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**Article**

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# Leadership development program and leaders performance for mid-level managers in Saudi Petroleum Company, ARAMCO

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## ABSTRACT

Organizations continually try to increase the level of leadership capability and increase the number of qualified applicants for leadership positions by supporting leadership development training program. This qualitative case study discovers whether participating in a leadership development program resulted in leader's performance that can fill leadership gaps. The theoretical framework of this study is depend on expectancy theory, suggests that leaders who involved in leadership development expect to become leaders in future. This exploratory case study sought to learn whether, upon completion of a comprehensive leadership development program, participants applied for, and assumed, leadership positions. A purposeful sample of 32 participants was drawn from in structured interviews conducted by the researcher from Aramco Company. The results provided evidence that using leadership development programs to fill a leadership gap is productive, and that the effectiveness of this strategy is enhanced when organizations purposefully select and support participants through all stages of their leadership development. Participants who pursued leadership opportunities indicated the importance of institutional involvement in leadership development.

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## 1. Introduction

The principles of great leadership are timeless but the challenges orientation such as globalization, technological advancement, and generational gap are renewed. The challenges become more complex as leaders have to adjust their leadership approach to suit with the diverse workforce coordination. Leader development is oriented toward increasing the individual's ability to perform in the recent position. Leadership development integrates the individual within the organization's social systems, strategies, and goals (Olivares, Peterson, & Hess, 2007). Burns (1978) noted that leaders are often categorized according to traits and behaviors, but that leadership preparation is an organizational development process that requires training specific to an organization. Brungardt (1997) stated "the study of leadership has been a major scholarly activity over the last 100 years" (p. 82). Barker (1997), who said "leadership training has become an industry" (p. 348), supported Brungardt's statement and challenged the efficacy of leadership training in view of the training models that were being used to develop leaders.

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Performance is a fundamental goal for business leaders and sports coaches. Psychology theory has a significant role in understanding how leaders and followers can work together yielding high performance. One recent development in leadership theory building is the focus on followership and how followers' perceptions of leadership influence performance (Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Ehrhart & Klein, 2001; Judge, Bono, & Locke, 2000). These models rest on the assumption that effective leadership is due to both leaders' behaviors and the impact these behaviors have on followers' information processing (Lord and Emrich, 2000). Social Identity Theory (SIT, Tajfel & Turner, 1985) provides a mechanism to explain this process since it concerns the perception of fit between leaders and followers. When a leader is considered to fit with a follower's prototypical view then the leader will be accepted and the follower is more likely to engage in high performance behaviors. However, follower perceptions show individual differences (Schyns & Sanders, 2007) that are not fully modeled in SIT alone, necessitating a supplementary approach.

Leading for high performance requires an understanding of the relationship between leaders and followers (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999). A growing field of research examines how perceptions of leadership influence followers' responses to leaders and their performance.

Employee and organization roles in career development in an organization provide a future orientation to human resource development activities. Therefore, performance development is the outcome of the interaction between individual career planning and institutional management process. Employees can be moved in a logical way; transfer and promotions can be done more systematically. Some organizations are beginning to employ dual-ladder career development systems whereby employees can progress along either a technical or a managerial hierarchy, receiving the types of training and job assignments most relevant to their position goals. Employees can tailor career development plans to their individual needs, avail themselves of support services as they need them, and obtain feedback during the process. Skills Assessment and training most organizations are beginning to use assessment centers to help in the career development of middle and late career employees. Organizations are providing more and more training for employees lacking specific skills needed for job movement such as technical and managerial skills. When employers offer plenty of training to employees, everyone will be more satisfied and fewer employees will leave.

