INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LATEST TECHNOLOGY IN ENGINEERING, MANAGEMENT & APPLIED SCIENCE (IJLTEMAS)

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XV, Issue VII, July 2026

Career Systems and Succession Planning: A Sectoral Analysis Linking Career Development and Succession Strategies Across Sectors in Responsible Business Practices

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.51583/IJLTEMAS.2026.150700154

Received: 12 August 2026; Accepted: 17 August 2026; Published: 25 August 2026

ABSTRACT

Human resource systems across sectors are undergoing profound transformation due to rapid technological evolution, shifting workforce expectations, and the increasing emphasis on responsible, sustainability-driven business practices. Career growth and succession planning have evolved from operational HR functions to strategic imperatives that enhance organizational resilience, competitive advantage, and long-term sustainability. Contemporary challenges—including digitalization, demographic shifts, regulatory pressures, and post-pandemic restructuring—necessitate structured talent-development systems, future-oriented leadership pipelines, and inclusive workforce strategies. Misaligned HR architectures, inadequate capability-building, unclear career structures, and reactive planning create systemic limitations, particularly in sectors with high attrition, technological complexity, and skill shortages. Anchored in theoretical frameworks, sectoral influences, institutional pressures, and labour-market dynamics shape talent practices across IT, healthcare, manufacturing, education, and retail. This study presents the Sector-Responsive Career–Succession Integration Model (SRC-SIM), an original framework derived from sectoral analysis, theoretical synthesis, and integration of career development and succession planning concepts. SRC-SIM links sectoral factors with career and succession strategies, offering practical applicability for HR decision-making. By promoting transparent career architectures, competency-based progression, mentoring, and cross-functional development, the model positions career growth and succession planning as mutually reinforcing pillars for building resilient, ethical, and future-ready organizations.

Keywords: Sectoral HR challenges, Career growth, Succession planning, Responsible business models, Employee retention, Sustainable HRM.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations today operate within complex socio–economic and technological ecosystems characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA). The accelerated adoption of digital technologies—such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, predictive analytics, and automation—has fundamentally transformed the nature of work, skill requirements, and leadership expectations. Simultaneously, global workforce dynamics have been reshaped by demographic transitions, rising employee mobility, generational differences, and the normalization of hybrid and remote work models. These trends collectively underscore the growing importance of structured career growth and succession planning frameworks within organizations. Career development refers to a systematic, intentionally designed set of processes that help employees build competencies, plan professional trajectories, gain exposure to developmental opportunities, and align personal aspirations with organizational goals (Dessler, 2012; Mathis et al., 2010). It encompasses training, mentorship, performance management, job rotation, and capability-building interventions. Succession planning, in contrast, deals with the identification, assessment, and preparation of high-potential individuals to fill key leadership and mission-critical roles (Rothwell, 2001). When integrated, these two HR components act as mutually reinforcing mechanisms that enhance both individual development and organizational continuity. Recent global surveys highlight significant gaps between employees' career expectations and organizational readiness. According to

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XV, Issue VII, July 2026

McKinsey (2023), 41% of employees consider leaving their jobs due to limited career progression, while the emerging workforce trends indicate that digitalisation is outpacing talent readiness, contributing to a growing international skills deficit (World Economic Forum, as cited in TRENDS MENA, 2024). This report projects that approximately 44% of workers' core skills will be disrupted by 2027, underscoring the urgency for continuous reskilling and workforce development strategies and predicts that 50% of employees will require significant reskilling by 2027. Similarly, Deloitte's Human Capital Trends Report (2022) emphasizes that organizations with mature leadership pipelines outperform competitors by up to 25% in innovation, decision-making agility, and employee engagement. These findings signal a pressing need for organizations to adopt evidence-based, sector-sensitive career and succession models. Sectoral variations aggravate these challenges. For instance, the IT sector faces hyper-dynamic skill obsolescence cycles, requiring continuous learning and agile leadership. Healthcare organizations experience high emotional labour, regulatory pressure, and leadership shortages. Manufacturing is undergoing Industry 4.0 transformations involving process automation and digital integration, requiring reskilling of large segments of the workforce. The education sector grapples with hierarchical governance, slow leadership transitions, and tenure-driven career pathways. Retail suffers from extreme attrition, low wage structures, and unstable leadership readiness. Given these diverse realities, a one-size-fits-all approach is inadequate. Sector-specific conditions—labour laws, market structures, technology maturity, professional certification requirements, and cultural norms—directly influence HR strategies. Thus, career growth and succession planning must be customized to reflect the contextual constraints and opportunities of each sector. The purpose of this section is to provide a comprehensive, theory-driven, sector-wise analysis of career growth and succession planning as strategic HR challenges. It argues that these systems are foundational to sustainable and responsible organizational development, emphasizing long-term value creation, workforce resilience, leadership continuity, and ethical people management. Part 1 lays the conceptual foundation for the expanded analysis that follows in later sections. Across sectors, organizations are undergoing structural shifts driven by globalization, automation, demographic changes, and sustainability requirements. These shifts have increased the urgency for organizations to build resilient HR systems that support long-term talent development. Career growth and succession planning—traditionally treated as internal HR activities—are now sector-level strategic necessities. Sectors such as IT, healthcare, manufacturing, education, and financial services face similar challenges: skill shortages, high turnover, aging leadership, and the need for responsible business practices. Career growth systems provide employees with direction, progression, and skill enhancement, while succession planning ensures continuity in leadership and critical roles. Together, these mechanisms form a responsible HR model that supports organizational sustainability and builds a future-ready workforce.

