

Strengthening Leadership Pipelines: A Critical Review of Succession Planning in Tanzania's Public Service (2015-2025)

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Abstract

This paper analyses the status, challenges, and outcomes of succession planning in Tanzania's public service. Guided by human capital and institutional theories, the present study systematically analysed 42 documents published between 2015 and 2025 using a documentary review methodology. The documents were retrieved and selected from multiple credible sources, including Scopus, Google Scholar, CrossRef, institutional repositories, government policy papers, audit reports, and official publications. A thematic coding approach was applied to identify progress, challenges, and outcomes of succession planning initiatives. Findings reveal persistent weaknesses, including poor implementation, policy inconsistency, weak institutional frameworks, and gender disparities in leadership pipelines. The study concludes that while succession planning is widely recognised in official rhetoric, its operationalisation remains inadequate. To strengthen leadership continuity and service delivery, the study recommends developing a national succession planning policy that integrates it with strategic human resource management frameworks and establishing robust monitoring and evaluation systems.

Key Words: Succession Planning, Public Service, Human Resource Strategy, Service Delivery, Human Capital.

1.0 Introduction

Globally, succession planning has emerged as a strategic priority for both public and private institutions, particularly amid demographic shifts, rapid institutional change, and leadership transitions. Countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia have institutionalised succession planning through data-driven approaches, competency frameworks, and leadership pipelines (Chen et al, 2021; CIPD, 2022). These efforts demonstrate how succession planning contributes to leadership continuity, knowledge retention, and organisational resilience. International frameworks, including ISO 30414 on human capital reporting, further emphasise the importance of integrating succession planning into human resource strategies. Without such mechanisms, organisations risk leadership vacuums, weakened decision-making, and diminished productivity (Jindal & Shaikh, 2021).

In Africa, succession planning remains underdeveloped and often informal. Studies indicate that public institutions frequently rely on ad hoc replacements, with limited emphasis on

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leadership development or systematic knowledge transfer (Muriithi & Waithaka, 2019). Even where policy commitments exist, such as in South Africa and Kenya, implementation is hindered by funding constraints, weak institutional capacity, and inconsistent leadership development programmes (Pillay, 2020). Cultural and systemic barriers, including hierarchical leadership styles, patronage, and gender inequality, further constrain progress (Mashikinyi, 2020). As a result, succession planning across much of the continent is often reactive, politicised, and insufficiently inclusive.

In East Africa, the importance of succession planning is increasingly recognised, particularly in Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda, where rapid economic growth has highlighted the need for leadership continuity. Nonetheless, existing frameworks for leadership development remain fragmented, poorly documented, and inconsistently aligned with workforce planning strategies (Gudo & Oanda, 2023; Nantanda et al., 2020).

In Tanzania, succession planning has been referenced in several policy documents, including the Public Service Management and Employment Policy (1998, revised 2008) and the Public Service Standing Orders (2009), which encourage institutions to plan for leadership continuity. However, evidence suggests weak implementation. Research indicates that ministries often lack formal succession plans and rely on political or personal networks in senior appointments rather than merit or structured development (Kyaruzi & Komba, 2021). Reports from the President's Office Public Service Management and Good Governance (PO-PSMGG, 2020) and the Controller and Auditor General (CAG, 2022) similarly highlight the absence of institutionalised frameworks, capacity gaps, and cases in which critical positions remain vacant or are filled on an acting basis for extended periods. Efforts such as the Public Service Reform Programme (PSRP) and the Human Resource Planning and Development Framework (URT, 2020) have sought to professionalise human resource management. However, most ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) still lack enforceable guidelines for identifying and grooming successors (PO-PSMGG, 2021). Challenges include limited alignment between training initiatives and leadership competencies (Ngirwa, 2021), bureaucratic rigidity, and political patronage in appointments (Mkapa Foundation, 2022). Gender imbalances also persist, with women underrepresented in leadership pipelines despite affirmative action policies (TGNP, 2023; Minja et al, 2024).

