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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Improving nonprofit succession management for leadership continuity: A shared leadership approach

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Abstract

The topic of nonprofit succession management has gained increasing research attention in recent years. However, the organizational implementation rate of succession management is often low – and even where present, may be mere “lip service.” Previous studies in the field mostly focus on the role of boards or executive directors in succession management. Grounded in shared leadership theory, this study takes a broader perspective, and stresses the shared responsibilities among boards, executive directors/division executives, and human resource (HR) professionals within the succession management process. As such, the study's framework comprises three components: shared leadership, the succession management process, and nonprofit leadership continuity as an outcome variable. The results of a large online survey in Germany ($N = 1020$) show that only 12.3% of responding nonprofit organizations in Germany practice tripartite shared leadership in succession management. However, applying partial least squares analysis indicates, for example, a positive relationship of shared leadership behavior among boards, executive directors/division executives, and HR professionals with the

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likelihood of a systematic succession management process, as well as nonprofit leadership continuity. Reflecting on our findings and current threats to nonprofits, such as COVID-19, we conclude by offering practical implications for nonprofit decision-makers and for academia. Among other things, we argue that nonprofit practice should push for more (tripartite) shared leadership to improve succession management and leadership continuity.

KEYWORDS

leadership continuity, nonprofit human resource planning, nonprofit leadership, PLS-SEM analysis, shared leadership, succession management

1 | INTRODUCTION

The departure of long-time board members or executive directors can cause major disruptions to an organization's operations (Ali & Mehreen, 2019; Landles-Cobb et al., 2015; Schepker et al., 2017; Tebbe et al., 2017). Whereas in U.S. nonprofit organizations up to 75% of leaders plan to leave in the coming years (Kunreuther et al., 2013), only a few nonprofits have prepared for this by implementing succession strategies (Carman et al., 2010; Chang & Besel, 2021; Santora et al., 2015; Sargeant & Day, 2018). Yet, the need to realize strategy-led successions, gearing toward smooth transitions on the board and at the executive director/division executive level, may become even more substantial in the near future in light of the latest market trends – for instance, the retirement of the baby boomer generation (Russel et al., 2020; Tierney, 2006), increasing competition to attract young talent (McKee & Froelich, 2016; Von Bergen, 2007), and conditional sector commitment (AbouAssi et al., 2021; Walk et al., 2021), to name just a few. These trends are likely to make changes in nonprofit leadership more frequent. As a consequence, systematic succession management has evolved to an important research topic in nonprofit literature in recent years (Bozer et al., 2015; Froelich et al., 2011; Li, 2019; Santora et al., 2015; Stewart et al., 2020).

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has immensely affected the nonprofit workplace for more than 2 years now. Kuenzi et al. (2021) highlight how COVID-19 has altered aspiring leaders' job choices. The authors also argue that the pandemic torpedoes the implementation of strategic HR development in nonprofits, since in challenging times resources are more directed toward the organization's immediate survival (Kuenzi et al., 2021). In contrast, however, that same pandemic also pushes nonprofits to, for example, “review the succession planning process for CEO governance” (Santora, 2020, p. 5) and thus makes salient the need to improve succession management.

While previous studies have yielded initial insights on succession practices in the nonprofit context, research usually focuses either on the role of boards or executive directors in succession management (Allison, 2002; Gothard & Austin, 2013; Hunter & Decker Pierce, 2020; Kramer & Nayak, 2013; Li, 2019; McKee & Froelich, 2016; Stewart, 2016; Stewart & Twumasi, 2020). Recently, however, several authors have noted that human resource (HR) professionals also

play a pivotal role in nonprofit succession management (Santora, 2019; Santora & Bozer, 2015; Varhegyi & Jepsen, 2017). This is mainly because HR professionals enrich human capital in strategic and daily operational practice (Pynes, 2004; Saleh, 2020; Selden & Sowa, 2015). As such, they are well educated to support the board and executives in the succession management process (Varhegyi & Jepsen, 2017) and could take the lead in tackling corresponding questions, for instance, concerning labor market law issues. Against this backdrop, Santora (2019, p. 8) notes a “[...] great need for a tripartite call for action among boards, CEOs, and HR professionals” in nonprofit succession management.

While we agree with this view, here we develop and test a theoretical framework of nonprofit succession management from a tripartite shared leadership perspective (Carson et al., 2007; Liang et al., 2021; Pearce & Conger, 2003). We elaborate on this in Section 2. Based on our framework, we aim to answer the following overarching research question: *Does shared leadership of boards, executive directors/division executives, and HR professionals improve the nonprofit succession management process, and finally, nonprofit leadership continuity?*

Our study makes several important contributions. First, we provide an extended definitional introduction to shared leadership in nonprofit succession management (see Table A1). Second, we develop a theoretical framework of shared leadership in succession management for the nonprofit context. In contrast to most existing succession management studies, this framework is not limited to one actor (boards, executive directors) but rather has a shared, tripartite leadership perspective. Third, our study is also among the first to offer empirical insights into nonprofit succession management from a shared leadership perspective by conducting a large online survey ($N = 1020$). Last, we extend knowledge on nonprofit succession management in different national contexts (Santora et al., 2015) by introducing quantitative data from the German nonprofit sector to the nonprofit succession discourse. Below, we next present the theoretical background of our research before explaining our methodological approach.

2 | CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Figure 1 provides a visual overview of our conceptual framework of shared leadership in nonprofit succession management. It consists of three main components: shared leadership, the succession

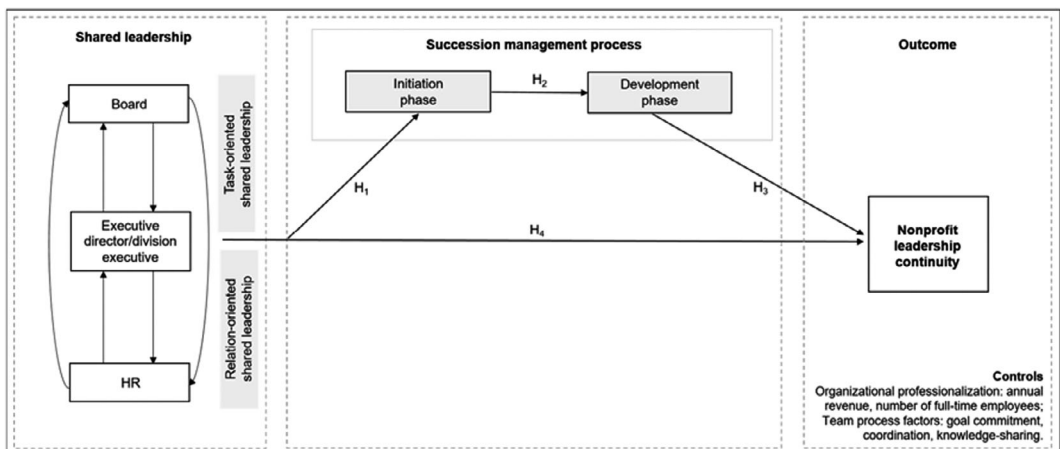


FIGURE 1 Conceptual framework of shared leadership in nonprofit succession management

management process, and nonprofit leadership continuity, as the intended outcome. Overall, we assume positive relationships between these components. For a concise overview of our components' key definitions, see Table A1. We argue specifically that shared leadership among boards, executive directors/division executives, and HR professionals in succession contexts is positively related to a comprehensive succession management process and nonprofit leadership continuity. We explain our framework and propose hypotheses in the following four subsections.