Sectoral Challenges in Building Career Growth Systems

Career development is no longer an individual pursuit; it has become a sector-level challenge shaped by the nature of work, industry expectations, and workforce mobility. Skill obsolescence and industry transformation have made many sectors, particularly IT and manufacturing, face rapid technological advancements that make skills obsolete. Employees cannot visualize long-term career paths, and organizations struggle to map evolving roles. On the other hand, Industries such as retail, BPOs, education, and healthcare experience high employee turnover. In the absence of structured career development, employees are more likely to leave prematurely, resulting in elevated attrition and increased talent mobility. Across diverse sectors, managers frequently demonstrate insufficient preparation in mentoring employees, facilitating developmental planning, and engaging in career-related dialogue. This deficiency contributes to ambiguous role expectations, diminished employee engagement, and constrained managerial effectiveness. Many organizations have unclear job roles, competency frameworks, or promotion criteria. This creates dissatisfaction and hampers internal mobility due to lack of transparent career architecture. Sectoral constraints—budget limitations, outdated training systems, or absence of upskilling platforms—affect career planning effectiveness and inadequate learning and development infrastructure

Strategic Managerial Perspectives on Employee Career Advancement

Managers hold a central influence over how employees navigate and experience their career development within an organization. While employees are responsible for shaping their own professional trajectories, managerial actions and attitudes significantly determine the opportunities, exposure, and support individuals receive. From a managerial perspective, career growth is not simply an HR activity—it is a strategic function that directly contributes to organizational effectiveness, capability enhancement, and long-term sustainability. Communicating organizational vision to the employees, require clarity on their role contribution to long-term organizational goals. Workforce-centered learning is a platform to make employees owners of their development while providing support through mentoring, projects, and performance feedback. Identifying high-potential talent. Managers should proactively recognize employees who show leadership ability, technical strength, or innovation potential.

Creating Inclusive Career Opportunities

Responsible organizations ensure equal access to training, rotation, and leadership opportunities across gender, background, tenure, and job categories. Career Growth as a Responsible Business Practice directly supports responsible business models by promoting employee well-being and engagement; sustainable skill development; ethical and transparent HR processes; internal mobility instead of external hiring; gender and diversity inclusion; alignment to sustainability goals (SDG 8: Decent Work). Responsible organizations provide structured pathways, competency-based progression, and continuous learning— such as Infosys' iRACE model and Oracle's career development centres.

The Strategic Role of Succession Planning Across Industry Sectors

Succession planning enables organizations to strategically prepare for future leadership and critical role requirements, and its importance is increasingly recognized across diverse sectors. However, several sectoral imperatives drive the urgency for robust succession systems. Many organizations—particularly small and medium-sized enterprises—lack formalized succession planning processes, placing business continuity at risk. In addition, there is often an over-reliance on individual employees, with crucial institutional knowledge concentrated in a few key people, making organizations vulnerable to unexpected departures. Rapid workforce transitions, driven by retirements, resignations, and internal reshuffling, further intensify the need for stable leadership pipelines. Despite this, employees across sectors frequently receive limited developmental opportunities, including inadequate cross-functional exposure necessary for preparing future leaders. Cultural resistance also remains a significant barrier, especially in traditionally hierarchical sectors where discussions about leadership replacement are viewed as sensitive or inappropriate. Collectively, these factors underscore the sector-specific pressures that make succession planning an essential human resource imperative.

