missing in many human resource departments.

In a survey carried out in 2014 in Telkom Kenya, 80 per cent of respondents indicate that TM was given higher priority due to change in organizational structure. 70 per cent of the respondents in the survey indicate that search for talent with much needed competences is a priority in the organization due to the constant pressure of competition from other telecommunication companies such as Safaricom, Airtel and Kenya Postal Corporation (Chemaiyo, 2016). The survey further indicates that the Kenyan market has evolved and organizations have begun to put considerable emphasis on talent acquisition and retention.

A TM survey at Kerio Valley Development Authority (KVDA) indicates that the organization is keen on TM strategies and is keen on retaining the available talents in the organization (KVDA Talent Management Survey, 2011) as cited in Chemaiyo (2016). However, the TM strategies did not address the lower cadre employees, who must be prepared to ascend to senior positions. The study further indicates that, retention and motivation of employees is a problem in the organization. It further reveals that the organization did not have a formal budget specifically set for training and recruitment for competitive talents from the labour market.

If human resource practitioners put more emphasis on organizations management of talents and reinforce processes and programs as well as strategies on talent management, then organizations may post improved productivity and profitability (Chemaiyo, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Currently, organizations are facing the challenge of retaining their skilled talent (Schuler, 2011; Scullion, 2010; Tarique & Schuler, 2010). According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2012), at least 20 per cent of employees leave their organisation, this severe drain of talents from organizations has not spared mobile telecommunication sector. The high rate of employee turnover in these organizations can be attributed to the fact that many managers have dismissed talent management as a non-issue and have not put in place strategies to retain talent in their organization (Rono & Kiptum, 2017). Usually, the lack of staff retention in these organizations has had adverse effects on service delivery (Ng'ethe, Iravo & Namusonge, 2012). According to the Annual Report, Safaricom has experienced a staff turnover of approximately 6.0 per cent (Safaricom Annual Report, 2016), 20 percent Airtel (Nding'ori, 2015; Odembo, 2013) and 35 percent in Telkom Kenya (Muteti, 2013).

Several studies have been done on talent management (Ochieng, 2016; Ndung'u & Omondi, 2015; Silvia, 2014; Omondi, 2013; Wambui, 2012), many of whom have studied about how talent management affects competitive advantage (Hejase *et al.,* 2016; Chepkwony, 2012) however, there is limited research that has been done on how talent management influence employee retention in the mobile telecommunication industry in Kenya. Nonetheless, despite a significant growth in talent management literature, most studies were carried out in other sectors such as banks (Karuri, 2015; Ndung'u & Omondi, 2015; Kibui, Gachunga & Namusonge, 2014; Silvia, 2013), commercial state corporations (Mwajuma, 2015; Njeri, 2014; Kagwiria, 2013; Wambui, 2012), training institutions (Katitia, 2014), in supply chain (Ochieng, 2016) and healthcare industry (Mukweyi, 2016; Karemu, Kachori, Josee & Okibo, 2014). Therefore, there are significant gaps between talent management and employee retention scholarship in mobile telecommunication industry in Kenya, which the current study sought to address.

Research Hypothesis

The study was guided by the following hypothesis;

- H_0 Succession planning has no significant influence on employee retention in Mobile Telecommunication Companies in Kenya

LITERATURE REVIEW

Succession Planning and Employee Retention

Garg and Van Weele (2012) assert that the lack of proper succession planning in an organisation can have a direct effect of causing business to collapse upon departure of key players (Maphisa *et al.,* 2017). The rise in the employee turnover rates is increasing the concerns amongst the organizations in retaining the employees in the workplace (Jaffar, 2019). The higher turnover rates are threatening the business capability in earning higher profits. Grounded by the leadership and motivational theories, the following study aims explore that how the succession planning strategies could help in retaining the employees in the organization. Staff turnover in the business environment which is varying day by day and is getting highly competitive is increasing in most of the companies in the world. This results in changing the demographics of the workers, rise in the global competition and technology that calls for the development of the talent pool to take the leadership responsibilities and pull the businesses towards the next level. There are some of the managers that feel that there is an issue of high attrition rate which seems to be threatening for the growth of the firms according to Pattanayak (2005). There are about 47% of the companies that are going through shrinking or closing up due to the absence of competent managers and as a result, there is no one there to encourage the employees and retain them (Jaffar, 2019)

