

SELF-LEADERSHIP TRANSFORMATION: ENHANCING THE DEVELOPMENT AND PERFORMANCE OF HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS

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Abstract:

Background: Self-leadership is increasingly recognized as an important competency for enhancing performance and professional development, among mid- to senior-level professionals in Human Capital Management (HCM). As the work environment is rapidly evolving, mid- to senior-level HCM professionals must transform the way they manage themselves and their teams and enhance their ability to innovate and be role models.

Objectives: This study explores the factors that foster self-leadership in mid- to senior-level professionals in Human Capital Management.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Using a qualitative approach, we conducted in-depth interviews with 15 mid- to senior-level HCM professionals from various companies. Thematic analysis was applied using the Gioia Corley methodology to identify self-leadership factors such as self-reflection self - goal setting, self-monitoring, continuous learning, and self-reward.

Findings/Results: The results show that the implementation of self-leadership contributes substantially to the improvement of skills, motivation, overcoming complex organizational challenges, and employee engagement, in the HCM development program. The transformation that occurs includes changes in the way of manages oneself and leads, which is part of the professional development process.

Conclusion: The implementation of self-leadership strategies has been proven to accelerate professional development, and encourage employees to be more proactive, adaptive, and independent, to changes in the work environment.

Originality/Value (State of the art): This study shows the importance of self-leadership training and implementation to improve performance, encourage individual initiative, and build a positive work culture.

Keywords: self-leadership, human capital management, professional performance transformation, qualitative research, development program

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INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization and digitalization, the challenges faced by organizations are increasingly complex and dynamic. Fierce competition, rapid technological developments, and changing market needs require companies to continue to adapt and improve their capabilities. Human Capital Management ensures that organizations can face these challenges through effective human resource development (Ran et al. 2023a). the cultivation of vocational adaptability among college students holds equal significance to fostering subjective well-being in the face of an increasingly daunting professional landscape. This intricate process can be influenced by exploratory expeditions into potential career paths, sincere introspection, and a profound sense of vocation. Methods: Drawing upon Bandura's self-regulation theory, this research project employed structural equation modeling (SEM) Self-leadership is a key strategy in empowering HCM to achieve professional goals and high performance (Furtner et al. 2018; Marques-Quinteiro et al. 2019). Self-leadership can be simply interpreted as the ability to lead oneself and it is interpreted broadly, not limited to certain things, and provides a strong motivation to start something from oneself before inviting others (Guerra & Pazey, 2016). Self-leadership is the precursor to adaptive, proactive, and independent leadership (Harari et al. 2021; Goldsby et al. 2021; Marques-Quinteiro et al. 2019). Self-leadership is a leadership approach that involves managing the dynamic nature of change, encouraging creative solutions, and development through responsive leadership, which is embedded in oneself.

Self-leadership plays an important role in improving performance and professional development, especially for mid- to senior-level professionals in Human Capital Management (HCM), (Krampitz et al. 2022). These HCM professionals are required to change their approach, not only in the way they manage and support the development of others but also in leading themselves. By strengthening self-leadership capabilities, they are better prepared to address complex organizational challenges, drive innovation, and serve as role models for proactive, adaptive, and independent behavior. This will foster a culture of sustainable growth and resilience in the organization. In this context, self-leadership emerges as a relevant and urgent approach to study, as it offers solutions to the need for proactive, adaptive, independent, and performance-oriented professional

development. This phenomenon is not only observed in multinational companies but also in local companies and public institutions that are required to develop resilient and innovative human resources to address industry and company dynamics.