Managerial Approaches to Succession Planning

Managers play a crucial role in ensuring transparent and future-oriented succession planning by adopting proactive developmental practices that strengthen organizational leadership pipelines. Effective managerial approaches include the early identification of high-potential employees, coupled with structured rotational assignments that broaden their functional understanding and operational versatility. Managers also support leadership readiness by offering both technical and managerial training that equips employees with the competencies required for future roles. In addition, documenting critical organizational knowledge helps preserve institutional memory and ensures continuity during transitions. Mentoring relationships and job-shadowing opportunities further enhance experiential learning and leadership preparedness, while building diverse talent pools ensures inclusivity and resilience in succession pipelines. Collectively, these managerial actions strengthen leadership continuity and contribute to responsible, long-term business sustainability.

Linking Career Growth and Succession Planning: A Sectoral Perspective

Career growth and succession planning are fundamentally interconnected processes that reinforce each other in shaping sustainable workforce strategies. Career growth initiatives build employee skills, enhance motivation, and strengthen internal capability, while succession planning leverages this developed talent to ensure leadership continuity and organizational stability. From a sectoral perspective, the interdependence of these systems becomes especially evident. IT and digital industries rely on rapid upskilling and continuous learning

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XV, Issue VII, July 2026

to prepare employees for fast-evolving leadership demands. The healthcare sector grapples with persistent skill shortages, making structured succession pipelines essential for maintaining service quality and patient safety. Education systems require long-term faculty development pathways to prepare academic leaders who can uphold institutional credibility and governance. Manufacturing and energy sectors increasingly depend on multi-skilled workers capable of navigating Industry 4.0 and sustainability-driven transitions. Integrated career and succession systems reduce reliance on external hiring, strengthen internal talent utilization, and build resilience by ensuring timely readiness for critical roles by right individuals at right time.

Hence, Career growth and succession planning represent core HR challenges across sectors. As industries evolve, responsible business models depend on sustainable talent development strategies. Organizations must install clear career architectures, build transparent development frameworks, engage managers in talent processes, and integrate succession planning into long-term strategies. By aligning employee aspirations with organizational needs, businesses can achieve workforce stability, leadership continuity, and sustainable growth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A robust academic understanding of career growth and succession planning requires grounding in well-established theoretical frameworks that explain why organizations invest in people, how talent becomes a source of advantage, and why sectoral contexts shape HR systems differently. These theories serve as analytical lenses for examining variations across industries and understanding the strategic relevance of developmental and succession processes. The following section synthesizes eight major theoretical perspectives after expanding each one to deepen conceptual clarity and establish a stronger foundation for subsequent sectoral analysis. *2.1 Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964):* Human Capital Theory posits that employees possess knowledge, skills, abilities, and experience that carry measurable economic value. Investments in training, education, developmental assignments, coaching, and mentoring enhance this human capital and generate returns through improved productivity, innovation, and professional mobility (Thomas, 2006). Expanded to a sectoral context, this theory explains why IT firms prioritize continuous upskilling, why healthcare institutions value credential-based growth, and why manufacturing organizations depend heavily on technical training for Industry 4.0 transitions. Succession planning reinforces human capital development by preparing high-potential employees for leadership positions through targeted interventions such as executive coaching, cross-functional rotation, international exposure, and leadership simulations. These investments create a pipeline of capable successors whose accumulated competencies strengthen organizational resilience. Thus, Human Capital Theory establishes the foundation for understanding why career growth and succession planning are strategic rather than administrative functions. *2.2 Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991):* The Resource-Based View (RBV) asserts that sustainable competitive advantage arises from resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN). Human talent—particularly leadership capability, innovative thinking, and institutional knowledge—fits this criterion. RBV emphasizes that internal talent systems, when well-managed, are more difficult for competitors to imitate than technologies or processes. Career growth systems contribute directly to building these VRIN capabilities by developing strategic competencies and future-oriented skills. Meanwhile, succession planning ensures that such critical resources are preserved, transferred, and continuously renewed. In sectors like healthcare and manufacturing where tacit knowledge is crucial, RBV explains why the loss of a single expert or senior leader can disrupt operations. Expanding RBV to HRM underscores the importance of leadership pipelines, talent pools, and developmental architecture as sources of enduring organizational advantage. *2.3 Career Development Theory (Super, 1990):* Super's Career Development Theory views career development as a lifelong, evolving process influenced by self-concept, personal experiences, social roles, and environmental opportunities. His model emphasizes several expanded components: Career stages (growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement); Life–role balance across work, family, and leisure; Career maturity and readiness; Continuous skill and identity development. This framework implies that organizations must design flexible and diverse career pathways that support employees at different stages of their lives and careers. Sectoral variations become clear in this context—for example, healthcare professionals often follow linear paths based on certification, while IT careers evolve through rapid multi-skill progression. Super's theory highlights that effective career systems must accommodate individual aspirations and psychosocial development, not just organizational needs. *2.4 Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958):* Social Exchange Theory argues that relationships are built through reciprocity: when organizations