Despite increasing global and regional recognition of succession planning, several gaps remain in the literature, particularly regarding the public sector in developing countries such as Tanzania. First, most studies on succession planning have been conducted in Western contexts, focusing on private-sector organisations or multinational corporations (Zhang et al., 2023; Tahmasebi, 2025). Limited empirical evidence exists on how succession planning is conceptualised and implemented in African public institutions, where contextual factors such as patronage politics, hierarchical cultures, and resource constraints significantly shape practices (Muriithi & Waithaka, 2019; Pillay, 2020).

Second, within the African context, research tends to be descriptive or policy-oriented, with little systematic analysis of the effectiveness of succession planning frameworks in sustaining leadership continuity or improving service delivery. Existing studies often highlight the absence of formalised structures but stop short of examining how institutions

that attempt succession planning operationalise it, the outcomes achieved, and the challenges encountered (Nantanda et al., 2020; Gudo & Oanda, 2023).

This study sought to investigate the current state of succession planning in the Tanzanian public service, identify institutional and contextual challenges, and offer policy recommendations to strengthen leadership continuity. By addressing these gaps, the study would enhance strategic human resource management and ensure that leadership transitions do not compromise service delivery or institutional stability.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Key Components of Succession Planning

2.1.1 Talent Identification

Talent identification is a foundational element of effective succession planning. Ngirwa (2021) emphasises the importance of systematically identifying high-potential employees to ensure leadership continuity. However, Kamali (2024) notes that many organisations still rely on subjective assessments, which could lead to biases and inconsistencies in identifying potential leaders. In South Africa, Manzini and Malatjie (2023) found that while succession planning is recognised in policy documents, its practical application was often inconsistent, particularly in talent identification. Similarly, Adegoke (2020) notes that, despite the existence of succession planning policies, their implementation was limited, resulting in challenges to leadership continuity and organisational performance. In Tanzanian public sector organisations, research indicates that factors such as staff shortages and lack of qualified personnel impede effective talent identification, affecting succession planning efforts (Mbwambo, 2022). While talent identification is crucial, Mwamanda (2023) argues that many public sector organisations lack formal succession plans, leading to reactive rather than proactive leadership transitions. This inconsistency in implementation raises questions about the actual effectiveness of talent identification in achieving its intended outcomes.

2.1.2 Leadership Development

Leadership development programmes are integral to preparing identified talents for future roles. Tahmasebi (2025) highlights that integrating performance data with succession-planning tools enables organisations to identify high-potential talent and assess their readiness for leadership roles. In Kenya, Siambi (2022) discusses the importance of aligning human resource management practices with organisational strategy to enhance leadership development. The study suggests that effective leadership development programs are those that are integrated with the organisation's strategic goals. In Tanzanian NGOs, Mwamanda (2023) observed that structured leadership development practices positively influence organisational performance. This suggests that when leadership development is strategically integrated, it can enhance organisational effectiveness. Despite the importance of leadership development, Roberts (2023) notes that many organisations fail to implement comprehensive leadership development programs, leading to gaps in leadership readiness and continuity.

2.1.3 Knowledge Transfer

Effective knowledge transfer ensures that critical organisational knowledge is retained and passed on to future leaders. Owolabi and Adeosun (2021) emphasise the importance of systematic knowledge transfer procedures, particularly during generational transitions, to maintain organisational continuity. In Nigeria, Monyei et al. (2021) found that knowledge transfer practices were often informal and lacked structure, leading to challenges in retaining critical organisational knowledge. The study suggests the need for formalised knowledge-transfer mechanisms to ensure continuity of knowledge.

In Tanzanian public sector organisations, research indicates that inadequate knowledge-transfer practices contribute to gaps in leadership continuity, underscoring the need for structured knowledge management systems. In contrast, knowledge transfer is essential, as noted by Kyaruzi and Komba (2021), who argue that many organisations neglect this aspect, leading to the loss of critical knowledge and competencies during leadership transitions.