Studies show that many organisations are not ready or well equipped to confront the talent crisis when it occurs as they usually lack official succession planning programmes aimed at creating "a feeder pool" of highly capable staff members who would be able to occupy management positions in the future (Eshiteti *et al.*, 2013). Even though most companies have succession planning programmes in place as per their policies, it is not clear how effective these programmes are (Gulzar & Durrani, 2014).

Statistics show that an overwhelming number of organizations do not have a meaningful succession plan (Global Leadership Solutions, 2011). Today's organizations are faced with a multitude of complex challenges. Some of these challenges include competing in a more globalized work world, leadership breaches in ethical and moral decision-making, retaining and developing talent, keeping up with technological advances and changes, leading a more diversified structure, and in some cases financial woes. As a result of these challenges, succession planning has become a popular topic (Kelly, 2015).

Succession planning involves preparing and developing current employees for senior leadership roles within the organization (Ahmed, 2016). Succession planning has the potential to be one of the major business issues of the coming decade (Nassor, 2013). The demographic reality is that organizations will have a shrinking pool of labour from which to draw on, which will impact operations at all levels, from the receptionist to the CEO (Nassor, 2013). It is this reality that has pushed succession planning – an important issue in normal times to the forefront (Brent, 2013).

M'Cathy (2013) asserts that companies that do it right as measured by bottom-line results follow all if not most of the following ten best practices in implementation of succession planning. These practices include: commitment and involvement of the CEO and Board, regular talent reviews, identifying viable successors for key positions, taking a "pipeline" approach to development**,** holding the executive team accountable**,** aligning the succession plan with business strategy, managing the irrational, political, and emotional dynamics of succession**,** assessing performance of potential successors, integrating succession planning with performance management, recruitment, selection, development and rewards and making a serious commitment to development in terms of time and resources. Succession planning is not an issue that many organizations address in any systematic way (Kigo, 2016). Because many organizations don't consider that a major priority and because they may be facing other organizational challenges, and as such thinking about who the next executive director might be or what would happen if the director of finance suddenly left is not high on their priority list. The impending retirement of the baby boomers is expected to have a major impact on workforce capacity (Lance & Dorothy, 2011). Because of this impending retirement, organisations need to consider succession planning seriously.

Pollit (2009) describes, succession planning as a tool to develop the leaders for future and to review the talent regularly for retention purposes. Topper (2008) who considers succession planning as a source to prepare the future talent that can help the organization to run its affairs smoothly also shares this view. He says that combination of various techniques can be helpful to get the right person for the right job, which helps to manage the talent of that organization.

Bernardin (2007) cites two types of succession planning namely; formal and informal succession plans where the former an individual manager identifies and grooms his or her own replacement and the latter involves an examination of strategic plans and human resource forecast, talent pool and implementation of promotion from within policy. Molina (2013) cites three succession planning best practices geared towards growth and business continuity namely: Benchmarking, considering the future and keeping it dynamic.

For an effective succession planning to take effect there is need for full support from the top management (Nassor, 2013). One of the biggest challenges of succession planning is the unwillingness of top managers to train the junior staff. This is because; those trained pose a threat to the very existence of the senior management. In addition, the general staff must support the efforts and the activities of succession planning. Staff who are unwilling to be trained to take up new and superior tasks may jeopardize the efforts and spirit of succession planning in the organization.

According to a study by Nassor (2013), some of the factors that may influence succession planning are; measuring the performance, determining the performance which is needed for the future, assessing the potential, establishing a way to narrow the gaps, following up, documenting competence, making and maintaining rewards for developing people, evaluating results and leading from the front.

Mehrabani and Mohamad (2011) studied on factors that influence the implementation of the succession planning system in Iran's private Banks, the following factors were found paramount in descending order; training, management support, clarifying the career path, creating positive vision, strong organizational culture, technology advancement, flat structure and financial conditions (Mehrabani and Mohamad, 2011).