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XV, Issue VII, July 2026

invest in employee development, employees reciprocate with loyalty, motivation, and prolonged tenure. Expanded further, this theory clarifies the psychological contract that binds employees to the organization. Career growth systems—training, development conversations, recognition, mobility opportunities—signal that the organization values its employees. Succession planning further strengthens the exchange by identifying high-potential individuals, offering them enhanced development, and communicating trust in their leadership potential. Employees who perceive fairness in developmental opportunities show reduced turnover intentions, higher engagement, and stronger commitment. This theory is especially relevant in the retail and IT sectors where retention is a major challenge. *2.5 Institutional Theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983):* Institutional Theory emphasizes that organizational practices are shaped by external environmental pressures including legal requirements, labour regulations, accreditation norms, and cultural expectations. These “coercive,” “normative,” and “mimetic” pressures explain why career and succession systems vary across sectors. For instance: The *Healthcare sector* is required to follow strict credentialing processes and compliance regulations for leadership advancement. The *Education sector* operates under accreditation norms, tenure systems, and academic ranking structures. The *Manufacturing sector* is influenced by safety regulations, collective bargaining agreements, and industry-specific technical standards. The *IT and Digital sector* experience market-driven innovation pressures that lead to rapid talent cycling. Institutional Theory clarifies that HR practices are not purely managerial choices; they are often shaped by sector-specific constraints that must be considered when designing career and succession frameworks. *2.6 Sustainable HRM Theory (Ehnert, 2014):* Sustainable HRM Theory integrates long-term employee well-being, ethical leadership, talent continuity, and responsible business practices. It positions HR not only as a driver of performance but as a custodian of human and social sustainability. Expanded further, this theory highlights: Workforce well-being and stress minimization; Fair, equitable developmental access; Reduced turnover waste; Long-term leadership stability; Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals—particularly SDGs 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), Career growth systems promote sustainability by enhancing employability and reducing career stagnation. Succession planning contributes by ensuring leadership continuity, knowledge transfer, and future-ready governance. This theory positions both systems as essential for building resilient, ethical, future-oriented organizations. *2.7 Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) Theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995):* Leader–Member Exchange Theory explains how the quality of relationships between managers and employees influences access to developmental opportunities. High-quality LMX relationships result in greater trust, mentorship, challenging assignments, and leadership exposure—factors essential for career growth. In succession planning, leaders often select successors from their "in-group," making LMX a critical determinant of who receives developmental attention. This theory exposes biases, relationship dynamics, and informal influences that shape talent pipelines across sectors. *2.8 Organizational Learning Theory (Argyris & Schön, 1978):* Organizational Learning Theory emphasizes the continuous creation, sharing, and transfer of knowledge within an organization. Career development supports this process by equipping employees with new competencies, while succession planning ensures that institutional knowledge is not lost but transitioned effectively. Industries such as manufacturing and IT depend heavily on learning cultures due to rapid technological shifts. From this perspective, succession planning becomes a mechanism for preserving learning cycles, codifying tacit knowledge, and embedding learning into leadership transitions.

Collectively, these theories illustrate that career growth and succession planning are not isolated HR activities, but interdependent mechanisms shaped by sectoral environments, organizational strategy, and employee expectations.

RESEARCH GAP

Although many studies discuss career development and succession planning, most of them treat these topics separately and focus on only one sector at a time. As a result, there is limited understanding of how different industries—such as healthcare, education, manufacturing, and IT-enabled services—shape career growth and leadership development in their own ways. Existing research does not clearly explain how factors like regulations, skill requirements, workplace structures, or innovation pressures influence talent movement or succession planning across sectors. Very few studies compare these sectors side by side, and even fewer examine how career systems and succession processes work together rather than separately. In the Indian context, this

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XV, Issue VII, July 2026

gap is even more visible, as evidence on how organizations connect career pathways with leadership planning is still limited. Because of these gaps, there is a clear need for a model that brings both areas together and shows how career and succession systems operate differently across sectors. This study aims to fill that need.

PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ON THE SECTOR-RESPONSIVE CAREER–SUCCESSION INTEGRATION MODEL (SRC-SIM)

The theoretical model depicted in Figure 1 synthesizes the major constructs that underpin the relationship between career systems and succession planning within diverse sectoral environments. It conceptualizes how structured career pathways, developmental mechanisms, and sector-conditioned organizational practices converge to influence leadership readiness and continuity. By integrating these elements, the framework positions career development processes and succession planning systems as mutually reinforcing components that operate within distinct regulatory, professional, and labour-market contexts. This integrated perspective advances the understanding of how organizations cultivate sustainable leadership pipelines and maintain strategic resilience. Accordingly, the model provides a conceptual foundation for examining sector-sensitive variations in talent progression and the conditions under which career and succession mechanisms contribute to sustained organizational performance. The Sector-Responsive Career–Succession Integration Model (SRC-SIM) presented in this study is an original framework developed and derived from the sectoral analysis, theoretical synthesis, and integration of career development and succession planning concepts. Career growth and succession planning are increasingly recognized as integrated HR systems that shape organizational continuity, employee development, and leadership readiness. SRC-SIM provides a concise framework that explains how sectoral forces influence the design and effectiveness of talent systems. Built on the foundation of the Career Systems Model (Sonnenfeld & Peiperl, 1988), SRC-SIM highlights three core layers: sectoral influences, internal HR architecture, and resulting organizational outcomes.

Sectoral Influences: Different industries are shaped by varying levels of regulation, technological change, labour-market pressure, and institutional expectations. IT and digital sectors face rapid upskilling needs and high talent mobility, while healthcare and education are governed by strict certification and accreditation norms. Manufacturing and energy operate under safety, technical competency, and union-related requirements. These external conditions determine whether organizations adopt closed, open, or hybrid career systems.

Internal HR Architecture: Career growth and succession planning operate within this sector-shaped structure. Career growth systems include competency frameworks, learning opportunities, mentoring, and developmental assignments. Succession planning involves identifying high-potential employees, building leadership pipelines, and enabling knowledge transfer. The quality of manager–employee relationships (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) and the psychological contract shaped by developmental support (Blau, 1964) further influence who gets access to critical opportunities.

Integration of Career and Succession Systems: SRC-SIM emphasizes that closed career systems produce predictable but rigid succession pipelines, while open systems generate flexible, skill-based leadership pools. Hybrid systems require a balance between certification-based advancement and rapid capability building. This integration ensures that sectoral constraints and opportunities are directly reflected in talent strategies.

Outcomes: An effective sector-responsive system strengthens employee motivation, career clarity, and retention while improving leadership continuity, organizational agility, and responsible workforce planning. The SRC-SIM framework therefore provides a practical, sector-sensitive lens for understanding how career growth and succession planning together enhance sustainable organizational performance.

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Fig 1. Sector-Responsive Career–Succession Integration Model (SRC-SIM)

Overall, the SRC-SIM provides an original and coherent framework showing how **sectoral influences** shape the design of an organization's **internal HR architecture**, and how this integrated structure drives stronger career development, succession readiness, and sustainable talent **outcomes**. By linking sector context with internal systems and leadership pipeline effectiveness, the model offers a practical and adaptable lens for aligning career and succession strategies to meet sector-specific demands.

INTEGRATED SECTORAL ANALYSIS OF CAREER GROWTH, SUCCESSION PLANNING, AND WORKFORCE TRENDS

Sectoral differences exert a profound influence on how organizations design and implement career development and succession systems. Variations in regulatory pressures, workforce composition, technological intensity, institutional norms, and labour-market conditions create distinct HR architectures across industries. Synthesizing the structural realities of five major sectors—Information Technology (IT), Healthcare, Manufacturing, Education, and Retail—this section examines how each sector's ecosystem shapes opportunities and constraints across the four variables: Attrition, Leadership Readiness, Career Progression Visibility, and Sectoral Workforce Dynamics.