2.1.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are crucial for assessing the effectiveness of succession planning initiatives (Pillay, 2020). Roberts (2023) discusses how federal agencies identify talent gaps and determine where learning and development programmes could be effective through effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes. In South Africa, Torres (2020) highlights the need for strategic human resources succession planning, emphasising the role of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in assessing the success of these efforts. In Tanzanian public sector organisations, research indicates that the lack of robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems hinders the assessment of succession planning effectiveness, thereby hindering the improvement and refinement of succession strategies (Ngirwa, 2021). Despite the importance of M&E, Minja et al. (2024) note that many organisations lack comprehensive evaluation frameworks, making it difficult to assess the impact of succession planning initiatives and make necessary adjustments.

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.2.1 Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory, pioneered by Becker (1993), posits that individuals possess skills, knowledge, and competencies that represent valuable assets to an organisation. Investing in employee development, including training, mentorship, and leadership preparation, is therefore not merely a cost, but a strategic investment that yields long-term returns through improved organisational performance, innovation, and adaptability (Roberts, 2023; Ngirwa, 2021). In the context of succession planning, this theory informs the current study, which posits that preparing future leaders through structured, continuous capacity-building ensures leadership continuity, preserves institutional memory, and enhances the sustainability of public service delivery (Kamali et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023). In the Tanzanian public service, where senior staff retire or leave without proper knowledge transfer, succession planning becomes a crucial investment in human capital (Mbwambo, 2022). By systematically identifying and nurturing potential leaders, institutions reduce leadership gaps and ensure a steady pipeline of qualified personnel ready to assume key

roles. However, the absence of formalised and consistent succession strategies within ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) undermines this investment, leading to the loss of expertise and service inefficiencies (Minja et al., 2024).

2.2.2 Institutional Theory

Institutional Theory, as articulated by Scott (2017), explains how organisational practices and behaviours are shaped by formal structures, cultural norms, rules, and expectations embedded within an institutional environment (Mshila et al., 2024). Organisations tend to conform to these institutional pressures, whether from laws, policies, or professional norms, to gain legitimacy, resources, and stability.

In Tanzania, the formal institutional environment includes policies such as the *Public Service Management and Employment Policy (1998/Revised 2008)* and the *Public Service Standing Orders (2009)*, both of which recognise the importance of leadership development and staff succession. However, Institutional Theory also highlights the role of informal norms and practices, which can either support or undermine formal systems (Ngirwa, 2021; Mwamanda, 2023). In many Tanzanian public institutions, informal practices such as patronage, political interference, and favouritism often supersede formal succession procedures (Mbwambo, 2022). As a result, succession planning is implemented inconsistently or not at all, despite being embedded in formal policy frameworks (Kyaruzi &Komba, 2021). This theory helps explain why there is often a disconnection between written policies and actual practices in succession planning within the public service.

2.3 Empirical Review

Succession planning is widely acknowledged as vital for ensuring leadership continuity and organisational stability. Scholars such as Zhang et al. (2023) argue that effective succession planning mitigates the risks associated with leadership gaps, enhances organisational performance, and fosters employee engagement. In the UK Civil Service, leadership development schemes are aligned with workforce planning and include clear pathways for talent identification and progression (CIPD, 2022). Bano et al. (2022) emphasise that effective succession planning involves the proactive identification of high-potential employees, mentorship, and mechanisms for knowledge transfer. In Canada, the Public Service Commission incorporates succession planning into performance appraisal and leadership development, ensuring alignment with organisational goals and demographic trends (PSC, 2021). In Canada and Australia, public service commissions have developed comprehensive succession frameworks. However, critics such as Chen et al. (2021) highlight that many public sector organisations lack formal succession plans, leading to reactive rather than proactive leadership transitions. This inconsistency in implementation raises questions about the actual effectiveness of succession planning in achieving its intended outcomes.