2.1 | Shared leadership in nonprofit succession management

Our framework's *first component* is shared leadership. The shared leadership concept is based on work in the interdisciplinary field of organizational and leadership theory since the 1930s (Follett, 1924), where contributions like social exchange theory, emergent leadership, followership theory, and participative decision-making theory paved the way (Pearce & Conger, 2003). A clearer vision of the shared leadership concept, however, evolved beginning in the 1990s (Pearce, 1997; Routhieaux, 2015). Since then, scholars have examined the issue in different ways and settings (Lorinkova & Bartol, 2021; Zhu et al., 2018), as it addresses real-life leadership challenges that frequently occur in organizations (Pearce et al., 2014; Yukl, 2012).

Building on pertinent literature (Carson et al., 2007; Klasmeier & Rowold, 2020; Pearce & Conger, 2003; Santora, 2019), we offer an expanded definition of shared leadership explicitly for the context of nonprofit succession management. As such, we define it as the interactive and emergent process of mutual influence among boards, executive directors/division executives, and HR professionals beyond their formal roles, which emphasizes the situational and horizontal dispersion of leadership responsibilities in structuring and executing succession management activities through task- and relation-oriented behaviors (Table A1). In the following, we explain what our definition is based on.

Commonly, scholars define shared leadership as the lateral and evolving process of mutual influence in regards to leadership responsibilities among team members to promote situational task completion (Carson et al., 2007; Liang et al., 2021; Pearce & Conger, 2003). A shared leadership perspective deemphasizes leadership characterized by top-down influence on subordinates (Klasmeier & Rowold, 2020) and instead stresses leadership as a fluid label (McIntyre & Foti, 2013) horizontally distributed to team-working individuals in social interactions (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Pearce et al., 2014; Wu et al., 2020). Drawing on research by Morgeson et al. (2010), Klasmeier and Rowold (2020, p. 916) further specify that shared leadership primarily helps team members “jointly structure and plan their tasks and mutually provide feedback.” In our view, and consistent with Santora (2019), in nonprofit succession management, this is done mainly by leadership-sharing team members: boards, executive directors/division executives, and HR professionals.

Generally, a shared leadership perspective does not negate the coexistence of vertical leadership (formal authority of command) (Pearce & Conger, 2003; Zhu et al., 2018). Hierarchical-formal leadership structures can remain in place or even foster the distribution of leadership responsibility to non-formal leadership actors on a task-related basis, for example, by reducing task-ambiguity (Freund, 2017; Klasmeier & Rowold, 2020; Ziegert & Dust, 2021). Pearce et al. (2001) and Pearce et al. (2004) first introduced the shared leadership approach into the nonprofit context; Routhieaux (2015), among others, later linked it to nonprofit succession management. We visualize this connection in our framework (Figure 1). Approaching nonprofit succession management in shared leadership of boards, executive directors/division executives,

and HR professionals, we argue that it requires leadership commitment from both the remaining and exiting leadership actors.

Grille and Kauffeld (2015) and Han et al. (2018) declare that two key dimensions of shared leadership are task-oriented and relation-oriented shared leadership. Whereas task-oriented shared leadership emphasizes tasks and objectives, relation-oriented shared leadership is about support and care among shared leadership actors (Grille & Kauffeld, 2015; Han et al., 2018; Yukl, 2006, 2012). In nonprofit succession management settings, the task-oriented dimension revolves around the shared long-term goal and related activities to ensure leadership continuity, carried out by boards, executive directors/division executives, and HR professionals. By contrast, the relation-oriented dimension stresses positive relationship factors, for example, promoting cohesion and voice among the three leadership actors. We conceptualize shared leadership in nonprofit succession management in terms of both key dimensions.

2.2 | Succession management process

Our framework's *second component* is the succession management process. Scholars here typically refer to Rothwell (2005) who has defined succession management as the “systematic effort by an organization to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and encourage individual advancement” (Rothwell, 2005, p. 10). In general, scholars and practitioners distinguish between two types of strategic succession practices: emergency-based and departure-based succession management. The major difference between them is the expected versus unexpected character of the processes (e.g., a board member/executive director is due to leave the NPO in 2022 vs. health problems of executive directors due to COVID-19) (Adams, 2005; Gothard & Austin, 2013). In our conceptual framework (Figure 1), we emphasize departure-based rather than emergency-based succession management.

Echoing aforementioned contributions, we specify the succession management process for nonprofit settings. We define it as the persistent planning and implementation of initial and developmental activities in continuous loops that target nonprofit employees' personal development and career progression and their transfer of knowledge of organizational specifics, aimed toward the outcome of a strong pipeline of leadership successors and, ultimately, leadership continuity. Next, we explain our definition by describing how the nonprofit succession management process is composed and indicating the extent to which it can induce situational role overlap.

Inspired by succession management scholars like Adams (2006), our framework conceptualizes an *initiation* and a *development phase* of the succession management process. In the initiation phase, decision-makers (boards, executive directors/division executives, and HR professionals) first commit to strategic succession practices, acquire resources to carry out related work, and identify key job functions and leadership competencies required in future environments (Gothard & Austin, 2013; Rothwell, 2005; Wolfred, 2008). The development phase then entails managing tasks like organizing a comprehensive selection process, identifying and developing talent (Charan et al., 2011; Groves, 2007), and creating communication and reporting plans (Gothard & Austin, 2013; Rothwell, 2005; Wolfred, 2008). For an overview of all critical succession management activities in both phases, see Tables A2 and A4.

Yet from a shared leadership perspective, the nonprofit succession management process may cause role overlap among boards, executive directors/division executives, and HR professionals at times. For example, boards, mainly responsible for some critical tasks, such as resource acquisitions and executive recruitment (Miller-Millesen, 2003), may leave leadership to (director/division) executives and HR professionals (Santora, 2019), with more situational expertise (Jäger & Rehli, 2012; Ziegert & Dust, 2021). However, deliberate overlaps of leadership responsibilities in succession management do not undermine the fundamental need for formal (vertical) leadership roles and chains of command. On that level, leadership aspirations of HR professionals remain limited to the administration and development of human capital, while boards and their executive principals hold more authority to issue directions and must lead in a broader range of areas, both strategically and operationally.

2.3 | Nonprofit leadership continuity

Our framework's *third component* is nonprofit leadership continuity. In line with Lynn (2001), we argue that this is a construct distinct from succession management, describing a critical organizational outcome, and thus it can and should be measured independently (Bernthal & Wellins, 2006). Consequently, we define nonprofit leadership continuity as a key organizational outcome of a nonprofit management process. As such, it displays the extent to which a nonprofit is capable of developing and retaining leadership potential and planning ahead for leader deputization, thus ensuring ongoing leadership. In this regard, an example of developing leadership potential may be offers of training in problem-solving, project management, and effective communication made by executives and HR for eager employees. Additionally, retaining leadership potential implies, for example, that boards and executives actively promote a motivating work climate, impact-oriented ways of working, and career opportunities (including deputization clarification) administered by HR professionals and made visible throughout the organization.