According to Heidrick, Struggles, and Stanford University's Survey (2011) on CEO Succession Planning, over 50 per cent of Canadian and US companies have not begun a succession process for the head of their organizations. The research on 140 CEOs and directors at large and mid-cap companies found that 39 per cent of the respondents have no viable internal candidates, only 50 per cent have any written documentation detailing skills required for the next CEO, only 19 per cent have well established benchmarks to measure internal candidate skills and only 50 per cent of companies provide onboarding or transition support for newly named CEOs. Additionally, boards spend only 2 hours a year, on average, discussing CEO succession planning (Heidrick & Struggles, 2011).

CEO turnover rates have risen over the years. In the 12th Annual Global CEO Succession Study, Favaro, Karlsson and Neilson (2011) noted that in 2011, 14.2 percent of CEOs at the world's top 2,500 companies were replaced. This number was sharply higher than the previous year's turnover rate of 11.6 percent. CEO development is becoming an increasingly critical and strategic imperative for organizations in the current business environment. Recent historical events and emerging trends emphasize the need to invest in the active development of leaders (Nassor, 2013).

Maalu (2010) researched on the succession strategy and performance of small and medium family businesses in Nairobi, Kenya. His research aimed at determining the nature of business succession strategies, the factors that influence succession and relationship between succession and firm performance among family owned SMEs in Nairobi. Mwiti (2010) looked into the succession planning process at Josra coffee company and determined the factors that influence the succession process in the firm. In his findings, Mwiti (2010) acknowledged the availability of succession plan at Josra coffee company although not formal and that predecessors are reluctant to delegate powers easily.

Nassor (2013) carried out a study on succession planning among commercial banks in Kenya. The study reveals that succession planning is not planned thus the process is not ongoing throughout. Once a CEO announces his/her exit then that is the time the process begins. Most of the respondents preferred an internal candidate to succeed a CEO over an external candidate. In the study respondents rated board of directors as most influential together with other factors such as government regulations, external completion exit of incumbent CEO, size of organization among others. The study recommends that commercial banks in Kenya take seriously the issue of succession planning so that they can make it an ongoing activity with employees being groomed and informed that they are being prepared for the job.

In a survey conducted by Booz & Co. it was noted that CEO turnover rate was highest among the top 250 companies by market capitalization, highest in the energy, telecom, and utilities sectors by 19, 18, and 16 percent, respectively and that the number of companies among the top 2,500 based in BRIC and other emerging countries has more than doubled, rising from 10 percent in 2006 to 25 percent in 2011 (Favaro *et al.,* 2011).

Avanesh (2011) measured the process of succession planning and its impact on organizational performance in Indian IT sector and made specific recommendations for improving the quality of succession planning and organizational performance. The study found that the overall mean percentage of Succession Planning Performance of IT Consultancy firms (72.4 per cent) is found to be higher than that of IT Product/ Research firms (70.4 per cent). Organizational Performance of IT Consultancy firms (79.6 per cent) are higher than that of the IT Product/ Research firms (76.7 per cent). The relationship between Practice of Succession Planning and Organizational Performance was found to be positive in IT Consultancy Groups and IT Product/Research Groups (Avanesh, 2011).

In a study by Helmich and Gilroy (2012) which focused on CEO successions in State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) in China. The focus of the study was on the supply of executives in different managerial labour markets and on what the aspiring executive is looking for when considering or moving into the CEO position. The study concluded that the likelihood of intra-firm succession in SOEs is significantly increased when the proportion of SOEs in the industry is low. Also, the likelihood of intra-firm succession is significantly increased when the performance of SOEs lags the industry average level.

K'Obonyo *et al.,* (2013) researched on succession strategy and performance of small and medium family businesses in Nairobi, Kenya and concluded that the relationship between succession and performance is not conclusive as to establish a clear causal relationship that can be modelled. They observed that succession strategy should not be considered under the simplistic labels of either planned or emergent where planned is considered as those deliberately considered and formally documented.