In Africa, the implementation of succession planning in the public sector varies significantly across countries, and studies highlight critical gaps. Countries such as Kenya and South Africa initiated capacity-building programmes linked to leadership succession (Mashikinyi, 2020). A study by Muriithi and Waithaka (2019) in Kenya's public service found that succession planning was not institutionalised and that its promotions were often driven

by political influence. Similarly, in Kenya, Gudo and Oanda (2023) found that although the Public Service Commission introduced leadership development programmes, these were rarely linked to succession outcomes, and ministries lacked strategic HR forecasting. Studies in South Africa reveal that while succession planning was recognised in policy documents, its practical application was often inconsistent. For instance, Manzini and Malatjie (2023) found that the National School of Government lacked a formalised succession planning strategy, with leadership transitions occurring reactively. Similarly, Pillay (2021) notes that, despite the existence of succession planning policies, their implementation was limited, leading to challenges in leadership continuity and organisational performance.

Adegoke (2020) observed similar patterns in Nigeria, where civil service reforms have not sufficiently addressed succession management, leading to leadership vacuums upon retirements or transfers. These studies underscore the need for policy frameworks and performance-based systems to institutionalise leadership continuity. In Uganda, Nantanda et al. (2020) reported the absence of succession frameworks in key government agencies, with staff promotions and replacements often reactive and undocumented. Rwanda presents a more positive case, with its Leadership Development Strategy (2021) aiming to link career growth with succession priorities, although implementation challenges remain.

In Tanzania's public sector, succession planning faces several challenges. Research indicates that factors such as staff shortages, lack of qualified personnel, and an ageing workforce impede the effective implementation of succession planning. For example, a study conducted at a Tanzanian public-sector organisation found that these challenges significantly affect succession planning, leading to gaps in leadership continuity (Mohamed, 2022). Massawe and Mgonja (2023) found that only 27% of surveyed institutions had succession plans. Another study by Mrema and Munishi (2020) revealed that political appointments and inadequate training infrastructure hinder succession practices. The UNDP (2022) reported that, despite leadership development programs offered through TPSC and the UONGOZI Institute, these efforts were not effectively linked to succession planning. The TGNP (2023) study on gender representation highlighted that succession systems often exclude women and minority groups from leadership pipelines.

Furthermore, studies show that succession planning was mentioned in national policies but lacks clear operational frameworks. Kyaruzi and Komba (2021) examined succession challenges in central government ministries in Tanzania and found that most institutions had no formal plans, instead relying on immediate replacements during crises. Moreover, leadership development was not synchronised with performance appraisals or talent management systems (Minja et al., 2024). The Public Service Recruitment Secretariat (PSRS) Annual Reports (2015–2023) also highlight delays in filling senior vacancies and reliance on acting appointments, which compromise stability and institutional memory. A study by Mbwambo (2022) echoed these concerns, noting that public institutions face risks in leadership transitions and service continuity when succession frameworks are not structured.

However, there are instances where succession planning has been beneficial. Mwamanda (2023) found that effective succession planning practices, including talent management and career development, in Tanzanian NGOs positively impacted organisational performance.

This underscores the potential benefits of well-structured succession planning initiatives in the Tanzanian context.

3.0 Methodology

This study adopted a documentary review design, deemed appropriate because succession planning in Tanzania is primarily documented in official publications, institutional frameworks, and scholarly works. A total of 42 documents published between 2015 and 2025 were reviewed, drawn from credible sources such as Scopus, Google Scholar, CrossRef, Science Direct, government repositories, and institutional databases. The review included peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, audit documents, and strategic policy frameworks to capture both theoretical and practical insights. Inclusion criteria required documents to address succession planning, leadership development, or public-sector human resource management and to be credible through peer review, institutional authorship, or official publication. Exclusion criteria eliminated duplicates, opinion-based works, and documents lacking substantive content. To ensure reliability, documents underwent a three-stage screening involving source verification, relevance assessment, and prioritisation of scholarly rigour. The selected materials were systematically sorted by type and analysed thematically, focusing on recurring issues such as policy inconsistency, implementation challenges, weak institutional frameworks, gender disparities, and monitoring mechanisms. The reliance on documentary data was justified as official records and scholarly sources provide comprehensive, credible, and verifiable insights into succession planning, enabling the study to assess reforms, practices, and outcomes while filling an existing gap in the literature.