Logically, we see succession management activities as affecting the organizational outcome of nonprofit leadership continuity at best. Striving for leadership continuity, however, reflects an overarching strategy pursuing an outcome display of organizational steadiness while combating a pending leadership void (Kuenzi et al., 2021; Landles-Cobb et al., 2015; Tierney, 2006). It may rely on succession management and more strategic measures of leadership capacity building (Connolly & York, 2003; Despard, 2017), but might also build on proxies, for example, sheer board experience (McKee & Froelich, 2016; Stewart et al., 2020).

2.4 | Hypotheses

According to the shared leadership literature, several positive effects on team-working tasks – such as succession management (Santora, 2019) – are observable (Zhu et al., 2018). For example, Erkutlu and Chafra (2012) find that shared leadership fosters proactive team behavior. This in turn is crucial for initiating a comprehensive succession management process (Landles-Cobb et al., 2015; Santora & Bozer, 2015). Here, executive directors/division executives and HR professionals must anticipatively approach each other and the board with mutual reminders to pursue strategy-led succession management. A shared leadership perspective supports them in offering their specific leadership expertise in individual succession management steps right

from the start. Against this background, we suggest that shared leadership amplifies the proactive behavior of boards, executive directors/division executives, and HR professionals to implement initial activities (initiation phase) of a systematic succession management process. Thus, our first hypothesis is as follows.

H1. *Shared leadership among boards, executive directors/division executives, and HR professionals is positively related to the initiation phase of a nonprofit succession management process.*

Moreover, initiating succession management ought to evoke further action to form a more comprehensive process (Adams, 2006). In this sense, subsequent succession management activities of developmental character (Charan et al., 2011; Groves, 2007) depend on previous initial ones (Rothwell, 2005; Wolfred, 2008). In practice, however, little is yet known about whether initial efforts – such as the formulation of future required leadership competencies agreed upon by executive directors/division executives with the board and HR professionals – actually have a causal link to developmental activities and thus a comprehensive process. Consequently, we check if the initiation of first activities in a strategic succession management process triggers the implementation of developmental succession management activities thereafter. In this vein, we posit as follows.

H2. *The initiation phase of a succession management process is positively related to implementing the development phase of a nonprofit succession management process.*

Following our discussion in Section 2.3, we further argue that leadership continuity is an ultimate goal and desired outcome of a nonprofit's succession management process (Adams, 2017; Lynn, 2001; Santora et al., 2015). With this in mind, we conceptualize a third path in our conceptual framework and empirically examine whether development activities indeed pay off in achieving this desired goal. Specifically, we expect that implementing leadership development activities in nonprofits' succession management process – leading to completion of a comprehensive process – feed into our framework's outcome component of nonprofit leadership continuity. Hence, we hypothesize as follows.

H3. *The development phase of a succession management process is positively related to nonprofit leadership continuity.*

In addition to indirect effects, we also hypothesize a direct relationship of shared leadership with nonprofit leadership continuity. Our conceptualization is based on Routhieaux (2015, p. 145), who predicts that “shared leadership and decision making will have stronger human capital and be better positioned for smooth and effective transitions.” Furthermore, Santora (2019) claims that involving boards, executives, and HR equally in implementing a succession management process improves organizational continuity. This also echoes researchers' claims that ensuring leadership promotes organizational continuity (Heimovics et al., 1993; McMullin & Raggo, 2020). We view leadership continuity as a critical part of organizational continuity, and, consistent with Routhieaux (2015), assume that it is fostered by shared leadership. Therefore, we posit the following.

H4. *Shared leadership among boards, executive directors/division executives, and HR professionals is positively related to nonprofit leadership continuity.*

We control for the organizational number of full-time employees and annual revenue, and for the three team process factors of goal commitment, coordination, and knowledge sharing. We include the number of full-time employees and annual revenue as indicators of the organization's degree of professionalization. The team process factors are rooted in Han et al. (2018), which indicates that shared leadership positively affects these factors and team performance in collaborative settings.

3 | METHODS

This section explains the data collection process and presents details of the sample. Then, it explains the questionnaire measurements, and finally, shows details of data analysis.

3.1 | Data collection and sample

Data collection took place in July and August 2021 by means of an online survey. We sent out a questionnaire to 24,722 nonprofit organizations in Germany, addressing leadership personnel, namely board members, executive directors/division executives, and HR professionals. For this, we collected the organizations' email addresses using an external service provider, which generated the addresses based on a daily-updating web-scraping technique, from publicly available sources. After reviewing the address list, we compared it with openly available addresses of (a) the 51 largest German foundations (Bundesverband Deutscher Stiftungen, 2021) and (b) all 231 nonprofits that currently bear the most prominent seal of approval for nonprofit organizations in Germany, the German Central Institute for Social Issues (DZI) seal (DZI, 2021). The DZI is a watchdog institution and key player in supervising high-quality giving standards in Germany. Its seal of approval accredits the quality of accountability of nonprofit money collecting nonprofits (Boenigk et al., 2017). If organizations were not present in the provider's list, we added them. Responses were anonymous; we excluded those who (1) did not agree to our privacy policy or (2) dropped out of the survey before we asked them questions about succession management. Our final sample included 1020 responses (response rate = 4.13%).

Table 1 shows an overview of our sociodemographic sample characteristics. Of the respondents, 309 are female (30.3%), 468 are male (45.9%), and 5 (0.5%) are of diverse gender (missing: $N = 238$). Only 4.6% are 30 years old or younger. By comparison, when added up, the percentage of respondents over the age of 50 years amounts to 42.7%. Meanwhile, 653 respondents (64.0%) are board members, 452 (44.3%) are executive directors/division executives, and 146 (14.3%) are HR professionals; 16.1% have been working in their position for more than a decade; and 57.5% serve their organizations on an honorary or voluntary basis, while 41.0% are employed full-time.

Turning to organizational characteristics (Table A3), most respondents are working in the nonprofit fields of education (25.9%), arts and culture (17.5%), or social services (15.4%), and the fewest in civil protection/disaster control (2.4%). Most respondents work in associations (72.6%), and the others in foundations (2.5%), cooperatives (0.1%), and nonprofit limited liability companies (2.2%). Just under one-fifth (18.5%) generate annual revenues of between 100,000 and 1 million euros, while a plurality (30.7%) have 10 employees or fewer. In sum, 14.4% have a seal of approval, such as that of the DZI.

TABLE 1 Sociodemographic characteristics of study participants

Variable	Number of responses	%
Gender		
Female	309	30.3
Male	468	45.9
Diverse	5	0.5
Missing	238	23.3
Age (years)		
≤30	47	4.6
31–40	121	11.9
41–50	141	13.8
51–60	225	22.0
>60	211	20.7
Missing	275	27.0
Function within organization ^a		
Board member	653	64.0
Executive director/division executive	452	44.3
HR professional	146	14.3
Other	29	2.8
Missing	0	0
Length of organizational function (years)		
≤1	11	1.1
2–5	158	15.5
6–10	194	19.0
11–20	117	11.5
>20	47	4.6
Missing	493	48.3
Employment type		
Honorary/voluntary	587	57.5
Employed full-time	418	41.0
Missing	15	1.5

Note: $N = 1020$.

^aDoes not amount to $N = 1020$ (100%) responses, because respondents could provide multiple answers.