The mid-level administrators play an important role in the daily operations of the company and there is lack of literature dedicated to investigate the significant method for preparing effective and appropriate leader to substitute the current leaders efficiently. The purpose of this exploratory case study to investigate the career outcomes of individuals who participated in a leadership development program. The shortage of leaders in the company has prompted to invest in leadership development and supporting the mid-level administrators in leadership development programs as one way to fill a leadership gap (Reille & Kezar, 2010). Understanding if there were changes in the career paths of individuals who completed the leadership development program would allow institutions to be better informed about the possible career outcomes of leadership development participants that they sponsor. If the institution has been using leadership development programs to address a leadership gap, the evidence provided from this study would be important for institutional decision-making.

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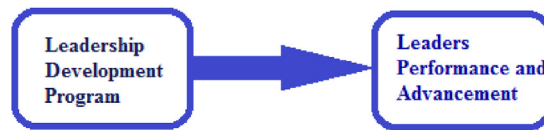
## 2. Theoretical framework

This qualitative, exploratory case study aims to discover whether participants who successfully completed a comprehensive leadership development program which arranged by Aramco Company in order to enhance their leadership positions. This study intend to investigate whether participants recognized the career improvement or performance progression they desired, and whether advancement could be attributed, to participating in the leadership development program. In addition, the attributes that may have effected those outcomes. The company and mid-level administrators have many reasons for choosing particular career paths and using a leadership development program to assist with career exploration and/or advancement is only one approach. For the purpose of this study, the reasons were delimited to those of expectancy theory. The experiences of mid-level administrators as they cultivate their leadership skills and competencies. Prior research has suggested that leadership transition can be disruptive and affect the institution's performance, particularly in institutions that are not highly bureaucratized in structure (Grusky, 1960, 1961). The mid-level administrators play an important role in the daily operations of the company, and yet their positions are complex and can be misunderstood, primarily because they are so diverse in the areas that they support (Bragg, 2000; Gillett-Karam, 1999; Rosser, 2000). Fig. 1, simplified the hypothesized model which include the two main variables leadership development program as independent variable and leader's performance and advancement.

Classification schemes for occupations into low, middle, and high skills categories sometimes rely on the educational attainment and training of people in the respective jobs. Heckman, Stixrud, and Urzoo (2006) find that except for college graduates, non-cognitive skills (as measured by indices of locus of control and self-esteem) exert at least as high and probably higher impact on job market outcomes than do cognitive skills (word knowledge, paragraph comprehension, arithmetic reasoning, mathematical knowledge, and coding speed as measured by the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery).

This study investigated what happens to participants in a leadership development program after they successfully completed the program. The results of this study add to the literature on the career outcomes of leadership development program participants. Findings could lead to further study on how to choose the best candidates for leadership development and the best way to support those candidates. Determining whether participation in leadership development programs results in the program participants successfully moving into leadership positions at their institutions helps institutions in several ways.

Therefore, this study addressed whether participating in a leadership development program results in career advancement and then in their performance. The diminishing number of leadership programs has been identified as one contributor to the



**Fig. 1 – Hypothesized model.**

leadership gap (Evelyn, 2001) and many institutions are responding by supporting leadership development (Aalsburg-Wiessner & González-Sullivan, 2007; Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005; Miller, 1997). Whether leadership development programs result in participants successfully moving into leadership positions at their institutions has not been established in existing research. Therefore, understanding the career progression of those individuals would be of primary interest to the institutions. It is also of interest to individuals who seek a leadership position and to the developers of leadership development programs.

However, this research was structured to answer five research questions that address the purpose of the study.

1. Does the leadership development program for the Mid-Level administrators affect their job advancement? Why or why not?
2. Are the participants in development program for the Mid-Level administrators, believe if they successfully complete this program would lead to leadership opportunities in their organization. Why or why not?
3. Are the participants in development program for the Mid-Level administrators, believe that the top leadership in their organization believed that the leadership development training program would prepare them for leadership opportunities within their institutions? Why or why not?
4. Are the participants in development program for the Mid-Level administrators' value attainment of a leadership position within their institutions? Why or why not?
5. Are the participants in development program for the Mid-Level administrators' applying for one or more leadership opportunities at their institutions for which they met the stated minimum qualifications? Why or why not?
6. If participants were successful in attaining a leadership position at their organization, they attribute their success to their own personal knowledge and experience. Why or why not?
7. If participants were successful in attaining a leadership position at their organization, they attribute their success to their leadership training. Why or why not?