Previous research on self-leadership has shown its role in improving individual and workgroup performance, especially in dynamic work environments. However, studies on the impact of self-leadership on professional development in HCM are still few/limited. Self-leadership affects motivation, job satisfaction, well-being, and individual efficiency in the work environment. (Müller & Niessen, 2019) (Furtner et al. 2018). Therefore, this study aims to dig deeper into how self-leadership practices are applied and have an impact in the context of HCM. Expanding the understanding of self-leadership, especially in enhancing professional capabilities in HCM, by examining elements such as self-reflection, self-goal setting, self-monitoring, continuous learning, and self-reward (Gregersen et al. 2024; Hägglund et al. 2024), in a dynamic work environment (Wendrich & Krabbenborg, 2024). In the context of Human Capital Management (HCM), self-leadership becomes crucial because it can influence the effectiveness of HCM and overall organizational performance (Kang et al. 2022). Even self-leadership strategies have also been measured using the Short Self-Leadership Questionnaire (ASLQ). Self-leadership is conceptualized as consisting of three dimensions/strategies: behaviorally focused strategies, cognitive mindset strategies, and natural reward strategies (Houghton et al. 2012; Houghton & Neck, 2002), so it needs to be further developed and researched (Harunavamwe et al. 2020).

The transformation of Human Capital Management (HCM) in the current era of globalization, initiated through self-leadership has become a strategic element in career development, especially at the middle to senior levels. This transformation includes improving technical skills, developing personal autonomy, self-awareness, and the ability to manage change independently. Technological advances, hybrid work models, and global challenges have shifted the role of HCM from merely a task executor to a change agent with strong individual leadership (Stewart, Courtright, & Manz, 2019). The HCM approach that focuses on self-leadership is now not only a trend but has also become a strategic need. Organizations must design a new competency framework that makes self-leadership

a key component, create training programs that focus on reflection and strengthening self-values, and implement a performance evaluation system that values initiative and independent learning.

So self-leadership not only improves individual growth but also improves team performance and organizational adaptability in the long term. This study shows that self-leadership has an important relationship in increasing individual productivity, creativity, and accountability. People who can manage themselves well tend to be more resistant to work stress, show greater initiative, and can carry out continuous independent learning (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2020). In an increasingly complex HCM environment, self-leadership becomes a vital asset in increasing competitiveness and sustainability. In addition, the integration of self-leadership into the HCM system has had a positive impact, especially in increasing the effectiveness of talent development and the efficiency of performance management. Self-leadership can set goals, design work strategies, and conduct self-evaluations that directly impact improved work results (Ho and Nesbit, 2020). In addition, organizations that are successful in implementing this approach show increased employee participation and loyalty to the company's long-term vision (Zhang & Bartol, 2020).

Human Capital Management (HCM) faces significant challenges in maintaining and improving the quality of professional performance from mid-level to senior level. The conventional approach to human resource development that is top-down and highly dependent on external interventions of the organization is beginning to look less appropriate in the context of modern work that requires high autonomy, flexibility, and adaptability (Stewart, Courtright, & Manz, 2019). There is an urgent need to change the way/approach in HCM, namely by including self-leadership as an important element. Self-leadership refers to an individual's capacity to lead themselves by setting personal goals, maintaining intrinsic motivation, and regulating behavior when carrying out work responsibilities (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2020). This ability is crucial for professionals at mid-level to senior level who are often in positions to make strategic decisions and face high work stress.

Unfortunately, many organizations have yet to systematically adopt a self-leadership approach in their human resource development policies and systems.

However, research shows that self-leadership can improve employee work effectiveness, creativity, and commitment to organizational goals, especially in dynamic and result-focused work environments (Zhang & Bartol, 2020). In addition, individuals with good self-leadership skills tend to be more proactive, adaptive, independent by showing high initiative, and more resilient when facing changes in the organization. Without a change in HCM strategy that includes elements of self-leadership, organizations risk losing the maximum contribution of experienced senior talent who are not empowered to grow independently. This is a strategic issue that must be addressed immediately, given the importance of maintaining long-term competitiveness and productivity amid global economic uncertainty and changing work patterns. Therefore, the main issue in this context is how organizations can change their HCM approach by incorporating and implementing self-leadership as a strategy to improve professional development and performance from middle to senior.