A sample is considered representative if its characteristics reflect those of a population. Based on a lack of recent representative data of nonprofit organizations in Germany (Mews & Boenigk, 2015), the only reliable studies available in these regards are the *Civil Society in Numbers* (ZiviZ) surveys. According to them, for example, 95% of organizations are associations (Priemer et al., 2017). However, this percentage is only 72.6% in our sample (Table A3). Likewise, our sample's distribution of nonprofits' annual revenues differs from that of the population. In this aspect, 4% of the German population's nonprofits generate annual revenues of more than 1 million

euros (Priemer et al., 2015), while it is 11.4% in our sample. Reflecting this, we label our study, by strict definition, as nonrepresentative. Nevertheless, we use our sample confidently as it (a) is characterized by a robust sample size, (b) provides insight in the context of our research focus, and (c) exhibits at least some indication of representativeness from a broader perspective. Apart from the deviations already mentioned in the context of associations, the distribution of legal forms in our sample is, for example, virtually identical to that of the population (Priemer et al., 2017).

3.2 | Measurement

Our questionnaire contains key measures of (1) *shared leadership*, (2) the *succession management process*, and (3) *nonprofit leadership continuity*. Where possible, we draw accepted scales from topic-specific studies and adapt them to our context. To measure all multi-item and single-item constructs, we use a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*). For an overview of our measures, see Table A2.

Shared leadership. To measure shared leadership, we refer to the aggregation approach (Sato & Makabe, 2021) and adopt the 10-item scale developed by Han et al. (2018). This scale builds on the Shared Professional Leadership Inventory for Teams (SPLIT), originally introduced by Grille and Kauffeld (2015). It spotlights the construct's task-oriented and relation-oriented dimensions in particular. We conceptualize the construct of shared leadership as consisting of both these dimensions, and later measure it accordingly. Hence, we treat shared leadership as a high-order construct (HOC) (Sarstedt et al., 2019). After checking whether there is shared leadership in the organizations' succession management, we ask respondents whether they agree with statements like "The responsible executives clearly assign internal tasks of succession management" or "The responsible executives take sufficient time to address the concerns of others in succession management."

Succession management process. We measure the succession management process based on succession management activity items previously used by Rothwell (2005). To validate them, we exposed them to external HR experts familiar with the nonprofit sector. Ultimately, our measurement captures an initiation phase (six items) and a development phase (eight items). For example, we ask respondents whether they agree with statements like "My organization develops indicators to measure the success of succession management" and "My organization implements programs to develop employees with leadership potential."

Nonprofit leadership continuity. To date, no established scale to measure nonprofit leadership continuity exists. However, Bernthal and Wellins (2006) provide several indicators of leadership continuity in succession management, which we consult. We formulate five items asking respondents whether they agree with such statements as "In my organization, enough employees are developed into leaders" and "In my organization, continuity in leadership is always guaranteed."

3.3 | Data analysis

For data analysis, we run partial least squares–structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to test our hypotheses (Bayonne et al., 2020; Hair et al., 2012). This enables us to simultaneously check for significant relations (hypotheses) between our framework's constructs and their indicators. PLS-SEM is especially applicable when empirical research designs include formative measured

constructs (Ringle et al., 2020) but also when exploring theoretical extensions of established theories (Hair et al., 2019). Typically, PLS-SEM follows a two-step procedure: first, evaluate a measurement model (step 1) and then assess a structural model (step 2) (Sarstedt et al., 2017). For this purpose, we use the software package SmartPLS (version 3.3.2) (Ringle et al., 2015).

4 | RESULTS

This section presents the descriptive results and then the PLS-SEM analyses, including the measurement model and structural model assessment.

4.1 | Descriptive results

Table 2 presents our descriptive results. When asked to indicate which leadership actors are substantially involved in succession management, only 12.3% state that their organization practices tripartite shared leadership by boards, executive directors/division executives, and HR professionals, but 633 (62.0%) report shared leadership in succession management to some extent. Apart from tripartite shared leadership, boards and executive directors/division executives are responsible in 28.4% of all cases, while respondents rarely indicate a shared leadership team composed of boards and HR professionals (1.8%), or executive directors/division executives and HR professionals (1.3%). Instead, various respondents acknowledge that different actors also play a role in their organization's succession management (18.2%). Hence, our results suggest that up to now, tripartite shared leadership of boards, executive directors/division executives, and HR professionals has not been the most common shared leadership composition. In this respect, our study confirms that practitioners in Germany have not yet followed Santora's (2019) call. On the one hand, this could be because many nonprofits are too small (Ban et al., 2003) to differentiate organizational leadership levels, for example, HR, clearly (although this is changing; Nonprofit HR, 2019). On the other hand, some nonprofits might not attribute succession management tasks to the three leadership levels of boards, executive directors/division executives, and HR professionals, but instead find other ways to distribute succession management activities or roles (Table 2).

Turning to the degree of implementation of the succession management process, only 10.3% of respondents report one of the top two scale values (4–5), indicating that few organizations have sufficiently implemented succession management. By direct comparison (Table A5), this percentage is 13.8% for respondents saying that shared leadership in succession management is present in their organization, and 5.8% for those stating it is absent. When looking at pivotal succession management activities (low two [1–2]/top two values), an ambivalent pattern emerges. More than one-third (37.4%) of respondents agree or totally agree that their organization defines current and future job requirements and competencies for leadership positions. Again, in comparison, this percentage amounts to 45.1% for respondents stating that shared leadership in succession management is present, whereas it is 24.5% for respondents indicating it is absent. Moreover, most respondents (39.2%) affirm that their organization determines which actor is in charge to communicate internal and external information about succession management concerns (shared leadership present = 47.4%, shared leadership absent = 25.4%). By contrast, only 14.0% of respondents agree or totally agree that their organization implements specific programs to develop employees with leadership potential (shared leadership present = 16.8%, shared leadership absent = 10.3%). Likewise, nonprofits identify a lack of

TABLE 2 Descriptive results

Variables (5-point Likert scale, 1 = “totally disagree” to 5 = “totally agree”)	Number of responses	%	Mean (SD)	Median	Low two (1–2)	Top two (4–5)
Shared leadership in succession management						
Yes (to some extent)	633	62.0				
No	311	30.5				
Missing	76	7.5				
Shared leadership composition in succession management						
Board + Executive director/ division executive + HR professional	125	12.3				
Board + Executive director/ division executive	290	28.4				
Board + HR professional	18	1.8				
Executive director/division executive + HR professional	13	1.3				
Other	186	18.2				
Missing	388	38.0				
Implementation of the succession management process	955	93.6	1.9 (1.1)	2.0	67.8%	10.3%
Missing	65	6.4				
Succession management process activities in place ^a						
Defined current/future job requirements and competencies	1000	98.0	2.9 (1.3)	3.0	40.3%	37.4%
Missing	20	2.0				
Responsible actors determined to communicate information internally/externally	989	97.0	2.9 (1.4)	3.0	39.0%	39.2%
Missing	31	3.0				
Programs implemented to develop employees with leadership potential	989	97.0	2.0 (1.2)	2.0	64.7%	14.0%
Missing	31	3.0				
Innovative measures implemented to meet succession needs	988	96.9	2.1 (1.1)	2.0	65.0%	13.3%
Missing	32	3.1				
Nonprofit leadership continuity	809	79.3	3.0 (0.9)	3.0	32.7%	14.6%
Missing	211	20.7				

Note: $N = 1020$.

Bold values are explicitly discussed in the results section.