To understand the leadership development program, there are obvious needs to discover the dimensions of program design, participant experiences and expectations, institutional involvement, and the methods used for evaluating the effectiveness of leadership development programs. The program was designed by the HR department in Aramco Company in order to enhance the mid-level administrative to earn the necessary leadership skills which qualifying them to move forward in their job performance. Participants have been supported by their company and, prior completed a number of leadership assessments that serve as a starting point for individual leadership development. Institutional support and involvement continues, as participants have been provided opportunities to enact dimensions of their individual development plan, including the assignment of a mentor who guides participant development.

The company has the general objective in investing in Leadership Development, that was produced by the HR for use as promotional material, revealed that participants reported changes in leadership competence, commitment to growth as leaders, and increased confidence in their leadership competencies (Barker, Brunn, & Bullock, 1974).

### **3. Literature review**

#### **3.1. Leadership development**

Northouse (2007) stated, "Leadership is a process through which an individual influence a group of people to attain common goals". Leaders now do not rely upon their legitimate power to persuade individuals to do as they are told but they take an interest in an interaction with their subordinates or they raise and widen the interest of their subordinates.

Allen and Hartman (2008) observed that billions of dollars have been spent on leadership development programs every year, even though "little academic work connects the theory of leadership development to the interventions used in leadership development programs" (p. 10). Evidence is also lacking on whether leadership development has led to advancement that fills the growing need for leaders. Thus, it is important to increase the understanding of leadership attributes and work styles that are possessed by successful presidents. Although this study has investigated leadership positions at a Mid-level, understanding leadership attributes for positions remains applicable on several levels.

The literature has revealed that there are similarities in leadership development programs, even when the targeted participants are different (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Inman, 2009; Knight & Trowler, 2001; Robinson, Sugar, & Miller, 2010). The landscape is littered with a variety of ideas on the best way to develop leaders, and college administrators must pick through them to decide which would have a useful application in their respective institutions.

When defining leadership development, the distinction between leader development and leadership development should be made. McCauley and Van Velsor (2005) defined leader development as directed toward expanding individual capacity, whereas Day (2001) defined leadership development as directed toward expanding organizational capacity. Burns (1978) also separated the definition of leadership from the definition of leader. Leaders were defined by traits and behaviors, whereas leadership was defined as a process that existed within a context. Even though the definitions were separated, Burns maintained that, as distinct entities, neither approach can be as singularly effective as it would be if it were integrated and understood in the context of the other. The leader offers leadership and leadership is offered by the leader, requiring both the leader and the leadership to receive due consideration.

Brungardt (1997) supported the distinctions in leaders and leadership; he said that all leadership theories could be categorized under five general approaches. These approaches included trait, behavioral, situational, power-influence, and transformational. Recognizing that different types of individuals pursue leadership development, this literature review limited the exploration of leadership theories to the trait and transformational categories. The reason for this is that trait theory addresses the individual leader's capacity for leadership according to identifiable characteristics, and transformational theory reoccurs in the literature as a leadership development program focus when determining and designing program content (Benezet, Katz, & Magnusson, 1981; Davis, 2003; Hawkins, 2009; Isaac, Zerbe, & Pitt, 2001). Trait theory further identifies differences and similarities in leaders, whereas transformational theory further specifies how leadership can be defined. Addressing both leader and leadership is consistent with the distinctions made by Burns (1978) and Brungardt (1997).