4.0 Presentation of Findings

The documentary review of the 42 selected documents, including government policy papers, audit reports, institutional publications, and academic literature from 2015 to 2025, revealed critical insights into the state of succession planning in Tanzania's public service. The analysis focused on the effectiveness of key components of succession planning, namely, talent identification, leadership development, knowledge transfer, monitoring and evaluation, and inclusivity. The findings indicated a persistent gap between policy recognition and operational implementation, highlighting systemic weaknesses, inconsistencies, and structural barriers that undermine leadership continuity and institutional performance. The emerging themes from the review reflected challenges common to both the Tanzanian context and broader African public-sector settings and provided evidence-specific insights that inform policy and practice. These themes form the basis for a detailed discussion on the effectiveness of succession planning in the Tanzanian public sector.

4.1 Policy Recognition versus Implementation Gaps

The documentary review revealed a significant discrepancy between policy recognition of succession planning and its practical implementation in the Tanzanian public service.

Policy frameworks, including the Public Service Management and Employment Policy (1998/2008) and the Public Service Standing Orders (2009), explicitly highlight the importance of succession planning for ensuring leadership continuity and institutional stability. However, the documents indicate that most Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) lack structured succession plans or standardised guidelines for preparing future leaders (Ngirwa, 2021). Several audit reports and institutional reviews have noted instances where senior leadership positions remained vacant for prolonged periods or were filled on an acting basis, thereby undermining decision-making and service delivery (Minja et al., 2024; Mbwambo, 2022). This gap suggests that although succession planning is recognised rhetorically, its operationalisation was weak, revealing a systemic policy-practice mismatch that compromises the effectiveness of human resource management in the public sector.

4.2 Talent Identification Challenges

Talent identification emerged as a recurring theme, highlighting weaknesses in the processes used to select high-potential employees for leadership pipelines. Documents from various MDAs and reports by the President's Office Public Service Management and Good Governance (PO-PSMGG, 2020, 2021) indicate that appointments to senior positions often depend on seniority, political alignment, or personal networks rather than merit or demonstrated potential (Massawe&Mgonja, 2023). There is little evidence of formal, competency-based mechanisms for systematically identifying and evaluating employees' leadership potential (Mohamed, 2022; Masanja & Nyambita, 2021). This ad hoc approach risks underutilising internal human capital and perpetuating leadership gaps. Critics, including Makumbe et al (2025) and Roberts (2023), argue that without structured talent identification, succession planning remains reactive rather than proactive, limiting its ability to secure leadership continuity and organisational resilience.

4.3 Leadership Development and Capacity Building

The review highlighted significant deficiencies in leadership development and capacity-building initiatives. While training programs are offered through institutions such as the Tanzania Public Service College (TPSC) and the UONGOZI Institute, several documents have emphasised that identified talents often lack structured development pathways to prepare them for higher responsibilities (Minja et al., 2024). This disconnects between training initiatives and succession planning objectives creates leadership-readiness gaps that can compromise institutional performance. (Empirical evidence from Tanzanian NGOs suggests that structured leadership development positively impacts organisational performance (Mwamanda, 2023), yet such programs remain sporadic and poorly integrated within MDAs' succession frameworks (Mbwambo, 2022).

4.4 Knowledge Transfer Deficiencies

The review revealed that knowledge sharing in Tanzanian public institutions was informal, typically occurring through ad hoc mentoring or on-the-job guidance (Kamali et al, 2024). Documents, including audit reports and policy reviews, highlighted that when senior leaders retired or were transferred, critical institutional knowledge was lost, hence, weakening organisational memory and continuity (Roberts, 2023). Scholars such as Gudo and

Oanda (2023) argue that effective succession planning depends on structured knowledge management strategies that ensure the retention and transfer of tacit knowledge. The lack of formal mentoring programs or knowledge documentation systems in Tanzanian MDAs exacerbates the risk of institutional memory erosion, affecting strategic decision-making and service delivery (Mbwambo, 2022; Minja et al, 2024).