^aActivities presented are a selection of all 14 activities measured in our survey. For a comprehensive overview of all activity values, see Table A4.

innovativeness in measures to meet their organization-specific succession needs. In this aspect, only 13.3% of respondents agree or totally agree that their organization undertakes creative endeavor (shared leadership present = 15.6%, shared leadership absent = 9.3%).

Given these findings, we assume that some succession management activities are easier for organizations to implement than others. Indeed, nonprofits perform weakly, in particular, when it comes to developing personnel into leaders (especially through unconventional means). This may be because such tasks require more time, collaborative effort, and resources than, for example, formulating job requirements or clarifying communication responsibilities. In addition, our observations point to at least three possible explanatory phenomena. (1) A lack of voice and mutual trust among responsible actors in succession management may inhibit more complex efforts (Carson et al., 2007; Freund, 2017). (2) A misconception of effective succession management may prevail among nonprofit decision-makers who conceive of succession management activities as substitutive. (3) Unbalanced activity manifestations may be due to a reduction in a board's management activity (McMullin & Raggo, 2020; Miller-Millesen, 2003) and in administrative resources tangential to the COVID-19 pandemic (Kuenzi et al., 2021).

Overall, only 14.6% of respondents consider that their organizations sufficiently ensure non-profit leadership continuity. On the other side of the spectrum, almost one-third (32.7%) indicate their nonprofit's leadership continuity to be at risk.

4.2 | PLS results

To test our hypotheses, we cut our sample from 1020 to 550 for two main reasons. First, of the 1020 respondents, 633 indicate that responsible actors in succession management practice shared leadership. Second, of the remaining 633 cases, 83 respondents (13.1%) do not provide sufficient information on all constructs essential to our analyses. We do not apply imputation, because missing percentage values are substantial for some variables. However, 550 responses are completely sufficient to calculate valid analyses with SmartPLS in our study (Hair et al., 2019). We present the results of our PLS-SEM analyses below. First, we evaluate the quality of the measurement model. Next, we address the quality of the structural model and hypothesis testing.

4.2.1 | Measurement model evaluation

Our measurement model constitutes formative and reflective operationalized constructs. To evaluate both types of constructs, different quality criteria apply (Hair et al., 2019). In our case, all constructs yield good measurement quality (Table A6). As shown in Table A6, we make use of the embedded two-stage approach and treat shared leadership as a reflective-formative HOC (Sarstedt et al., 2019). Thus, we conceptualize the two key dimensions of task-oriented and relation-oriented shared leadership as lower-order constructs (LOCs) reflectively and subsequently compute the HOC of shared leadership from the LOCs' latent variable scores formatively. Moreover, we operationalize the succession management process in a formative way. By contrast, we reflectively assess nonprofit leadership continuity.

First, we examine the quality of our formative measures. In this regard, we test whether critical collinearity issues occur in our data. Checking the variance inflation factor (VIF), we find no collinearity issues. All VIF values of the higher-order shared leadership construct and the

succession management process are below the maximum threshold of 5 (Hair et al., 2019). In addition, we assess the statistical significance of all indicator weights. We find that all but two indicators reach significant weights. However, we keep all indicators because their outer loadings, which we assess by applying the bootstrapping technique, display significance and are above values of 0.5 (Ramayah et al., 2018); hence, the indicators' absolute contribution to the construct is high (Hair et al., 2019).

Assessing quality for our reflective measures, we examine item and construct reliability. Moreover, we determine convergent and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2019). In total, the results indicate good quality of all constructs. For the LOCs of task- and relation-oriented shared leadership dimensions, factor loadings are all above the suggested threshold of 0.7, which implies high item reliability (Chin, 1998). For nonprofit leadership continuity, factor loadings for all but two items exceed the values of 0.7. However, we demonstrate the significance of both items using the bootstrapping procedure (Table A6). For testing construct reliability, we additionally check Cronbach's alpha values. All values suggest excellent or good quality: $\alpha = 0.91$ (task-oriented shared leadership), $\alpha = 0.91$ (relation-oriented shared leadership), and $\alpha = 0.75$ for nonprofit leadership continuity (Diamantopoulos et al., 2012). To address convergent validity, we determine average variance extracted (AVE) metrics: all exceed the recommended threshold of 0.5. In terms of discriminant validity, we also estimate heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratios. Here, all values revolve around the recommended threshold of 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015).

4.2.2 | Structural model evaluation

By calculating path coefficients for all posited relations in our model, we provide information on our hypotheses. We can interpret path coefficients as standardized beta coefficients of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. Table 3 presents an overview of the results of our structural model.

Table 3 displays our results. After having checked inner VIF values to assess collinearity ($VIF < 5$), we find support for all our hypotheses. Regarding the influence of shared leadership on the succession management process, we find support for H1. Our model's path coefficient of 0.612*** ($p = 0.000$) shows that shared leadership is significantly related to initial succession management activities (the initiation phase). Consistent with the work of Erkutlu and Chafra (2012), we can thus consider shared leadership particularly promising when it comes to the pivotal initiation effort in succession management (Landles-Cobb et al., 2015).

Moreover, we find support for H2. Accordingly, our model's path coefficient of 0.727*** ($p = 0.000$) indicates that the initiation phase of a succession management process is significantly related to developmental activities (the development phase). As anticipated, succession management activities of developmental character (Charan et al., 2011; Groves, 2007) indeed become more likely via preparatory initial activities (Rothwell, 2005; Wolfred, 2008).

In addition, we discover in our model that the development phase of the succession management process is significantly related to nonprofit leadership continuity, with a path coefficient of 0.285***, $p = 0.000$. Hence, our results support H3. In this aspect, our study echoes what scholars continuously proclaim – comprehensive succession management is indeed positively related to nonprofit leadership continuity (Adams, 2017; Lynn, 2001; Santora et al., 2015).

However, when looking for a direct relationship of shared leadership with nonprofit leadership continuity, our model's path coefficient of 0.115* ($p = 0.048$) indicates only a weak significant relationship. Still, we find support for H4. Apparently, shared leadership in itself pushes

TABLE 3 Results of the structural model

Hypotheses	Path coefficients	p-values	SD	H supported
H1: Shared leadership → SM initiation phase	0.612***	0.000	0.029	Yes
H2: SM initiation phase → SM development phase	0.727***	0.000	0.020	Yes
H3: SM development phase → Nonprofit leadership continuity	0.285***	0.000	0.055	Yes
H4: Shared leadership → Nonprofit leadership continuity	0.115*	0.048	0.058	Yes
Controls				
Organizational professionalization				
Number of full-time employees → Nonprofit leadership continuity		0.019 ns	0.452	0.025
Annual revenue (0 = < 1 million, 1 = > 1 million) → Nonprofit leadership continuity		0.029 ns	0.305	0.028
Team process factors				
Goal commitment → Nonprofit leadership continuity		0.088 ns	0.143	0.060
Coordination → Nonprofit leadership continuity		0.292***	0.000	0.072
Knowledge sharing → Nonprofit leadership continuity		−0.035 ns	0.607	0.069
Endogenous outcome construct	R²			Q²
Nonprofit leadership continuity	0.39			0.18

Note: SmartPLS bootstrapping settings: 5000 iterations; SmartPLS omission distance: 7; $N = 550$.

Abbreviations: ns, not significant; SD, standard deviation; SM, succession management.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

nonprofits' leadership continuity to some extent, although shared leadership in succession management rather captures the full impact.

