

## Identifying Influential Factors in the Personal Development Program for National Bank Managers

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### Article Info

#### Article type:

Original Research

#### How to cite this article:

Afshari, M., Soleimani, N., & Shafizadeh, H. (2023). Identifying Influential Factors in the Personal Development Program for National Bank Managers. *International Journal of Innovation Management and Organizational Behavior*, 3(3), 176-182. <https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.ijimob.3.3.22>



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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The Personal Development Program (PDP) model serves as a coherent and effective tool for human resource development, aligning with the individual and organizational competencies required for managers' professional development. This study aims to identify the influential factors in the PDP of managers at the National Bank of Iran.

**Methodology:** This applied research employs a qualitative approach. The target population consists of all employees in managerial and specialist positions at the National Bank of Iran, totaling 14,560 individuals. The research sample was selected using both "theoretical sampling" and "snowball sampling" methods, ultimately selecting 30 participants. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews. The validity of the research was confirmed using methods such as peer review and audits by observers. To assess the reliability, the researcher employed strategies from Pitty et al., Charmaz, Lincoln, and Guba, and obtained confirmation.

**Findings:** The results indicate that the professional development program for managers at the National Bank is structured around six key dimensions (knowledge, attitude, communication, professional, leadership, and spiritual competencies) as the central phenomenon. It encompasses three key levels (individual, organizational, and supra-organizational) as causal factors, including six main components: motivation, willingness to learn, interpretability, eagerness to progress, leadership, and critical thinking. Additionally, structural and contextual factors are introduced as the prevailing context and influential factors on the research strategies at three levels.

**Conclusion:** Based on the results, expanding the implementation of the PDP can be considered a qualitative indicator for the professional development of employees in organizations, particularly the National Bank.

**Keywords:** *Personal Development, Managerial Competencies, National Bank Managers.*

## 1 Introduction

A personal development plan (PDP) is a structured and documented plan aimed at individual growth and development, functioning as both a communication tool and a roadmap. Visualizing the current status and depicting the desired state, along with designing a roadmap between the present condition and the ideal state, constitutes the essential elements of a PDP (Gee et al., 2019; Körkkö et al., 2022).

Additionally, the PDP can be viewed as a process that helps individuals reflect on their education, efficiency, and achievements and plan for their personal, academic, and professional development. The PDP identifies employees' training needs through self-assessment and organizational evaluation programs, enabling appropriate planning and prioritization of goals. This aligns with organizational objectives, and employees, in close collaboration with their supervisors, can use the evaluation results to design and implement plans to enhance their skills, knowledge, and competencies within the broader organizational framework (Farhangi, 2015). Furthermore, the PDP is an effective tool for structuring employee learning in organizations and an optimal strategy for individual development (Tsai et al., 2018). Organizations adopting this approach are more efficient in identifying developmental needs and taking timely actions to address them (Gee et al., 2019).

Various methods exist for employee development; however, the PDP is considered one of the most beneficial and efficient methods for engaging employees and enhancing the effectiveness of employee training because it simultaneously addresses personal needs and goals and organizational objectives. Employees who understand their abilities and are aware of their strengths and weaknesses navigate the path to change and progress more easily (Özer et al., 2020).

The importance of the PDP approach is based on the key assumption that individuals, by choosing subjects of their interest, take charge of their development and determine the goals they aim to achieve and the individuals they aspire to become (Tsai et al., 2018; Yazdani et al., 2020). Achieving the goals outlined in the PDP enables employees and even organizational managers to align and adapt to potential changes in their professional fields.

Neglecting individual development has undesirable consequences. On one hand, the organization's adaptability in the face of rapid changes declines, leading to reduced organizational performance. On the other hand, employees and human resources within the organization find their

talents, competencies, and abilities confined in an environment that does not provide growth and advancement opportunities, resulting in increased dissatisfaction and lack of motivation.

Despite the importance of personal development of human capital as a vital foundation for contemporary organizations, evidence from organizational studies (Körkkö et al., 2022; Macià & García, 2016; McFadden, 2015) indicates that learning plays a crucial role in the PDP. From many experts' perspectives, the structural changes and challenges societies face due to global transformations necessitate organizations' human resource management to find new methods for managing these changes. Therefore, organizations must continuously evaluate and adjust their performance and quality of work since the future world will revolve around knowledge rather than labor, raw materials, and energy. The value and wealth of organizations will increasingly depend on the knowledge and skills of individuals, and in this context, education and development of individuals hold special importance. Proper and appropriate training empowers and makes individuals efficient (Gholipour et al., 2015). Organizations need trained and specialized individuals, who are considered one of the most effective factors in the economic, social, and cultural development of any country, to fulfill their mission (Shibankova et al., 2019).