This study aims to bridge the gap by investigating the factors that foster self-leadership, namely through self-reflection, self-goal setting, self-monitoring, continuous learning, and self-reward in professional development programs. This is expected to improve adaptability and add new insights into sustainable organizational culture. Thus, this study not only contributes to existing literature but also provides practical implications for HCM practitioners who are trying to develop effective employee development programs.

METHODS

The professionals who became the data sources for this study were selected based on certain criteria, such as their experience in managing HCM, leadership skills, and their involvement in employee development programs. They came from multinational companies, large local companies, and public and non-profit organizations, offering diverse perspectives on the application of self-leadership. In terms of their positions, the informants held strategic roles in HCM, namely HCM managers, Directors, HCM Consultants, Learning and Development Specialists, and HCM Business Partners as well as professionals who function as bridges between executive leadership and employees and are actively involved in HCM strategies that operate in the business sector. This study involved 15 participants

who were purposefully selected based on their strategic roles and experience in employee development and Human Capital Management initiatives.

This study used primary interview data and secondary data sources such as academic journal articles and relevant organizational documents reviewed to support triangulation and enhance analytical validity. This study was conducted over ten months from September to June 2024. The data collection process through in-depth interviews with 15 HCM professionals from various companies was conducted both directly and through online platforms.

Using a qualitative approach using the Gioia and Corley 2013 methodology (Gioia et al. 2022). Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews that encouraged informants to reflect on and describe their lived experiences related to self-leadership. Interviews were conducted face-to-face or online (via Zoom or Google Meet), depending on participant availability. Each session lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes, and with participant consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to maintain data accuracy and integrity.

Data analysis followed the four-step approach outlined by Gioia and Corley (2013): (1) transcription of interviews, (2) first-level coding using participants' terms, (3) second-level coding through theoretical abstraction by the researcher, and (4) synthesis into aggregate dimensions. This structured analysis process produced a coherent framework that describes how self-leadership manifests in professional development in HCM.

The results of this study provide in-depth insights into the role of self-leadership in enhancing professional development and employee performance in the HCM field). This study involved 15 purposefully selected HCM professionals who hold strategic roles and are actively involved in employee development and organizational transformation initiatives. Having strategic roles in HCM, namely HCM Manager, HCM Director, HCM Consultant, Learning and Development Specialist, and HCM Business Partner as well as professionals who serve as a bridge between executive leadership and employees, and are actively involved in HCM strategies that operate in the business sector. The informants emphasized that the self-leadership strategy has five themes, namely self-reflection, self-goal setting, self-monitoring, continuous learning, and self-reward. These

five themes have become an integral part of their daily work. These strategies help them effectively navigate challenges in the workplace, including frequent policy changes, high-performance expectations, and ongoing demands for employee development. In addition, Informants stated that the ability to lead oneself is very important in cultivating proactive, adaptive, and independent behavior not only for personal growth but also in becoming a role model for their team.

This analysis follows Gioia's methodology, which applies first-level systematic coding of interview excerpts, then groups them into second-level themes, and finally synthesizes them into aggregate dimensions. A visual presentation of the data structure to illustrate the logic of the data analysis process can be seen in Table 1.

Table 2 shows the results of qualitative thematic mapping from interviews with 15 respondents regarding their insights and experiences regarding self-leadership practices that validate the elements of self-leadership. Data structure in Figure 1.

Self-Reflection

Most of the informants stated that they actively reflect on past work experiences, both successes and failures and stated that self-reflection emerged as an initial foundation for building strong self-leadership. This encourages increased self-awareness which plays an important role in making wiser and more targeted decisions. Theoretically, Hägglund et al. (2024) emphasize that deep reflection can be a tool for improving sustainable performance, while Chen et al. (2022) state that self-reflection supports a reassessment of an individual's role in the social context of the organization. Self-reflection allows professionals to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, which is key to setting a conscious and targeted career development strategy. This gives rise to Proposition 1: Self-reflection increases individuals' self-awareness and understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, which in turn improves decision-making and career planning (Hägglund et al. 2024; Y. C. Chen et al. 2022).