Sectoral Analysis of Career Growth and Succession Planning: *I. In Information Technology (IT)*, rapid innovation and global competition create a highly dynamic, knowledge-intensive landscape where technical skills depreciate quickly—often within 2.5 years (Gartner, 2023). Workforce expectations emphasise flexibility, continuous learning, and mobility (National Association of Software and Service Companies [NASSCOM], 2022). Career growth is affected by flat structures and frequent role transitions. The sector experiences consistently high attrition, reflecting fast-paced skill shifts and limited long-term development architecture. Leadership pipelines remain fragile due to mobility and insufficiently formalized leadership pathways; only 29% of IT firms deploy structured leadership development and succession systems (Deloitte, 2022). In response, organizations increasingly rely on competency-based career maps, dual technical–managerial ladders, AI-enabled learning ecosystems, and leadership development centres. *II. Healthcare* is regulated and labour-intensive, requiring advanced technical competence and patient-centred service. Growing workforce shortages—projected to reach 15 million globally by 2030 (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020)—intensify workload pressures. Career progression is shaped by rigid credentialing requirements and hierarchical norms, resulting in moderate attrition and slow mobility among nurses and clinicians. Leadership Readiness is challenged by burnout, mid-level turnover, and seniority-based promotions, with 45% of U.S. hospital leaders expected to retire within five years (American Hospital Association [AHA], 2022). Sector responses include leadership residencies, rotational programs, mentoring networks, hybrid clinical–administrative roles, and talent pools for critical leadership positions. *III. Manufacturing* continues to transform under Industry 4.0, with automation, robotics, and IoT altering workforce expectations. Many employees lack the digital competencies required for emerging roles—approximately 40% according to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2022). Career growth is constrained by hierarchical structures and slow mobility, while the sector experiences relatively stable attrition but faces long-term risks from aging workforces and automation anxieties. Leadership pipelines appear structurally strong but are increasingly threatened by retirements and skill gaps. Organizations introduce competency frameworks, cross-training, apprenticeships, technical leadership academies, and digital capability-building initiatives to strengthen readiness for future transitions. *IV. Education* careers depend on qualifications, research output, teaching quality, and service contributions. Mobility is slow, shaped by seniority norms, accreditation demands, and tenure-track constraints (Altbach & de Wit, 2020). Attrition appears low but often reflects suppressed mobility rather than satisfaction. Leadership Readiness challenges arise from seniority-driven appointments rather than structured leadership development. Institutions respond through academic leadership programs, mentorship, career frameworks, and appraisal reforms emphasizing teaching, research, and leadership potential. *V. Retail* is labour-intensive and customer-facing, characterized by workforce volatility and very high attrition, often exceeding 40% (Retail Industry Leaders Association [RILA], 2021). Career development pathways are constrained by low training investment, demanding work environments, and

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XV, Issue VII, July 2026

limited performance differentiation. Leadership pipelines are fragile, with many supervisory roles filled reactively. Sector innovations include store manager academies, structured career pathways, graduate fast-track programs, coaching systems, and retention-oriented incentives.

Comparative Workforce Dynamics Across Sectors: Cross-sectoral trends reveal substantial variation in Attrition, Leadership Readiness, Career Progression Visibility, and Sectoral Workforce Dynamics, each influencing the effectiveness of career development and succession systems. *I. Attrition*: IT reports persistent global attrition of 20–30%, driven by rapid skill shifts and mobility opportunities (NASSCOM, 2022). Retail demonstrates the highest volatility, with 30–45% attrition linked to low wages and unpredictable work schedules (RILA, 2021). Healthcare exhibits moderate attrition of 12–18%, stemming from burnout and shortage-induced pressures (AHA, 2022). Manufacturing maintains relatively stable rates (10–14%), though automation and aging workforces pose future supply risks (ILO, 2022). Education appears stable at 8–12%, but progression bottlenecks and workload strains often suppress turnover (Altbach & de Wit, 2020). These patterns indicate that high-volatility sectors require aggressive succession strategies, while low-turnover sectors must focus on internal mobility and capability development. *II. Leadership Readiness:* Manufacturing shows strong continuity due to structured hierarchies and predictable career ladders, though retirements threaten future stability (ILO, 2022). Healthcare demonstrates moderate readiness, as clinical expertise often does not translate into administrative capability (AHA, 2022). IT's leadership pipeline remains fragile because high mobility and rapid innovation cycles disrupt leadership continuity (Deloitte, 2022). Retail shows the weakest readiness, shaped by frequent vacancies and reactive promotions (RILA, 2021). Sector-specific leadership pathways therefore require tailored approaches to maintain knowledge flow and strengthen succession pipelines. *III. Career Progression Visibility:* IT demonstrates comparatively clear career pathways, with 58% of employees reporting visibility through competency-based and dual-track systems (Gartner, 2023). Healthcare follows with 45%, shaped by structured clinical ladders but limited administrative progression (WHO, 2020). Manufacturing and Education show lower visibility—40% and 35% respectively—due to rigid hierarchies, inconsistent skill transitions, and seniority-based norms (Altbach & de Wit, 2020). Retail remains the least transparent at 20%, with many frontline roles perceived as temporary and lacking formal pathways (RILA, 2021). These disparities highlight the importance of designing sector-suited progression frameworks. *IV. Sectoral Workforce Dynamics:* IT prioritizes digital fluency, AI literacy, cloud competence, agile project skills, and hybrid collaboration (McKinsey, 2023). Healthcare emphasizes clinical proficiency, ethical decision-making, crisis management, and interdisciplinary team leadership (WHO, 2020). Manufacturing requires automation literacy, robotics integration, data-driven operations, and safety compliance (ILO, 2022). Education depends on pedagogical quality, research productivity, academic governance, and leadership capability (Altbach & de Wit, 2020). Retail relies on customer management, store operations, supply chain coordination, and sales leadership (Deloitte, 2021). These distinct competency demands underscore the need for sector-calibrated career and succession systems in Table 5.2.1