Apart from testing our hypotheses, we also determine the coefficient of determination (R^2) (goodness of fit) for our endogenous outcome construct of nonprofit leadership continuity. We can consider the resulting value of $R^2 = 0.39$ as moderate (Chin, 1998; Hair et al., 2019). Moreover, we additionally estimate a Q^2 value for nonprofit leadership continuity. In this way, we check our model's predictive accuracy. Using the blindfolding procedure (Hair et al., 2019), this Q^2 value surpasses the suggested threshold of zero. Thus, our study's path model has predictive relevance.

Turning to our controls, only coordination (0.292***, $p = 0.000$) shows a significant relationship with our model's endogenous outcome variable of nonprofit leadership continuity. Regardless, we find shared leadership in succession management to have significant effects on nonprofit leadership continuity beyond the influence of both organizational professionalization and team process factors.

5 | LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

There are some limitations to our study, which future research on succession management should address. First, our study has a rather low response rate of 4.13%.

Whereas Lu (2015, p. 303) notes that reaching high response rates “is always a challenge in nonprofit studies that use survey methods”, Hager et al. (2003) underscore this issue to be salient in particular when surveys ask for organizational rather than personal characteristics. In addition to these factors, however, our low response rate could also be apparent because we conducted a web survey rather than a mail survey (Lin & Van Ryzin, 2012). Moreover, it may be partially caused by the fact that our survey’s contact information for nonprofit organizations was from an external service provider and included only general email addresses. In this vein, we assume that a large number of invitations to participate in our survey did not reach respondents of interest (boards, executive directors/division executives, and HR professionals). Hence, future quantitative researchers may put additional effort into personalizing the contact information beforehand. In addition, respondents of interest could be offered explicit incentives for their survey participation. Since monetary rewards, however, appear to be less effective in a nonprofit context (Hager et al., 2003), non-monetary benefits may be more promising. In this aspect, future collaboration in research and teaching or visibility within the university (as a recruitment activity) may be possible offerings. Overall, this could improve response rates and help meeting the sector’s need for more studies that fulfill the criteria of representativeness and generalizability.

Second, our survey shows a noticeable dropout rate, as many of the organizations addressed considered their organizations too small or not sufficiently professionalized with regard to succession management issues to respond to our survey questions. In this aspect, our results could be biased, as the self-selection of respondents may be implicit in our sample. Consequently, future researchers should also focus more on the extent to which succession management is managed or tailored to the explicit realities of small nonprofits with little annual revenues and without paid staff.

Third, our study is cross-sectional by nature and uses an anonymous organizational sample. Therefore, we cannot control for or aim to assess long-term dynamics over time. Future research should, however, apply a longitudinal research design that takes precisely these aspects into account. Of particular interest in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic would be a study that looks at changes in succession management activities before and since the pandemic. In this way, the impact of an existential crisis on strategic management behavior, for example, at the board level (Miller-Millesen, 2003), and decisions may be exemplary documented.

Fourth, we use the aggregation approach to measure shared leadership behaviors (Zhu et al., 2018). However, this approach does not capture network and team dynamics fully. To do so, future research may apply social network analysis approach to measure shared leadership behaviors (Carson et al., 2007; Sato & Makabe, 2021).

Fifth, we consider the German nonprofit sector in our study only. Follow-up studies should investigate the extent to which our assumptions hold true and similar evidence is found in other national contexts, for example, in other European, African, and Asian countries, or the United States.

Sixth, our study does not explicitly distinguish between different peculiarities of nonprofits, such as board successions (nonpaid leadership positions) and operational leadership successions (rather paid leadership positions) entail. This, too, could be considered more deeply in follow-up research.

Finally, our study mostly emphasizes departure-based succession management. With regard to the current COVID-19 pandemic, however, future research may also dig deeper into the strategy implementation of nonprofits’ emergency-based succession management (Gothard & Austin, 2013; Santora, 2020).

6 | PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Our study has several implications for practice. In general, we recommend that nonprofit boards and executives, together with HR, should critically reflect on their internal prioritization of the planning and implementation of a systematic succession management process. In doing so, they take steps toward the goal of organizational continuity, which most nonprofits pursue (McKee & Froelich, 2016; Stewart et al., 2020). Additionally, reflecting threats due to COVID-19, succession management via shared leadership will help nonprofits to build crisis resilience, particularly in terms of leadership talent retention through offering career advancement paths.

Directly based on our finding that shared leadership is positively related to succession management activities, we specifically advise nonprofit managers to push for tripartite pooling of boards, executives, and HR and their competencies in implementation efforts. Here, we recommend that all leadership actors explicitly discuss their sometimes overlapping roles and future activities of succession management in detail. Whereas the pivotal actor of the board, for example, should address succession management issues more frequently in its meetings and consider it in financial planning, HR professionals may anticipate their function to be reminding and training the board to take up this responsibility as well as providing situational leadership to the board itself. Moreover, executive directors/division executives, together with HR professionals, could (a) lead the development and scouting of internal candidates who have potential to become future organizational leaders; (b) report to the board, and thus (c) enhance leadership over time. If necessary, nonprofits may also bring in external consultants in this process to meet key nonprofit staff challenges (more competition, job retirement, conditional sector commitment, among others).

Moreover, our data analysis shows that comprehensive succession management is indeed positively related to nonprofit leadership continuity. For practical purposes, this suggests that the latter should be monitored on a regular basis, particularly in order to infer, through monitoring, the effectiveness of engagements already undertaken with respect to succession management. In addition, monitoring the organizational outcome of leadership continuity can provide internal insights into whether a key organizational objective is being ensured, by any means, over the long term. Executive directors/division executives together with HR professionals may lead this task in particular. In the event that the assessment is not satisfactory, our research also provides guidance to nonprofit decision-makers on how to better ensure leadership continuity, namely by implementing a succession management process pushed by shared leadership.

We conclude by noting three broader lessons for the nonprofit sector. First, our research underscores the plea in the sector for more overhead tolerance in order to leverage internal (leadership) resources (Schubert & Boenigk, 2019; Schubert & Willems, 2021). In this vein, we suggest funders in particular strengthen leadership development in the sector by providing both additional financing for nonprofits' own initiatives and also for expert advice through (external) workshops and consulting, especially in Germany.

Second, our research is an indication that there are too few potential future leaders in the nonprofit sector for organizations to draw upon (at least in Germany). Against this background, our research echoes the call for more explicit training and academic programs with a specific focus on nonprofit management. In this way, a pending leadership continuity deficit could be addressed somewhat upstream, not just through initiatives by nonprofit organizations themselves. Likewise, targeting future nonprofit managers with academic awareness of the benefits of the shared leadership approach could also make it easier to implement such approaches in tomorrow's nonprofits.