4.5 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Accountability

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of succession planning practices were consistently weak across the reviewed documents. While some audit reports (CAG, 2022; Ngirwa, 2021) documented leadership vacancies and acting appointments, there is little evidence of systematic assessment of succession planning initiatives. The absence of M&E frameworks limits MDAs' ability to track progress, evaluate outcomes, and refine succession strategies over time (Mohamed, 2022). This deficiency undermines organisational accountability and institutional learning. Globally, Roberts (2023) emphasises that robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms are crucial for identifying talent gaps and measuring the effectiveness of leadership development programs. In Tanzania, the scarcity of such systems suggests that succession planning was poorly institutionalised and inadequately monitored (Masanja &Nyambita, 2021).

4.6 Gender and Inclusivity Challenges

Finally, issues of gender and inclusivity emerged as a critical theme. Several documents, including reports from the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP, 2023), indicate that women and marginalised groups were significantly underrepresented in leadership succession pipelines. Cultural norms, structural barriers, and limited access to leadership development programmes contributed to this disparity (Mbwambo, 2022). The review highlights that current succession planning practices were not sufficiently gender-responsive, limiting the diversity of perspectives and leadership styles in public sector management (Ngirwa, 2021). This aligns with findings by Mohamed (2022) and Makumbe et al. (2024), who noted that without deliberate efforts to mainstream gender equity, succession planning would inadvertently perpetuate structural inequalities.

Collectively, these themes indicate that, while succession planning is acknowledged as important in Tanzanian public-sector policies, operational weaknesses, structural barriers, and inadequate monitoring limited their effectiveness. Addressing these gaps requires institutionalised, gender-responsive, and evidence-based succession planning frameworks aligned with strategic human resource management principles.

5.0 Discussion of Findings

The documentary review revealed a significant discrepancy between the formal recognition of succession planning in policy and its practical implementation in the Tanzanian public service. Policies such as the Public Service Management and Employment Policy (1998/2008) and the Public Service Standing Orders (2009) recognise succession planning as essential for leadership continuity. However, most MDAs lacked actionable succession

plans, standardised procedures, or enforceable frameworks. This supports Institutional Theory, which posits that formal policies and structures are necessary but not sufficient for ensuring organisational compliance and effective practice (Scott, 2017; Roberts, 2023). Globally, similar gaps were noted in African contexts, where policy intentions often failed to operationalise succession planning due to weak accountability (Kamali et al, 2024; Pillay, 2020). The Tanzanian evidence suggests that formal recognition without institutional embedding leaves succession planning largely symbolic rather than functional (Massawe & Mgonja, 2023).

The findings suggest that talent identification in the Tanzanian public service was informal, influenced by factors such as seniority, political alignment, or personal networks, rather than competency-based assessments. This aligns with Human Capital Theory, which emphasises that strategic identification and development of human resources as valuable organisational assets (Becker, 1993). Globally, competency-based talent identification is linked to improved leadership readiness and organisational performance (Zhang et al, 2023). The Tanzanian scenario confirms the critiques of Mwamanda (2023) and Kamali et al. (2024), who argued that informal and subjective selection methods undermine leadership continuity and create gaps in the succession pipeline. Therefore, structured, merit-based identification mechanisms were crucial for maximising human capital potential and aligning them with strategic HRM principles.

Leadership development programmes exist within institutions such as the Tanzania Public Service College (TPSC), yet the review found they were often generic and poorly aligned with succession objectives (Ngirwa, 2021). This aligns with SHRM's advocacy of aligning HR practices with organisational goals to ensure effectiveness and sustainability (Armstrong, 2020; Roberts, 2023). The study's findings align with those of Mwamanda (2023), emphasising that leadership programs should be competency-driven and closely linked to succession pipelines to prepare high-potential employees for higher responsibilities. Without such alignment, identified talent may remain underprepared, risking organisational efficiency and continuity.

The review revealed inadequate formal knowledge transfer mechanisms, with most sharing occurring informally through ad hoc mentoring or experiential learning (Onyango & Makhama, 2024; Roberts, 2023; Ngirwa, 2021). This deficiency compromises institutional memory and continuity. Human Capital Theory supports the need for structured knowledge management to preserve organisational expertise (Becker, 1993), while Institutional Theory emphasises embedding such practices within formal structures for effectiveness. Similar challenges are noted across the African public sector (Olagunju et al., 2022; Pillay, 2020), indicating that informal knowledge sharing was insufficient to maintain organisational resilience. Implementing structured mentoring, documentation, and handover protocols was critical for sustaining leadership effectiveness.