Early trait research conducted by Stogdill (1948) and Mann (1959) identified differentiating characteristics for those who were leaders, as did later studies by Gardner (1989). As one of the earliest subjects to be researched under the topic of leadership, many trait models exist. These models emphasize the personal attributes of leaders and how combinations of traits, motives, and skills can predict leader effectiveness. Although there have been many studies aimed at identifying the common characteristics of effective leaders (DeRue, Nahrgang, Wellman, & Humphrey, 2011; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991), no definitive predictors have been solidified. Further research revealed that trait theory could not identify leaders in all situations because it did not consider the context requirements for particular traits. The presence of particular traits could indicate the propensity for leadership, but not accurately predict whether individuals possessing those traits would end up as leaders (Davis, 2003; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). The trait theory of leadership was founded on the belief that leaders have natural abilities and attributes that are well aligned for leadership. The assumption was that leaders were born and not made, allowing individuals to create expectations around their leadership propensity.

Once identification of traits did not prove to be a successful predictor of effective leadership, researchers shifted, in the 1950s, to study the actions of leaders. Actions were analyzed according to what leaders did with the personal traits, skills, and motives that they possessed. The significant difference between these new behavioral models and trait models was that behaviors can be learned whereas traits are innate. Within the framework of expectancy theory, one aspect of this study sought to determine to what participants attributed their leadership success. It was interesting to discover what traits or behaviors participants identified as important to their success, as these may serve to reveal how leadership programs can or do serve individuals in their career advancement. Transformational leadership is often used as the theoretical backdrop on which many leadership development programs have been successfully modeled (Ardichvili & Manderscheid, 2008; Benezet et al., 1981), because it views the leader as the change agent who, either before or after undertaking leadership development training, can inspire or motivate followers. Heavy criticism of leadership models during the 1980s led to a leadership gap because of what was defined as the "performance-cue effect." When times were good, leadership was deemed effective, but when times were bad, then leadership was blamed even if the leadership during both periods was similar. This resulted in a new type of leadership, labeled "charismatic leadership," developed by Conger and Kanungo (1987). Based on the Greek word meaning special or divine gift, charismatic leadership relies on the effect the leader has on followers. Follower commitment stems from the relationship with the leader, which is one aspect of transformational leadership. Bass (1985) noted that follower commitment is significant to challenging organizational goals. The transformational leader presents these goals as a compelling vision that appeals to followers' value systems, allowing the leader to then incite positive feelings toward a new vision. Change occurs when followers reevaluate their behavior options and become committed to supporting the espoused vision of the leader. Signaling change, transformational leadership addresses the need for action and many contemporary scholars, including Bennis and Nanus (1985), Kouzes and Posner (2007), and Covey and Merrill (2006), have presented the leader as a catalyst for change.

Medina observed that transformational leadership has become a dominant theme in leadership studies. The leadership development program under study for this dissertation has been grounded in transformational leadership theory. Participants in the study provided information about whether this type of training prepared them for leadership roles within their institutions.

### 3.2. Expectancy theory

Expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) asserts on the premise that individuals would execute of action that resulted in consequences that they believed were likely to occur. The expectancy theory of motivation provides an explanation as to why an individual chooses to act out a specific behavior as opposed to another. This cognitive process evaluates the motivational force (MF) of the different behavioral options based on the individual's own perception of the probability of attaining his desired outcome. Expectancy refers



to the “effort-performance” relation. Thus, the perception of the individual is that the effort that he or she will put forward will actually result in the attainment of the “performance”. This cognitive evaluation is heavily weighted by an individual’s past experiences, personality, self-confidence and emotional state. The degree of effort individuals put toward achieving the outcome would depend on how much they value the outcome. Being able to predict how much effort individuals would exert and how much they valued particular outcomes would help to identify the degree of motivation individuals would direct toward particular outcomes.