Last, nonprofit management research should continue its efforts to illuminate the attractiveness and assets of the sector for potential leaders – for in doing so, it contributes to strengthening the sector's profile, promotes its recognition in career decisions made by potential leaders, and thus helps pave the way for viable nonprofit leadership pipelines.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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APPENDIX A

TABLE A1 Key definitions

Construct	Our definition
Shared leadership Han et al. (2018), Carson et al. (2007), Klasmeier and Rowold (2020), Liang et al. (2021), Pearce and Conger (2003)	Shared leadership in nonprofit succession management is defined as an interactive and emergent process of mutual influence among boards, executive directors/ division executives, and HR professionals beyond their formal roles, which emphasizes the situational and horizontal dispersion of leadership responsibilities in structuring and executing succession management activities through task- and relation-oriented behaviors.
Succession management process Adams (2006), Charan et al. (2011), Gothard and Austin (2013), Groves (2007), Rothwell (2005), Wolfred (2008)	The succession management process in nonprofits is defined as the persistent planning and implementation of initial and developmental activities in continuous loops that target nonprofit employees' personal development and career progression, as well as their transfer of knowledge of organizational specifics, aimed towards the outcome of a strong pipeline of leadership successors and, ultimately, leadership continuity.
Nonprofit leadership continuity Bernthal and Wellins (2006), Lynn (2001), Rothwell (2005)	Nonprofit leadership continuity is defined as the key organizational outcome of a systematic nonprofit management process. It displays the extent to which a nonprofit is genuinely capable of developing and retaining leadership potential as well as plan ahead for leader deputization, thus ensuring ongoing leadership.

TABLE A2 Scales, means, and standard deviations

Constructs (5-point Likert scale, 1 = “totally disagree” to 5 = “totally agree”)		
Measurement scales	Mean	SD
Shared leadership (Han et al., 2018)		
Task-oriented dimension	3.1	1.1
1. The responsible executives clearly assign the internal tasks of succession management.	2.9	1.3
2. The responsible executives clearly communicate expectations to each other.	3.0	1.2
3. The responsible executives communicate important succession management information among themselves.	3.4	1.2
4. The responsible executives ensure that all those involved know their roles in succession management.	3.1	1.3
5. The responsible executives monitor the achievement of succession management targets.	2.8	1.3

(Continues)

TABLE A2 (Continued)

Constructs (5-point Likert scale, 1 = “totally disagree” to 5 = “totally agree”)		
Measurement scales	Mean	SD
Relation-oriented dimension	3.2	1.1
1. The responsible executives take sufficient time to address the concerns of others in succession management.	3.0	1.3
2. The responsible executives recognize good performance in succession management.	3.0	1.3
3. The responsible executives promote cohesion among the organizational units of succession management.	3.0	1.3
4. The responsible executives support each other in dealing with problems in succession management.	3.4	1.3
5. The responsible executives never let each other down in the succession management process.	3.4	1.2
Succession management process (Rothwell, 2005)		
The initiation phase		
1. My organization has concrete ideas on how succession management should ideally proceed.	2.8	1.2
2. My organization organizes regular meetings with the relevant managers to exchange views on succession management.	2.1	1.2
3. My organization defines current and future job requirements and competencies for key positions.	2.9	1.3
4. My organization also takes into account special needs of the organization.	3.3	1.3
5. My organization develops indicators to measure the success of succession management (e.g., number of positions filled per year).	1.6	1.0
6. My organization communicates internally in a transparent manner about upcoming succession plans.	3.0	1.3
The development phase		
1. My organization offers potential leaders the opportunity to plan their careers within the organization.	2.7	1.4
2. My organization points out to managers and employees their roles in succession management (e.g., as mentors, internal talent scouts, etc.).	2.5	1.3
3. My organization implements programs to develop employees with leadership potential.	2.0	1.2
4. My organization evaluates the potential of employees to assume leadership positions in the future.	2.7	1.3
5. My organization also reflects on employee performance in relation to a future leadership position.	2.9	1.3
6. My organization implements innovative measures to meet its succession needs.	2.1	1.1
7. My organization is there to advise those in charge on how to deal with succession management issues.	2.8	1.4
8. My organization specifically determines which responsible persons communicate which information internally and externally (e.g., job advertisement, contact persons for interested parties, succession announcements, etc.).	2.9	1.4
Nonprofit leadership continuity (adopted from Bernthal & Wellins, 2006)		

TABLE A2 (Continued)

Constructs (5-point Likert scale, 1 = “totally disagree” to 5 = “totally agree”)		
Measurement scales	Mean	SD
1. In my organization, enough employees are developed into leaders.	2.3	1.2
2. In my organization, potential leaders do not leave.	2.9	1.3
3. In my organization, internal candidates fill leadership positions.	3.4	1.3
4. In my organization, there are clear regulations for deputization of all key (leadership) positions.	3.1	1.4
5. My organization always guarantees continuity in leadership.	3.3	1.3
Controls of team process factors (inspired by Han et al., 2018)		
Goal commitment		
1. In my organization, I judge the pursuit of goals by the responsible succession management executives to be very consistent.	2.9	1.2
Coordination		
1. In my organization, I judge the internal coordination of all responsible managers in succession management to be very good.	3.2	1.2
Knowledge sharing		
1. In my organization, I judge the knowledge sharing of the responsible executives in succession management to be very good.	3.3	1.2

Note: $N = 1020$.

TABLE A3 Organizational characteristics of study participants

Variable	Number of responses	%
Working field ^a		
Education	264	25.9
Arts and culture	179	17.5
Social services	157	15.4
Health	143	14.0
Civil protection/disaster control	24	2.4
Missing	226	22.2
Legal form		
Association	740	72.6
Foundation	26	2.5
Cooperative	1	0.1
Nonprofit limited liability company (gGmbH)	22	2.2
Missing	231	22.6
Annual revenue (€)		
≤10,000	147	14.4
10,001–20,000	93	9.1
20,001–100,000	168	16.5

(Continues)

TABLE A3 (Continued)

Variable	Number of responses	%
100,001–1,000,000	189	18.5
>1,000,000	116	11.4
Missing	307	30.1
Number of employees (full-time)		
0	254	24.9
1–10	313	30.7
11–50	123	12.1
51–150	33	3.2
151–4000	31	3.0
Missing	266	26.1
Donation seal		
German Central Institute for Social Issues (DZI) seal	39	3.8
Initiative Transparent Civil Society (ITZ) seal	59	5.8
Other	49	4.8
None	647	63.4
Missing	226	22.2

Note: $N = 1020$.

^aDoes not amount to 1020 (100%) responses, because it is only a selection of given answers, and respondents could provide multiple answers.

TABLE A4 Succession management process activities

Variables (5-point Likert scale, 1 = “totally disagree” to 5 = “totally agree”)	Number of responses	Mean (SD)	Median	Low two (1–2)	Top two (4–5)
My organization has concrete ideas on how succession management should ideally proceed.	1002 Missings = 18	2.8 (1.3)	3.0	41.8%	34.6%
My organization organizes regular meetings with the relevant managers to exchange views on succession management	1000 Missings = 20	2.1 (1.2)	2.0	66.6%	16.8%
My organization defines current and future job requirements and competencies for key positions.	1000 Missings = 20	2.9 (1.3)	3.0	40.3%	37.4%
My organization also takes into account special needs of the organization.	995 Missings = 25	3.3 (1.3)	4.0	28.5%	50.2%
My organization develops indicators to measure the success of succession management (e.g., number of positions filled per year).	994 Missings = 26	1.7 (1.0)	1.0	78.6%	7.8%
My organization communicates internally in a transparent manner about upcoming succession plans.	999 Missings = 21	3.0 (1.3)	3.0	37.5%	39.5%

TABLE A4 (Continued)