Table 5.2.1 Sector specific Dimensional view on career and succession systems

Sector	Attrition (%)	Leadership Readiness (%)	Career Progression Visibility (%)	Sectoral Workforce Dynamics
IT	20–30	Fragile	58	High turnover, rapid skill evolution, global mobility; emphasis on continuous learning
Healthcare	12–18	Moderate	45	Burnout and staffing shortages; growing need for structured leadership pipelines
Manufacturing	10–14	Strong	40	Aging workforce, automation challenges; moderately stable hierarchy and succession pathways
Education	8–12	Moderate	35	Slow promotion cycles, tenure rigidity; administrative leadership gaps persist

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Retail	30–45	Weak	20	High workforce volatility, reactive promotions, low career attractiveness; retention critical

Global research reinforces that structured career systems reduce attrition by up to 50%, increase engagement by 35%, and improve mobility by 25% (Deloitte, 2022; McKinsey, 2023). Formal succession planning yields faster leadership transitions and stronger leadership effectiveness (CEB Corporate Leadership Council [CEB], 2021). Sectors investing in leadership development consistently demonstrate greater resilience, adaptability, and innovation (World Economic Forum [WEF], 2023). Bringing these patterns together, the Sector-Responsive Career–Succession Integration Model (SRC-SIM) synthesizes sectoral workforce dynamics with human capital theory (Becker, 1964), sustainable HRM (Ehnert, 2014), and institutional theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Anchored in the four study variables—Attrition, Leadership Readiness, Career Progression Visibility, and Sectoral Workforce Dynamics—the model conceptualizes career development and succession planning as ecosystem-driven processes shaped by regulatory frameworks, workforce expectations, technological disruption, and governance imperatives. The SRC-SIM provides an integrated foundation for building adaptive, resilient, and ethically grounded talent pipelines across diverse industry contexts.

Integrated Discussion Based on the Sector-Responsive Career–Succession Integration Model (SRC-SIM)

The integration of theoretical insights, sectoral contexts, and empirical evidence demonstrates the **Sector-Responsive Career–Succession Integration Model (SRC-SIM)** offering a more realistic and adaptable framework for understanding talent development across industries. Unlike traditional HR models that treat career development and succession planning as parallel but separate processes, SRC-SIM positions them as interdependent systems shaped by sectoral forces. The model emphasizes that **sectoral influences**—such as technological intensity, regulatory environments, clinical or technical credentialing, workforce demographics, and market volatility—form the outer layer that determines how organizations structure their HR practices. This aligns closely with Institutional Theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), which argues that external environments significantly shape internal organizational processes. Under the SRC-SIM framework, **internal HR architecture** adapts sectoral realities into concrete practices through competency frameworks, job families, progression ladders, rotational programs, and leadership tracks. For instance, IT organizations design agile and dual-ladder career systems because digital innovation cycles require accelerated skill development (Gartner, 2023). Healthcare organizations rely heavily on structured clinical pathways shaped by regulatory and ethical demands (AHA, 2022). Manufacturing emphasizes cross-skilling, job-rotation, and tacit knowledge transfer due to Industry 4.0 demands (ILO, 2022). Education adopts academic rank structures and tenure systems that prioritize research and teaching excellence (Altbach & de Wit, 2020). Retail emphasizes frontline capability building to counter high turnover (RILA, 2021). The third layer of SRC-SIM—the integration of **career growth and succession planning**—explains how organizations convert skill development into leadership preparedness. This interaction is critical because career development cultivates the competencies and aspirations necessary for advancement, while succession planning channels these competencies into future roles. The model asserts that integration is essential in volatile sectors like IT and retail, where turnover destabilizes leadership continuity, as well as in stable but hierarchical sectors like education and healthcare, where leadership readiness lags behind experience-based progression (Deloitte, 2022). Finally, the SRC-SIM identifies three sustainability-oriented outcomes—*Employee Motivation, Leadership Continuity, and Responsible Workforce Planning.* Consistent with the principles of Sustainable HRM (Ehnert, 2014), these outcomes demonstrate that sector-responsive career–succession integration strengthens not only organizational effectiveness but also fosters ethical, equitable, and forward-looking talent stewardship across sectors.