Expectancy theory is based on four assumptions (Vroom, 1964). One assumption is that people join organizations with expectations about their needs, motivations, and past experiences. These influence how individuals react to the organization. A second assumption is that an individual’s behavior is a result of conscious choice. That is, people are free to choose those behaviors suggested by their own expectancy calculations. A third assumption is that people want different things from the organization (e.g., good salary, job security, advancement, and challenge). A fourth assumption is that people will choose among alternatives so as to optimize outcomes for them personally. The expectancy theory based on these assumptions has three key elements: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. A person is motivated to the degree that he or she believes that (a) effort will lead to acceptable performance (expectancy), (b) performance will be rewarded (instrumentality), and (c) the value of the rewards is highly positive (valence). Leaders should try to increase the belief that good performance will result in valued rewards. Ways of doing so include: measure job performance accurately; describe clearly the rewards that will result from successful performance; describe how the employee’s rewards were based on past performance; provide examples of other employees whose good performance has resulted in higher rewards. In essence, leaders should link directly the specific performance they desire to the rewards desired by employees.

Mathibe (2008) used the expectancy theory assumption that people make decisions based on their expectation that a particular behavior will lead to a desired outcome—to show the need for balance between employee needs and institutional needs. A synergy between employee needs and institutional needs was believed to create more productive tendencies. Identifying goals and clarifying their meaning forges a shared understanding between the individual and the institution. When individuals know and understand what is expected, Mathibe (2008) stated they would be motivated to achieve. In referring to the possible, as opposed to the actual, the unlocking of potential required identifying what an individual needed in the form of communication, workload allocation, job standards, and degree of involvement in decision-making. As is consistent with expectancy theory, individual perceptions and needs vary and the degree of empowerment offered through the aforementioned essentials required personalization in order to achieve successful outcomes. This would allow effort to be directed toward achieving the goals or expectations without abdicating responsibility or relationships. Mathibe used the equity element to replace Vroom’s (1964) definition of valence. Whereas valence was determined to be the value placed on an outcome, Mathibe believed that a failure to balance the inputs and outputs of individuals acted in the same way. For example, if something is not valued, the motivation to achieve it will be low, just as individuals are not motivated to pursue a course of action if they believe the outcome to be unfair. All of the preceding elements lead to performance, using expectancy theory to predict that employees would be motivated when they believed that putting in more effort yields higher levels of performance.

### 3.3. Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory

Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory suggests that a leader will develop an exchange relationship over time with each subordinate (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Social exchange theory and role theory provide the basis for explaining how the exchange relationship develops gradually over time as a leader interacts with each subordinate and the role of the subordinate is negotiated. The quality of the relationship may vary from one subordinate to another. In a high exchange relationship there is a high level of trust, liking, and respect. The leader provides outcomes desired by the subordinate (e.g. interesting tasks, additional responsibilities, more rewards), and in exchange the subordinate is expected to be committed to the work and loyal to the leader. In low-quality exchange relationships, subordinates are only expected to perform the formal requirements of their jobs, and extra benefits are not provided by the leader. Empirical studies have found a positive correlation between LMX quality and several indicators of leadership effectiveness (e.g. Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Harris, Wheeler, & Kacmar, 2009). In a meta-analytic study Gerstner and Day (1997) found that a favorable exchange relationship was related to higher subordinate satisfaction, greater organizational commitment, better job performance, and lower turnover.

Finally, this investigation study used the dimensions of expectancy theory relating to expectancy, instrumentality, and valence to frame the study, while considering the reciprocal relationship between the individual and the institution. According to Creswell (2009), this meant that the research questions needed to be open ended and broad. This type of questioning has been consistent with research conducted for studies that were investigated as part of this literature review and has resulted in identifying ways to help individuals move into leadership positions. For example, Coppard (2006) conducted a study, using an open ended, broad questioning style that investigated the experiences of faculty who moved into chair roles.

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## 4. Methodology

As mentioned before, the population for this study was drawn from a number of members which participated in leadership development program who conducted by HR department in Aramco company. The sample population consisted of 32 individuals

who came from different departments across the company. The purposeful sample allowed for exploration of the career outcomes of mid-level administrators who participated in the leadership development program. Merriam (1998) supported using a purposeful sample when the researcher had selected a sample from which the most could be learned and was the preferred sampling method when attempting to assemble the lived experiences of individuals.