Quote: "I often reflect on past mistakes so as not to repeat them in the future." (12 out of 15 respondents supported self-reflection as a crucial element)

Table 1. Summary of first-order concepts, second-order themes, and aggregate dimensions

First Level Concept (Quote)	Second Order Theme	Dimensions Aggregate
"I always set my work goals every month and monitor their achievement."	Determination objective	Self Goal Setting
"I like to make plans daily and weekly ."	Routine planning	Self Goal Setting
"I try to manage my time well so that all work is completed on time."	Management time	Self Goal Setting
"I often reflect on past mistakes to avoid repeating them."	Reflection self	Self Reflection
"I usually use brainstorming techniques to solve problems."	Solution problem in a way creative	Self Reflection
"I often ask for input from coworkers and superiors."	Look for bait come back	Self- Monitoring
"I use a task management app to organize my work."	Organization task	Self- Monitoring
"I try To still be flexible and adaptable with change in place Work ."	Ability adapt	Self- Monitoring
"I regularly attend training and read books to improve my skills."	Learning sustainable	Learning Sustainable
"I reward myself when I achieve my goals."	Self-rewarding behavior	A Gift for Yourself
"I try to stay positive and motivated despite the high work pressure."	Resilience	Motivation Psychological

Table 2. Mapping of Respondents Insights on Research Proposals

Informant source	Quote Illustration	Amount Respondents Supporters (N=15)
P1: Reflection self increases awareness of self and taking decisions.	"I often reflect on past mistakes..." "I evaluate my performance every week."	12
P2: Goal setting increases motivation and focus on performance targets.	"I set work goals every month..." I create plans daily and weekly ."	10
P3: Self-monitoring improves performance quality and correction capabilities.	"I track my progress using an app..." "I ask my manager for feedback."	9
P4: Continuous learning enhances adaptability and skills development.	"I regularly attend training and read books..."	13
P5: Behavior gives self-esteem Alone increases motivation and productivity intrinsic.	"I give the award to self I Alone after reaching objective I. " " Achievement small Motivate me when I admit it ."	11

These results are in line with research showing that self-reflection can act as a protector in two important stages: first, by reducing the relationship between Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) traits and self-rumination (Tamura et al. 2025). This protective effect is stronger in women and in individuals with inattention traits (difficulty focusing), compared to hyperactivity. In addition, age also influences: in the younger group, self-reflection plays a more moderating role, while in the older group, it serves as a direct protector against depression, but also strengthens the ability to reflect healthily (Tamura et al. 2025).

Furthermore, it is also in line with research (Zhao & Zhang, 2025) which states that self-reflection acts as a mediator in the relationship between subjective well-

being. Individuals who have self-reflection can control negative emotions and impulses, which ultimately reduces loneliness and increases happiness (Zhao & Zhang, 2025). And when associated with current AI technology, self-reflection in students can be an important tool in managing the use of Generative AI (GenAI) in large class assessments, that self-reflection not only helps students understand how they use AI ethically but also supports lecturers in assessing the originality and authenticity of academic work. Students who can reflect on their learning process honestly and deeply tend to have lower AI scores, indicating wise use of AI and supporting the learning process. So good self-reflection is negatively correlated with high AI scores. By including elements of self-reflection in the assessment, students can be invited to be more

responsible for their learning process and become an important tool for lecturers in evaluating whether the use of AI supports or replaces the learning process that should be. (Combrinck & Loubser, 2025). So it can be concluded that self-reflection is defined as a process of critical evaluation of one's own thoughts, emotions, and behavior, which is important in understanding the causes and impacts of stress (Park et al. 2025).