A study by Tunje (2014) on Relationship between Succession Planning Practices and Employee retention in large media houses in Kenya. The study reveals that succession planning exists in the large media houses but a lot of emphasis is put on top positions and key talent. The findings also reveal that effective open communication by management, leave management, diversity management; good corporate culture and promotion from within policy are practices, which are put into consideration when implementing succession planning.

Employee Retention

Employee retention issues are emerging as the most critical workforce management challenges of the immediate future (Rono & Kiptum, 2017). Once an organization has captured skilled employees, the return on investment requires closing the back door to prevent them from walking out (Kubaison, Mukangu & Rutiria, 2015). Employees are more likely to remain with the organization only if they believe that the organization shows more interest and concern for them, if they know what is expected of them, if they are given a role that fits their capabilities, and if they receive regular positive feedback and recognition (Samuel & Chipunza, 2013).

Employee retention and talent management practices of successful companies are fundamental element to maintain their leadership and development in the marketplace (Kurbetta & Mehta, 2014). An organization's talent management strategy should contribute to employee engagement, effective recruitment and retention of employees. This will create positive employer brand, employees will want to stay with the organization, which will minimize turnover (Julia, Hughes & Rog, 2008).

Retention of key talent; that employee who is a strong performer, have high potential or are in critical jobs is even more important during economic recoveries when organizations compete aggressively for market share and talent (Kigo, 2016). Key talent disproportionally contributes to current organization performance and to future performance since key employees often become organization leaders. Losing key talent costs considerably more since these employees' impact and contribution are greater than that of typical employees (McMullen & Mark, 2012).

Retention of talent employees is critical to preserving skills of such employees (Chikumbi, 2011). By so doing, a business can avoid losing customers so that they maintain high quality products that are marked by high sales. Employees who work together for a long time will enjoy a healthy working atmosphere, good relations with managers, effective succession planning and deeply embedded organisational knowledge and learning. Failing to retain key employees especially new graduates is costly for any business. Mendez and Stander (2011) further emphasises that a company needs to invest in employee retention in order to be successful. For example, a good compensation package is important in retaining employees, offering an attractive, competitive benefits package with components such as life insurance, disability insurance and flexible hours motivates employees to commit themselves to an organization (Ahmed, 2016).

It is important and difficult to retain talented employees under high unemployment levels. It is important to retain them because of high training and recruitment costs so organizations use rewards to retain employees (Simon North, 2011). Furthermore, Ratna and Chawla (2012) argued that retention is more important than hiring, even though hiring knowledgeable people is essential for an employer. Employee retention also indicates taking the appropriate measures to encourage people to stay in the organization as long as they can. Ratna and Chawla (2012) state that "The process of employee retention will benefit an organization as the cost of employee turnover adds hundreds of thousands of money to a company's expense." It also means that if a company has a higher employee retention rate, it will motivate potential employees to join the company.

McNally (2011) found some ways of retaining valued employees, such as designing a compensation programme to reward valued employees, career opportunity, development and growth paths they need to develop, encouraging work-life balance and good communication. McNally stated that "Give your most valued employees the best opportunities, coaching and rewards, knowing that the key to your company's success is their retention."

Employees must be able to see a clear career path in the organization, only then they will stay for long (Bagga, 2013). Providing great career development opportunities makes the employees to stay in the company for long and at the same time enhances their loyalty to the firm. Also creating a positive social work environment and adding content to the jobs and tasks to be done by the employees enhances employee satisfaction and commitment (Meganck, 2007).

In an exploratory study to identify ways to retain talent conducted in professional organizations Govaerts *et. al.,* (2010) collected a sample of 972 employees and concluded, to retain employees it is important to pay attention to learning of employees. Learning and development of employees plays a key role in talent management strategy. In order to retain people, organizations should allow people to learn more and do more in what they are good at. This kind of talent management practices leads to satisfied employees, which lead to retention. The study further identifies a positive relationship in intention to stay with the company and age of the employees. Using different talent management practices, the company is able to retain employee for a longer period, the less will be the intention of employee to leave job (Mehta, 2014).