This study dedicated and conducted in Aramco company which is the state-owned oil company of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Over the past 80 years it have become the world's top exporter of crude oil and natural gas liquids (NGLs). Employing more than 61,000 workers and their ability to attract, develop, and retain top talent is critical to achieving their aspirations. The company foster a culture that empowers individuals, encourages collaboration, manages risks, drives accountability, and rewards high performance. This appeals to professionals who are looking for a place where they can work as high-functioning teams and individuals. Young professionals are particularly drawn to the company culture of internal mobility and continuous development, which has increased the young talent in the workforce, where almost half of the employees are 35 or younger ([www.saudiaramco.com](http://www.saudiaramco.com)).

The purposeful sample of 32 participants from different departments across the company provided data through instruments that were developed to answer the research questions. Instruments included interviews and document requests from participants. All of the participants were identified as having participated in the 2010-2014 leadership development program and had been sponsored to attend by their department. A total of 32 participants were registered in this sample, and all were contacted via e-mail and invited to participate for the study. The instrument which used to collect the data were included a letter or e-mail contact script, a structured interview guide, and a questionnaire. The interview questions were formulated using Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory as a conceptual framework, and together with the other sources of information, were used to answer the research questions.

The first step involved separating the research question responses into categories that aligned with the theoretical framework of Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory. Leadership development program participants shared beliefs, expectations, and values that covered a range from positively pursuing leadership opportunities to consciously avoiding an expanded leadership role within their institutions. The participants shared positive thoughts, indicating that they felt the program was beneficial, even if they did not pursue leadership opportunities.

Data from the interviews was connected to the research questions, using multiple interview questions to answer research questions. For example, interview question one asks participants if they expected to become leaders, which speaks to the research parameter of expectancy. This response was compared to question four, asking whether participants had applied for leadership opportunities, which speaks to instrumentality in whether they believed they might become leaders but also speaks to expectancy as participants who expected to become leaders would need to apply for opportunities. Coding of data identified not only the what, but the why of participant experiences. Using the example from the previous paragraph, participants may have expected to become leaders (question one), but did not apply for leadership opportunities (question four) because none were available or none met their preferences for a leadership opportunity they wanted to pursue. The study involved 32 participants, and it was therefore possible to draw a data tree to indicate the direction of participant's responses. For example, participants disclosed whether or not they expected to become leaders and yes/no was noted on the data tree. Asking participants why or why not introduced an open-ended opportunity to provide insights, or branches on the tree, into the why of this decision. As participants provided data it was possible to separate different and attach similar responses in order to explore the responses more thoroughly. Following this rudimentary graphic compilation, participant responses were documented and transferred into Qualtrics software, a program designed to facilitate qualitative research analysis. The software allowed for importing and working with the different types of documents that were collected. For example, the decision tree would highlight whether or not a participant had a professional development plan and the software provided an added dimension of confirming connections between having a plan and pursuing leadership opportunities. The coding procedure involved categorizing dimensions of the findings according to themes that were related to the expectancy theory framework. These include the major categories of expectancy, instrumentality, and valence with subcategories that include motivation, effort, performance, and outcomes. Discrepant cases were used to revise, expand, or confirm and disconfirm research findings.