Variables (5-point Likert scale, 1 = “totally disagree” to 5 = “totally agree”)	Number of responses	Mean (SD)	Median	Low two (1–2)	Top two (4–5)
My organization offers potential leaders the opportunity to plan their careers within the organization.	998 Missings = 22	2.7 (1.4)	3.0	41.7%	34.6%
My organization points out to managers and employees their roles in succession management (e.g., as mentors, internal talent scouts, etc.).	992 Missings = 28	2.5 (1.3)	2.0	50.2%	27.8%
My organization implements programs to develop employees with leadership potential.	989 Missings = 31	2.0 (1.2)	2.0	64.7%	14.0%
My organization evaluates the potential of employees to assume leadership positions in the future.	993 Missings = 27	2.8 (1.3)	3.0	42.6%	33.2%
My organization also reflects on employee performance in relation to a future leadership position.	993 Missings = 27	2.9 (1.3)	3.0	37.6%	37.5%
My organization implements innovative measures to meet its succession needs.	988 Missings = 32	2.1 (1.1)	2.0	65.0%	13.3%
My organization is there to advise those in charge on how to deal with succession management issues.	984 Missings = 36	2.8 (1.4)	3.0	43.5%	33.7%
My organization specifically determines which responsible persons communicate which information internally and externally (e.g., job advertisement, contact persons for interested parties, succession announcements, etc.).	989 Missings = 31	2.9 (1.4)	3.0	39.0%	39.2%

Note: $N = 1020$.

TABLE A5 Succession management process activities (shared leadership: absent vs. present)

Variables (5-point Likert scale, 1 = “totally disagree” to 5 = “totally agree”)	Number of responses	Mean (SD)	Median	Low two (1–2)	Top two (4–5)
Implementation of the succession management process					
Shared leadership (present)	624 Missings = 9	2.1 (1.1)	2.0	65.8%	13.8%
Shared leadership (absent)	304 Missings = 7	1.5 (0.9)	1.0	82.6%	5.8%
Defined current/future job requirements and competencies					
Shared leadership (present)	627 Missings = 6	3.1 (1.3)	3.0	31.9%	45.1%
Shared leadership (absent)	306 Missings = 5	2.4 (1.3)	2.0	56.9%	24.5%

(Continues)

TABLE A5 (Continued)

Variables (5-point Likert scale, 1 = “totally disagree” to 5 = “totally agree”)	Number of responses	Mean (SD)	Median	Low two (1–2)	Top two (4–5)
Responsible actors determined to communicate information internally/externally					
Shared leadership (present)	622	3.2 (1.3)	3.0	29.1%	47.4%
	Missings = 11				
Shared leadership (absent)	303	2.3 (1.4)	2.0	59.2%	25.4%
	Missings = 8				
Programs implemented to develop employees with leadership potential					
Shared leadership (present)	623	2.2 (1.2)	2.0	60.8%	16.8%
	Missings = 10				
Shared leadership (absent)	303	1.7 (1.1)	1.0	74.3%	10.3%
	Missings = 8				
Innovative measures implemented to meet succession needs					
Shared leadership (present)	621	2.2 (1.9)	2.0	59.5%	15.6%
	Missings = 12				
Shared leadership (absent)	304	1.7 (1.0)	1.0	78.1%	9.3%
	Missings = 7				

Note: Responses do not add up to 1020, because only respondents who provided information on the possible existence of shared leadership are included (see Table 2); *N* = 944.

TABLE A6 Measurement quality report

Constructs (5-point Likert scale, 1 = “totally disagree” to 5 = “totally agree”)			
Formative-HOC measurement scale	VIF	Indicator weights	Outer loadings
Shared leadership (Han et al., 2018) (HOC)			
1. Task-oriented shared leadership dimension (LOC)	2.726	0.488***	0.939***
2. Relation-oriented shared leadership dimension (LOC)	2.726	0.567***	0.955***
Formative measurement scale	VIF	Indicator weights	Outer loadings
Succession management process (Rothwell, 2005)			
The initiation phase			
1. My organization has concrete ideas on how succession management should ideally proceed.	1.794	0.187**	0.746***
2. My organization organizes regular meetings with the relevant managers to exchange views on succession management.	1.845	0.094 ns	0.701***
3. My organization defines current and future job requirements and competencies for key positions.	2.326	0.246***	0.816***
4. My organization also takes into account special needs of the organization.	2.336	0.310***	0.827***

TABLE A6 (Continued)

Formative measurement scale	VIF	Indicator weights	Outer loadings
5. My organization develops indicators to measure the success of succession management (e.g., number of positions filled per year).	1.464	0.299***	0.680***
6. My organization communicates internally in a transparent manner about upcoming succession plans.	1.539	0.193***	0.691***
The development phase			
1. My organization offers potential leaders the opportunity to plan their careers within the organization.	1.863	0.116*	0.645***
2. My organization points out to managers and employees their roles in succession management (e.g., as mentors, internal talent scouts, etc.).	2.193	0.118*	0.744***
3. My organization implements programs to develop employees with leadership potential.	1.825	0.110*	0.694***
4. My organization evaluates the potential of employees to assume leadership positions in the future.	3.171	0.199**	0.743***
5. My organization also reflects on employee performance in relation to a future leadership position.	3.549	0.022 ns	0.749***
6. My organization implements innovative measures to meet its succession needs.	1.829	0.315***	0.801***
7. My organization is there to advise those in charge on how to deal with succession management issues.	1.723	0.202***	0.745***
8. My organization specifically determines which responsible persons communicate which information internally and externally (e.g., job advertisement, contact persons for interested parties, succession announcements, etc.).	1.583	0.265***	0.735***
Reflective-LOC measurement scales	Factor loadings	Cronbach's alpha	HTMT ratio
Task-oriented shared leadership (Han et al., 2018) (LOC)		0.91	0.745
1. The responsible executives clearly assign the internal tasks of succession management.	0.834***		
2. The responsible executives clearly communicate expectations to each other.	0.893***		
3. The responsible executives communicate important succession management information among themselves.	0.846***		
4. The responsible executives ensure that all those involved know their roles in succession management.	0.899***		
5. The responsible executives monitor the achievement of succession management targets.	0.843***		

(Continues)

TABLE A6 (Continued)

Reflective-LOC measurement scales	Factor loadings	Cronbach's alpha	AVE	HTMT ratio
Relation-oriented shared leadership (Han et al., 2018) (LOC)		0.91	0.742	<0.87
1. The responsible executives take sufficient time to address the concerns of others in succession management.	0.845***			
2. The responsible executives recognize good performance in succession management.	0.838***			
3. The responsible executives promote cohesion among the organizational units of succession management.	0.890***			
4. The responsible executives support each other in dealing with problems in succession management.	0.888***			
5. The responsible executives never let each other down in the succession management process.	0.845***			
Reflective measurement scale	Factor loadings	Cronbach's alpha	AVE	HTMT ratio
Nonprofit leadership continuity (adopted from Bernthal & Wellins, 2006)		0.75	0.502	<0.85
1. In my organization, enough employees are developed into leaders.	0.746***			
2. In my organization, potential leaders do not leave.	0.730***			
3. In my organization, leadership positions are filled with internal candidates.	0.611***			
4. In my organization, there are clear regulations for deputization of all key (leadership) positions.	0.688***			
5. My organization always guarantees continuity in leadership.	0.757***			

Note: SmartPLS bootstrapping settings: 5000 iterations; $N = 550$.

Abbreviations: HOC, higher-order construct; LOC, lower-order construct; ns, not significant.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.