Self-Goal Setting

Setting specific and measurable goals is the second dominant element in self-leadership practices. Several informants stated that they set monthly, weekly, and even daily targets as a form of clear work direction. Problems in self-goal settings arise when individuals are unable to effectively set, adjust, or evaluate their personal goals in the context of ongoing career development. In a dynamic and challenging work environment, a lack of clarity or consistency in setting

goals can lead to confusion, demotivation, and an inability to proactively navigate a career. However, the main challenge is that not all individuals have the skills or drive to independently set clear and measurable career goals. As a result, they tend to be passive and less able to adapt to changes in a dynamic work environment. This is in line with research stating that when a self-goal setting is supported by the organization, the result is a more sustainable, flexible, and meaningful career. Therefore, this issue needs to be taken seriously so that individuals and organizations can grow sustainably ("Self-Goal Setting and Career Sustainability Research from China Explores Roles of Career Crafting and Perceived Organizational Goal Clarity," 2024).

As quoted below:

"I make a weekly plan and record my achievements every day." (10 out of 15 respondents mentioned this as an important routine)

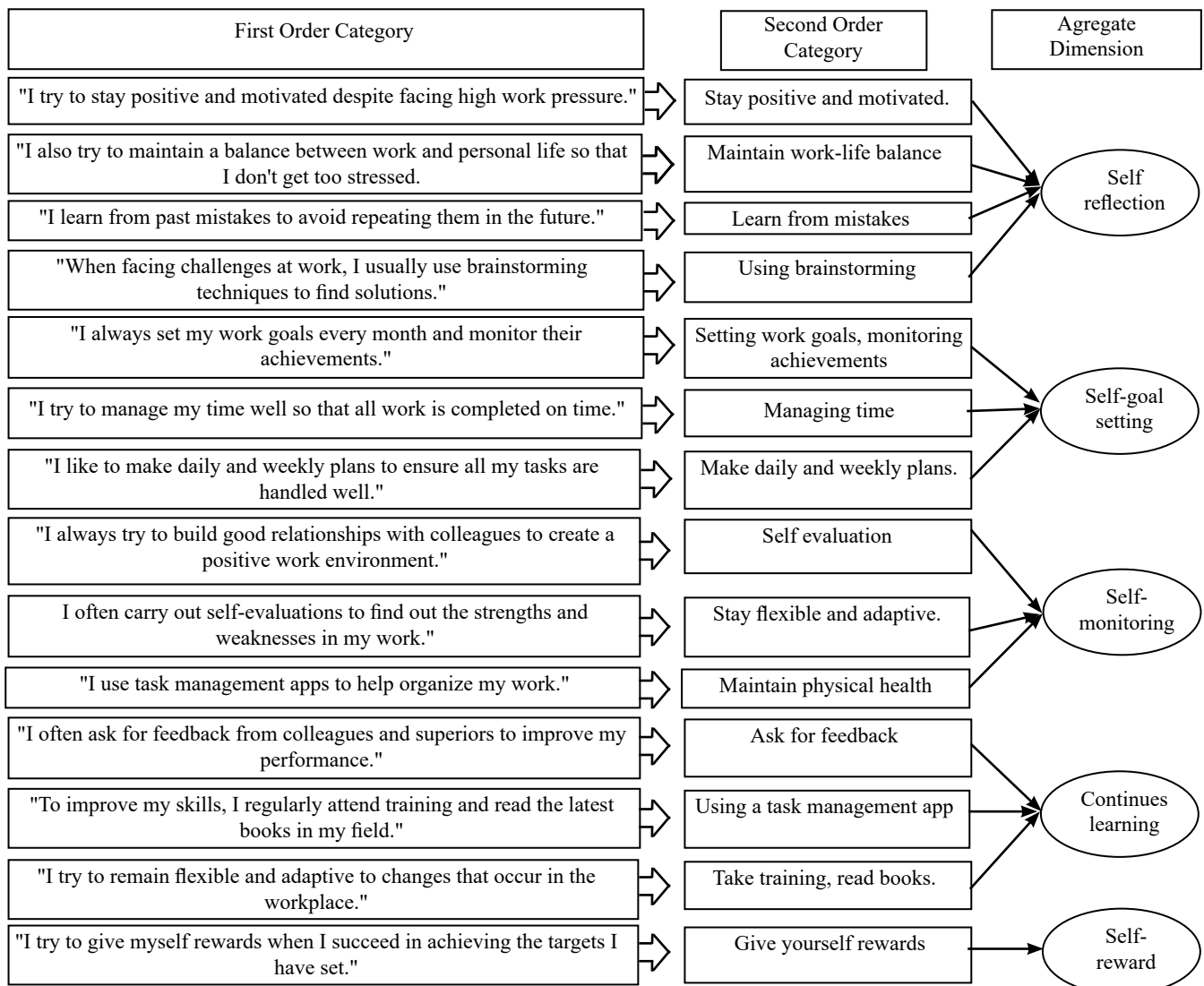


Figure 1. Data structure

Ge (2023) explains that goal setting plays a role in shaping career clarity and significantly increasing work motivation. In the context of HCM, setting personal goals allows professionals to stay focused amidst various strategic responsibilities, and helps them maintain self-accountability without having to be constantly directed by superiors. Specific and measurable self-goal setting will increase individual motivation and focus in achieving performance targets (Ge, 2023).

Self-goal setting in the context of career sustainability arises because many individuals are not yet aware of the importance of proactively setting personal goals in managing their careers. Self-goal setting has a positive impact on career sustainability. So self-goal setting requires a balance between motivation and realism in order to be an effective tool in improving performance (Min et al. 2024), so it can also support the theme of this research.

Self-Monitoring