However, the concept of PDP is influenced by various factors that alter its intensity and quality. Identifying these factors poses a significant challenge for managers and organizations, as these factors can either strengthen or weaken PDP efforts. According to a Gallup Institute report (2018), organizations focusing on nurturing employees' innate talents see a 33% annual increase in employee engagement, resulting in approximately \$4.5 million in productivity gains (Najafi Moghadam Nejjhad et al., 2021). Stewart (2019) argues that most research on individual development and PDP implementation has focused on education and healthcare industries, with insufficient understanding of this process in a managerial business environment (Stewart & Brown, 2019). Furthermore, despite the popularity of PDP in the workplace, its actual application and impact on learning and progression for managers and employees are relatively unknown. Empirical evidence on the effectiveness or impact of PDPs is limited, and the implementation of this tool by human resource management is accompanied by various assumptions and speculations.

While PDPs are intended to promote employee learning and professional development, in practice, they often prove

ineffective and are seen by employees as part of an annual promotional ritual that organizations do not genuinely prioritize. Although PDP implementation has become common in organizations, there is limited practical information available. To optimize PDP practices and enhance their effectiveness, further research is clearly needed (Yazdani et al., 2020).

Research conducted domestically and internationally on the importance of human capital development and its related dimensions and components underscores the crucial role of personal development in transforming, maintaining, and enhancing the competitive advantage and organizational resilience of contemporary organizations. For example, Ramadhinta et al. (2022) demonstrated in their quantitative study on developing individual competencies for Industry 4.0 among managers in the oil industry that social skills, cognitive abilities, and systemic skills are essential for personal development and excellence (Ramadhinta et al., 2022).

Analysis of the effectiveness of pre-service and in-service training for human resource development at the National Bank indicates that despite structured programs aligned with current and future specialized needs and organizational costs directed toward human resource development, a paradigm shift from cost to investment in human resources, emphasizing personal motivation, professional efficiency, individual growth, and development alongside continuous organizational activity, is increasingly essential. Thus, the objective of this study is to identify the influential factors in the PDP of managers at the National Bank.

## 2 Methods and Materials

### 2.1 Study Design and Participants

This applied research employs a qualitative approach. The target population consists of all employees in managerial and specialist positions at the National Bank of Iran, totaling 14,560 individuals, based on data from the

bank's human resources management. The sample for conducting research interviews was selected using "theoretical sampling" and "snowball sampling," ultimately selecting 30 participants.

### 2.2 Data Collection

The data collection instrument was a semi-structured interview, developed based on guidance from academic advisors and some experts at the National Bank, aligned with the research objectives and questions and incorporating grounded theory elements. The validity of the research was confirmed using methods such as member checking, triangulation of data sources, peer review, and observer audits. To assess reliability, the researcher employed strategies from Pitty et al. (2012), Charmaz (2010), and Lincoln and Guba (1985), including dependability, credibility, confirmability, and transferability, and obtained confirmation.

### 2.3 Data Analysis

For data analysis, coding was used, a method of reducing and analyzing data within a broader social and cultural context by summarizing, categorizing, and thematically analyzing qualitative data.

## 3 Findings and Results

Based on the results of the secondary coding of the research, several factors, as described in the following table, were selected as the central categories (dimensions related to the core phenomenon of the model) of the personal development program for National Bank managers. The reason for selecting these categories is that each category's footprint is evident in various data sections, playing a pivotal role that can gather other categories around itself. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Paradigmatic Model of Personal Development for National Bank Managers*

Selective Code	Main Category	Subcategory
Core Phenomenon	Dimensions of Managers' Personal Development	Knowledge Competencies Attitude Competencies Communication Competencies Professional Competencies Leadership Competencies Spiritual Competencies

Causal Factors	Individual Level	Motivation Willingness to Learn Adaptability Eagerness for Progress Leadership Critical Thinking
	Organizational Level	Need for Innovation Organizational Nature Organizational Strategies Competitive Position
	Supra-Organizational Level	Coaching Collaboration Ability Teamwork Culture
Contextual Conditions (Prevailing Context)	Content	Technology Environment
	Structural	Knowledge-Centric Relationship-Centric Team-Centric Development-Centric
Intervening Conditions	Individual Level	Job Knowledge, Criticism Acceptance, Talent and Learning Ability, Commitment to Development
	Organizational Level	Organizational Support, Pay Benefits, Performance Evaluation System
	Social Level	Individual and Group Participation, Negotiation Skills, Customer Orientation

Based on the secondary coding results, "indices such as individual motivation, willingness to learn, adaptability, eagerness for progress, leadership, critical thinking, organizational need for innovation, organizational nature, organizational macro-strategy, competitive position in the industry, coaching indicators, ability to collaborate and teamwork" were selected as the causal factors of the personal development program model for National Bank managers. These factors are essential for the personal development of bank managers because causal factors must exist initially.

Specific conditions affecting strategies are referred to as context (background). According to this definition, specific conditions are necessary for the implementation of strategies, which are not seen in other dimensions. In other words, according to the paradigmatic model, strategies will not yield the desired results without context. Based on the secondary coding results, organizational culture, existing technology, organizational environment, importance of knowledge and knowledge sharing, presence of formal and informal communications within the organization, teamwork, mutual cooperation, and organizational efforts for development and progress were selected as contextual factors in designing the comprehensive model of the personal development program for National Bank managers. Therefore, without a proper definition of contextual factors, development is unattainable, and other issues cannot be addressed.