In order to keep attrition low, managers must provide sufficient training to employees to attain the necessary KSA to perform better, so that older employees in the organization are at the same expertise level as compared to their younger counterparts (Taplin, Winston & Winterton, 2007). Well-trained workers stay loyal to their employees (Leidner, 2013). Access to training, adjusting training practices as per older employees' requirements and an age-awareness training program is required for better older employee retention (Marjorie, Stassen & Templer, 2004). Lastly, it is important to retain employees otherwise; it leads to wastage of training costs. Employee retention is a technique adopted by businesses to maintain an effective workforce and at the same time meet operational requirements (Kurbetti & Mehta, 2014).

Chepkwony (2012) did a study on the link between talent management practices, succession planning and corporate strategy amongst commercial banks in Kenya and found that there is a direct link between talent management practices, succession planning and corporate strategy. He also found out that banks rely on management trainees as part of the retention strategy of which only as small percentage are retained over a period of five years.

Eshiteti *et al*. (2013) researched on effects of succession planning programs on staff retention amongst sugar companies in Kenya and concluded that succession planning programs emerged as a strong factor influencing staff retention mainly through provision of employee growth opportunities and job satisfaction. This was enabled through programs such as job rotation, mentoring, coaching and learning programs.

Kataike (2013) carried out a study to determine the relationship between talent management and employee retention and found out that there is a strong positive relationship between talent management and staff retention, and therefore management must give more attention to talented staff in order to retain their services in the long term. The study concluded that talent management cannot be divorced from employee retention because they go hand in hand. Organizations need to develop their employees for them to perform well.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study predicted that succession planning had a positive and significant influence on employee retention in the mobile telecommunications sector in Kenya. Accordingly, employees who are aware that the organization has a succession-planning program tend to work more for the organization longer in the hope that they are likely to ascend to management positions.

Further, it was also found that many employees were aware that the presence of a succession planning strategy did not guarantee promotion and that it had little influence on their stay. From the study, it was also evident that many employees felt that it was necessary for the organization to identify potential successors through talent identification in the various departments. It was also established that most succession plans did not put into consideration all the positions; however, the key positions were limited and only featured key talents in the various departments. Therefore, since it was established that succession planning had a positive and significant influence on employee retention in Kenya, the hypothesis set was rejected.

Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Research

These findings added to the already existing empirical and conceptual evidence that Talent management practices have an influence on employee retention. They fill the specific knowledge gap that the relationship between talent management practices and employee retention can be supported by the organization to ensure that skilled and talented employees are kept longer in organizations. However, the factors used to measure talent management practices – succession planning, leadership development, skill development - may not be exhaustive. A further review of Succession management practices may identify additional variables and other possible moderators or intervening variables which may broaden the range of influence between these practices and employee retention. Nevertheless, to boost employee retention, it is recommended that organizations should provide their employees with appropriate training on issues of talent management. Similarly, it is also recommended that all employees be allowed to exploit their talent skills, and that they should be given greater autonomy in the performance of their work.

A study by Wambui (2012) indicates that there is a strong relationship between career management and HR outcomes such as employee retention and performance. However, this relationship has not been tested exhaustively in the context of mobile telecommunication sector. Therefore, the replication of this study in other sectors as well as countries, especially in the sub Saharan Africa, could demonstrate the universality and significance of talent management practices and how it relates to employee retention in general.

Similarly, future research in this area should adopt a different research design such as a longitudinal one, to provide a better assessment of the variables and how they improve over time. A longitudinal testing of talent management practices is also critical in terms of establishing a causal linkage between the variables instead of a relationship testing as shown in the descriptive survey. Also, future research should consider combining multiple internal informants with the views of other informants such as customers, together with other stakeholders in the mobile telecommunication industry, in order to generate dependable conclusions of the study variables. Finally, this research work relied on a case study for data collection. Future studies should collect data using multiple methods to avoid common-method bias. Equally, the sample was drawn from mobile telecommunication sector and thus, the conclusions may not be generalized to other industries. In light of this, future studies may be conducted across industries to cover the different organizations and sectoral settings.

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