This element reflects the respondent's ability to continuously evaluate work progress and adjust actions. Several informants stated that they use task management applications and periodically ask for input from colleagues and superiors. From the perspective of Wendrich & Krabbenborg (2024), self-monitoring is a proactive way to keep behavior in line with personal and organizational goals. With this skill, HCM professionals are able to carry out self-correction quickly and efficiently, which is very crucial in a rapidly changing and dynamic work environment (Wendrich & Krabbenborg, 2024). Effective self-monitoring improves an individual's ability to identify and correct deviations from the work plan, thereby increasing efficiency and quality of performance.

If self-monitoring ability is high, it tends to be able to delay immediate gratification, make wise shopping decisions, and avoid impulsive consumer behavior (Du Plessis et al. 2025). Self-monitoring is an individual's conscious process of observing, recording, and evaluating their own behavior, in this case, related to physical activity and their own health (Hamido et al. 2021).

Quote: *"I record my work progress and consult regularly."* (9 out of 15 respondents conveyed this practice)

The relationship between the CEO and the Human Capital Management team, then the CEO's self-monitoring has a positive impact on employee efforts in achieving individual goals that they want to achieve. The impact becomes stronger as the company's discretionary leeway decreases because the reduced leeway creates an organizational context that is more supportive of the influence of self-monitoring (J. Chen et al. 2022)

Continuous Learning

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Self-Reward

The importance of giving yourself appreciation, and self-reward is effective in encouraging significant improvements in model performance (Tjoa & Guan, 2023). The informants stated that they felt more motivated and excited when success, no matter how small, was acknowledged and celebrated personally. Self-reward or intrinsic reward is a psychological drive that arises from within an individual as a reward for certain actions or achievements, without expecting external compensation (H. Zhang et al. 2025). Self-reward refers to the human tendency to respond faster and more accurately to stimuli associated with oneself compared to stimuli associated with others. And which has an impact on perception and decision-making.