Managerial Implications Based on the Src-Sim Framework

The SRC-SIM provides a clear set of implications for HR leaders and managers seeking to design sector-responsive, future-ready talent systems. First, managers must recognize that **sectoral context determines HR strategy**, not vice versa. Therefore, talent development frameworks must be designed to reflect the technological pace, regulatory environment, and labour-market dynamics of the industry in which the organization operates (Barney, 1991). For IT and digital sectors, managerial priorities include building agile skill ecosystems, reinforcing rapid internal mobility, and preparing hybrid technical–managerial leaders through accelerated development programs. In healthcare, managers must establish structured clinical–administrative development pathways to overcome the traditional dominance of seniority-based promotion. They should invest in mentoring systems, residency-style rotations, and ethical leadership preparation to ensure readiness for complex patient-centered environments (AHA, 2022). Manufacturing managers should focus on multi-skill capability development, knowledge transfer mechanisms, and Industry 4.0 talent readiness. In the education sector, managers need to modernize academic leadership pipelines by moving beyond seniority-driven advancement and building governance, research leadership, and academic administration capabilities (Altbach & de Wit, 2020). Retail managers must construct stability-oriented career ladders, fast-track supervisory programs, and strong store-level leadership development mechanisms to counter persistent turnover. Across all sectors, the SRC-SIM highlights the need to strengthen the integration between career growth and succession planning. Managers must build transparent competency-based career ladders, establish high-potential talent pools, and align succession planning with strategic workforce forecasting. In addition, data-driven talent analytics should be used to identify development gaps, predict leadership risks, and measure internal mobility effectiveness (McKinsey & Company, 2023). Finally, workforce well-being and inclusion must be incorporated into all talent systems to ensure long-term sustainability and ethical alignment with SDGs (Ehnert, 2014).

CONCLUSION

The chapter demonstrates that career development and succession planning must be interpreted through a sector-responsive lens, a perspective captured in the Sector-Responsive Career–Succession Integration Model (SRC-SIM). By positioning sectoral dynamics as the central determinant of talent architecture, the SRC-SIM illustrates that industry characteristics—such as technological turbulence, regulatory rigor, skill ecosystem maturity, and institutional norms—directly shape how organizations design career pathways and construct leadership pipelines. The model underscores that internal HR systems cannot operate as standardized frameworks; instead, they require deliberate customization to remain effective, equitable, and sustainable within distinct sectoral contexts. Through its emphasis on linking career growth mechanisms with succession planning processes, the SRC-SIM argues that long-term leadership continuity is attainable only when employee development is systematically aligned with evolving organizational requirements. This integration becomes especially crucial in sectors marked by high attrition, rapid innovation cycles, or stringent regulatory expectations. Moreover, by embedding sustainability-oriented outcomes—such as workforce resilience, employee well-being, adaptability, and long-term employability—the model broadens conventional HRM approaches and situates them within the paradigm of responsible and future-ready business practices. As the world of work continues to transform under demographic shifts, global competitive pressures, and accelerating technological change, the adoption of models such as the SRC-SIM becomes imperative. Organizations that successfully integrate sectoral realities with coherent career and succession strategies will be better positioned to maintain leadership continuity, strengthen competitive advantage, and generate enduring value for all stakeholders.

DECLARATIONS

Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate

Not applicable. This study is a conceptual and theoretical analysis based on secondary data and published literature; it does not involve primary data collection from human or animal participants.

Consent for Publication

Not applicable. This manuscript does not contain any individual person's data, images, or identifiable information requiring consent for publication.

Funding

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XV, Issue VII, July 2026

Not applicable. This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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