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## 5. Results

Maintaining the simplicity of the study, the questions of the study used to become the same questions of interview. The first research question was asked: Does the leadership development program for the Mid-Level administrators affect their job advancement? Participant responses varied from, some who stated, "Yes, I expected to become a leader," to, who stated, "No. Our department has a well manager for the position. I would be interested in a managerial position in one of the service areas of the institution if the right one came up. Generally, out of the 32 participants interviewed, 8 stated that they did not expect to become leaders and 24 said that they did. The second research question was asked: Are the participants in development program for the Mid-Level administrators, believe if they successfully complete this program would lead to leadership opportunities in their organization. Participant responses varied to agree and disagree, the responses who are they believe is 18 which are they have great expectations. While, the majority (20) of the responses said they believed that the leadership development training program would prepare them for leadership opportunities within their institutions. In addition, 28 said they value attainment of a leadership position within their institutions. Surprisingly, 24 said No they did not applied for one or more leadership opportunities at their institutions. So that, 20 responses said they attribute their success to their own

personal knowledge and experience. While, 18 attribute their success to their leadership training. All of the research questions led to an exploration of the purpose for this research study, including participant expectations, beliefs, and values surrounding attainment of a leadership position. Questions 4 and 5 were most directly related to the purpose of this study, which was to explore whether participation in leadership development programs resulted in participants applying for, and successfully moving into, leadership positions at their institutions. [Table 1](#) summarizing Participant Responses to research questions of this study.

## 6. Discussion, conclusions, and recommendations

This study was conducted to examine whether participants from the mid-level administrators, who successfully completed a comprehensive leadership development program subsequently applied for and assumed leadership positions in their organizations. The subject was examined by adapting a conceptual framework from [Vroom \(1964\)](#) that revealed whether individuals (a) expected to attain, (b) believed they were capable of attaining, and (c) valued attaining leadership positions in their institutions. Based on this results of this study, it can be concluded that the findings of this study can categorized into three top that were common to all participants in the study. These topics deal with the design of leadership development programs, participants and their experiences, institutional involvement, and evaluation of the program.

The findings from negative associations were supported by evidence from the research ([Allen & Hartman, 2008](#); [Griffin, 2003](#)) which indicated potential complications and shortcomings with leadership development programs, participant preparation, and institutional involvement would hinder individuals from pursuing leadership opportunities. As a result, participants with negative associations were less likely to pursue leadership opportunities than those with positive associations. Although this may not seem surprising, it indicates that there are practices that could be changed to improve the likelihood that leadership development participants would later pursue leadership opportunities. Linking the findings from this study with those from existing research helps to understand whether participants in leadership development programs go on to pursue and attain leadership positions. Participants believed what they learned from the program was relevant to their work environment, and if what they learned were applied to the workplace, improvements would occur. Unfortunately, most participants feel that their institutions are not supportive or interested in adopting these practices.

According to the theoretical framework from [Vroom's \(1964\)](#) expectancy theory, individuals will exert effort if they believe they are capable of achieving the outcome and if they value that outcome. In the case of participants who have attended leadership development training but are either not sure what the institutional motivation is for sending them or did not indicate that they desire a leadership opportunity, the desired outcome is unclear. These participants may still indicate that they enjoyed the experience, but according to Vroom's theory, the participant is willing to work harder toward the goal of pursuing leadership opportunities if participation in the program is initially aligned with an institutional and personal goal. The first step to rectify the problem of unclear participant expectations is communicating to potential participants the reason they are being asked to consider attending the leadership development program, and they should accept the invitation only if they are interested in pursuing the possibility of assuming a position of leadership.

**Table 1 – Summary of participant responses to research questions.**

| Research question | Question statement   | Yes | No |
|-------------------|--|-----|----|
| 1                 | Does the leadership development program for the Mid-Level administrators affect their job advancement?   | 24  | 8  |
| 2                 | Are the participants in development program for the Mid-Level administrators, believe if they successfully complete this program would lead to leadership opportunities in their organization?   | 18  | 14 |
| 3                 | Are the participants in development program for the Mid-Level administrators, believe that the top leadership in their organization believed that the leadership development training program would prepare them for leadership opportunities within their institutions? | 12  | 20 |
| 4                 | Are the participants in development program for the Mid-Level administrators' value attainment of a leadership position within their institutions?   | 28  | 4  |
| 5                 | Are the participants in development program for the Mid-Level administrators' applying for one or more leadership opportunities at their institutions for which they met the stated minimum qualifications?  | 8   | 24 |
| 6                 | If participants were successful in attaining a leadership position at their organization, they attribute their success to their own personal knowledge and experience.   | 12  | 20 |
| 7                 | If participants were successful in attaining a leadership position at their organization, they attribute their success to their leadership training.   | 18  | 14 |