Intervening conditions are general contextual conditions that affect the strategy. Based on the secondary coding results, job knowledge, ability to accept criticism, talent and ability to learn, commitment to development, organizational support indices, pay benefits, performance evaluation system, individual and group participation indices, negotiation skills, and customer orientation were selected as intervening conditions (facilitating or hindering) for developing managers' competencies. Therefore, it can be inferred that the intervening conditions of this study are general contextual conditions that are also common in other existing activities in this field.

#### 4 Discussion and Conclusion

This research aimed to identify the influential factors in the personal development program for National Bank of Iran managers. The study sought to address the necessity of research and fill the existing gap in scientific and experiential research concerning managers' personal development in the National Bank of Iran. The goal was to develop an appropriate and efficient model that could be reflected in the extensive banking system of the country.

In line with this objective, the study explained the method of competency assessment, identified the gap between the current and desired states of managers, and presented appropriate key factors for personal development using

research resources and exploratory interviews with organizational informants at the National Bank.

Based on the research results, the factors influencing managers' personal development are categorized into three main components as causal conditions affecting the core phenomenon: individual factors, organizational factors, and supra-organizational factors. Therefore, organizations should pay attention to this important issue that managers' personal development depends on focusing on and improving all three components—individual skills, organizational factors, and focusing on supra-organizational factors. Additionally, providing the necessary context within the organization to create a comprehensive personal development program for their managers is crucial.

The findings from the interviews in this research showed that there are intervening factors within organizations that can act as potential barriers or reinforcing elements. This finding is consistent with the results of prior research which indicated that various factors, such as perceived organizational and motivational factors, are significant barriers to managers' development and empowerment (McFadden, 2015; Ramadhinta et al., 2022).

According to the research results, organizational factors influencing managers' personal development are categorized into one main component: job enthusiasm, qualitative performance, strategy and goal setting, planning, organizational needs, and support. The research findings indicated that among organizational factors, human resource performance (training, succession planning, meritocracy), executive ability, cognitive ability, excellence and improvement, empowerment, and support affect personal development.

Human resource development, as the most critical competitive resource of organizations, requires a structured approach for their professional development. Therefore, organizations should provide environments for leader development to enhance managers' skills in coping with the challenges of the changing and complex environment (Najafi Moghadam Nejjhad et al., 2021; Özer et al., 2020). It is evident that for survival and success in today's competitive and changing landscape, organizations need capable managers with developed skills and thinking.

However, the research results indicated a competency gap, or development gap, between the skills of National Bank of Iran managers and the required skills. The analysis and grounded theory results suggested using a personal development program focusing on individual, organizational, and supra-organizational factors to address

this gap. Providing the necessary context for training and empowering managers and experiencing various work situations and conditions to enhance problem-solving abilities can effectively develop and elevate managers and, subsequently, human resources and the organization's level in its competitive industry.

Therefore, it is recommended that organizations employ human resource management strategies for enriching and developing management and apply these strategies throughout the human resource management process, from recruitment to retention and exit. They should also utilize global talent management strategies to train managers with a global perspective (Stewart & Brown, 2019; Tsai et al., 2018; Yazdani et al., 2020). The personal development program is a coherent and effective tool for human resource development, aligning organizational and individual competencies needed by employees for their professional development. Therefore, expanding the implementation of the personal development program can be considered a qualitative indicator for professional development in organizations. The alignment of the personal development program with education and development characteristics encourages self-direction and responsibility for professional development among employees. Additionally, it assists senior managers and human resource departments in providing better feedback and planning effective learning activities. A capable manager is essential for meeting organizational expectations, requiring both management knowledge and the ability to utilize experiences effectively.

In many leading and successful organizations worldwide, the personal development program for managers has become part of educational activities. Specialists are expected to have a personal development plan and continuous learning. The personal development program can have multiple objectives, including expanding existing capabilities and skills, developing new skills, and acquiring future-required skills. Given the significant changes in today's competitive world, developed managers play a crucial and influential role in organizational survival. Without addressing this, organizations will lose their ability to adapt and face these changes.

Neglecting personal development in human resources systematically reduces individual and group performance, ultimately decreasing organizational performance and leading to organizational decline. Developed managers in the banking services sector, including the National Bank, significantly impact performance indicators and business

outcomes. They also play a vital role in responding to stakeholders and ensuring their satisfaction.

Additionally, personal development of managers affects the relationship between managers and their employees. A developed manager focuses more on the personal development of the organization's human resources, improving organizational communications and training and developing employees. All these aspects are achievable only through the personal development of managers and enhancing their competencies and capabilities.

Creating an appropriate environment and context for developing individuals' capabilities and adopting proper management and planning in human resources can indicate that research findings show that any organization needs to focus on human resources and human resource development activities for survival and continued profitability. Development center approaches such as experiential training, role-playing, management games, behavior modeling, classroom training, on-the-job training such as job rotation, mentoring, and most importantly, emphasizing succession planning methods can be utilized for this purpose.

### Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

### Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

### Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

### Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to all individuals helped us to do the project.

### Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

### Funding

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

### Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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