The documentary review found that the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of succession planning was either absent or weak (Ngirwa, 2021; Armstrong, 2020). Without M&E, it was challenging to assess whether succession planning achieved its intended outcomes, tracked leadership readiness, or refined processes over time. Strategic HRM underscores the importance of performance measurement to ensure HR practices contribute to strategic

objectives (Mbwambo, 2022). Globally, robust management and evaluation (M&E) systems are linked to higher success rates in succession planning (Roberts, 2023). However, the Tanzanian findings highlight that the lack of systematic evaluation limited organisational learning and accountability, reinforcing critiques that succession planning was underprioritised despite policy recognition (Nkya et al., 2024; Kyaruzi & Komba, 2021).

Finally, the review revealed persistent gender disparities in succession pipelines, with women and marginalised groups underrepresented (TGNP, 2023; Ngirwa, 2021). This finding underscores the importance of both Human Capital Theory and SHRM Theory, as inclusive development of all employees enhances organisational capability and the diversity of leadership perspectives (Omar & Ismail, 2022). Despite gender equity policies and affirmative action initiatives, structural and cultural barriers hinder women's progression. The findings align with prior research indicating that gender-blind succession strategies limited organisational effectiveness and failed to maximise available talents (Kamali et al, 2024).

Generally, the discussion reveals that Tanzanian public-sector succession planning was plagued by weaknesses across critical components, reflecting broader institutional, structural, and cultural challenges (Kyaruzi & Komba, 2021; Mohamed, 2022). The findings reinforce theoretical arguments that human capital must be systematically developed and managed, that formal institutional structures are essential for operationalisation, and that strategic alignment of HRM practices with organisational goals is necessary for effective leadership continuity (Ngirwa, 2021). These insights underscore the importance of comprehensive, institutionalised, gender-responsive, and evidence-based succession planning to enhance leadership sustainability, organisational resilience, and service delivery.

6.0 Conclusion

The documentary review shows that although succession planning was formally recognised in Tanzanian public service policies, its implementation was fragmented, inconsistent, and largely ineffective. Key areas, such as talent identification, leadership development, knowledge transfer, monitoring and evaluation, and gender inclusivity, face significant weaknesses, often resulting in leadership gaps, loss of institutional memory, and limited-service delivery. Talent identification was informal and influenced by favouritism, leadership development programmes were generic and poorly linked to succession goals, and knowledge transfer remained ad hoc. Weak monitoring and evaluation hindered organisational learning, while gender disparities persisted despite inclusivity provisions. These findings align with Human Capital, Institutional, and Strategic Human Resource Management theories, which emphasise the need for structured, merit-based, competency-driven, and gender-responsive succession planning frameworks. The study concludes that without comprehensive reforms and operational frameworks, policy recognition alone cannot ensure leadership continuity or organisational resilience in the Tanzanian public service.

7.0 Recommendations

The study recommends that the Tanzanian public service establish a comprehensive national succession planning framework that clearly defines processes, responsibilities, and timelines to ensure consistency across Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs). Talent identification should be merit-based and competency-focused, using standardised assessments, performance evaluations, and leadership potential metrics, supported by regular audits for transparency. Leadership development programmes must be strategically aligned with succession goals through customised training, coaching, and mentoring, with institutions like the Tanzania Public Service College offering tailored curricula. To safeguard institutional memory, MDAs should implement structured knowledge management practices such as mentoring, job rotation, documentation, and formal handover protocols. A robust monitoring and evaluation framework with clear indicators, periodic reviews, and data-driven adjustments should support succession initiatives. Addressing gender disparities requires gender-responsive strategies, including targeted mentorship, affirmative action, and equal access to training to ensure inclusivity in leadership pipelines. Finally, succession planning should be integrated into broader human resource management strategies and aligned with strategic public service objectives, fostering leadership continuity, organisational resilience, and improved service delivery.

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