The program meets the recommendation requirements of an effective program. Participants identified that their level of skill and knowledge has increased. Adding the recommendations from this research will further ensure that institutions achieve their intended purpose when sending participants for leadership development training.

The results indicates that effectiveness of training, participant expectations and experiences, and institutional commitment to leadership development. Each of these themes has provided insights into ways to undertake simple but impactful actions that will help optimize the benefits of leadership development, including the incorporation of purposeful selection methods and scheduled debriefing and follow-up opportunities. Institutions and individuals are making significant investments in leadership development with the hope of addressing the critical shortage of leaders. Without change, institutions will continue to expend resources to develop leaders who do not go on to pursue leadership opportunities. Adopting the practices of mindful participant selection and follow-up will contribute positively to the effectiveness and efficiency of investing institutional resources in leadership development programs. Attention to these practices will improve the expectations of the applicant and the institution, leading to increased goal compatibility between applicants and institutions. Applicants who are clear on the expectations and are supported by institutions will be more likely to apply to leadership positions. Institutions will benefit from this by addressing the leadership shortage through sponsoring and supporting quality applicants who in turn assume leadership roles within the institution.

This study has shown that using a leadership development program to encourage and facilitate the pursuit of leadership opportunities in Aramco is a good idea that helps institutions create a larger pool of competent leadership candidates. When employers understand how their employees make decisions about future work, they can do a better job of planning for their human resource needs. The individual is driven by his or her skills, knowledge, abilities, attitudes, values and life situation. Employers provide the jobs and information about the jobs as well as the opportunities and constraints within which employees may pursue other jobs in the future. Organizations should track career paths and develop leader's abilities. Management seeks information to direct and to monitor the progress of special groups of employees, and to ensure that capable managerial and technical talent will be available to meet the organization's needs. Correspondingly, Aramco work intensively on provide an intensive learning and development on-boarding program that addresses the needs of newly hired young professionals to prepare them for transition to the workplace and future leadership roles. Aramco have program to create an engaging and experiential learning opportunity for young talent. By utilizing different techniques such as Talent Management, Participant-Driven, Team-Orientated and Simulated Work Environment. This case produces a highly effective Saudi Aramco employee with the competencies and confidence to lead at work and in the community.

Aramco committed to the national vision 2030 to nationalizing the jobs including the leadership positions. This opportunity will increase the Saudi worker in energy sector to 70% of employees. This plan cannot succeed without respectable execute of advancement program to promote mid-level leaders to advance level with confidence to achieve healthy. Aramco, for this purpose should address the hesitation of some members about believe that their success to leadership training will necessary pave the way to attaining a leadership position.

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## 7. Limitations and recommendations

The limitations identified from purposeful participant selection and data collection methodology were considered when determining the trustworthiness of the study. All participants were from institutions in Aramco and all attended the same leadership development program. This may lead to questions about the generalizability of the study findings.

Additional research into the study of leadership development program participants is needed. Such a study could explore whether participants are more effective and efficient at their jobs, have adopted different philosophies, or have had shifts in attitude or understanding as a result of the training. For example, it is possible that people who have received the training will be more sympathetic to and supportive of what administrators are trying to do than people who did not receive training, who may have difficulty seeing some issues from an administrator's point of view.

A further recommendation would be to conduct a comparative analysis of the ways in which participants are selected to attend leadership development training. A final recommendation would be to engage participants in determining what sort of institutional support participants would like to have after they receive the training.

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## Conflict of interest

No conflict of interest.

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