Thus, self-reward appears to act as a powerful intrinsic mechanism in directing attention and reinforcing learning. This effect has the potential to be an important tool in understanding emotion regulation, personal motivation, and even psychological disorders such as depression. These findings emphasize the importance of viewing self-reward not simply as an egocentric drive, but as a complex cognitive factor influenced by social context and one's self-perception

Quote: "I buy my favorite coffee every time I finish a big project as a form of self-reward."
(11 out of 15 respondents reported this practice)

Self-reward triggers maintaining energy levels to continue performing. This strengthens the spirit of work continuity and helps individuals survive under pressure without always having to rely on external recognition. Thus ultimately contributing to improved performance and productivity (Zhou et al. 2024)(Wu & Mei, 2024). Self-reward also plays an important role in encouraging continuous innovation (Sui et al. 2023).

Managerial Implications

Factors about self-reflection, self-goal setting, self-monitoring, continuous learning, and self-reward can be incorporated into employee development programs as part of professional development. In addition, self-leadership can also be integrated into employee reward policies, where management recognizes individual initiatives in managing their careers and achievements. Another implication is the need for management to

create an environment that encourages self-leadership. So this study shows that employees who continue to learn and update their skills tend to be more proactive and contribute positively to the organization.

On the other hand, it is also important for managers to promote an open attitude towards new initiatives and ideas from employees. By giving employees, the freedom to develop their potential through Self-leadership, consisting of Self-reflection, Self-goal setting, Self-monitoring, Continuous learning, and Self-reward, managers indirectly create a more creative, innovative, adaptive, and independent environment. This can have a positive impact not only on individual development but also on the performance of the team and the organization. In the long run, the implementation of effective self-leadership throughout the organization can improve overall performance. Employees who are trained in self-leadership tend to be more adaptive to change, learn faster, and are better able to contribute to the achievement of the organization's strategic goals. Thus, management needs to see self-leadership as an integral part of HCM development and management strategy.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

This study investigates the role of self-leadership in enhancing professional development and employee performance among mid- to senior-level HCM professionals. The main self-leadership strategies, namely self-reflection, self-goal setting, self-monitoring, continuous learning, and self-reward, have been shown to improve individual performance, motivation, and adaptability. These findings confirm previous studies (Furtner et al. 2018; Hägglund et al. 2024) and extend their relevance to the strategic function of HCM in the diverse Indonesian organizational landscape. Theoretical implications of this study include the contextualization of self-leadership within the strategic HCM function, highlighting its potential as a mechanism for building organizational capability and resilience. Data collected from 15 professionals validated each proposition, demonstrating strong alignment between thematic findings and interview insights.

In practice, organizations should embed self-leadership into their development and training programs. For example, employee development initiatives can be designed to emphasize the importance of self-reflection, self-goal setting, self-monitoring, continuous learning, and self-reward as key components of professional growth. In addition, it can be integrated into employee reward policies, where management recognizes individual initiative in managing careers and achievements.

Another practical implication is the need for management to create an environment that encourages continuous learning. The study shows that employees who continually update their skills tend to be more proactive and contribute positively to the organization. It is important for managers to promote an attitude of openness to new initiatives and ideas from employees. By giving employees the freedom to develop their potential through Self-leadership, managers indirectly foster a more creative and innovative work environment. This positive atmosphere affects not only individual development but also team performance and the overall success of the organization. In the long run, the implementation of effective self-leadership throughout the organization can improve overall performance.

Recommendations

Further research is recommended to employ quantitative or mixed-methods approaches in examining self-leadership variables, such as self-reflection, goal setting, self-monitoring, continuous learning, and self-esteem. These variables should be tested across diverse organizational settings, with the support of practical interventions such as structured training, coaching, or mentoring programs. Additionally, longitudinal studies are essential to capture how self-leadership behaviors evolve over time and contribute to long-term professional development and performance. Future studies can also explore the integration of self-leadership with digital technology, including AI-based self-tracking tools, virtual coaching, or mobile learning apps, which can enhance individuals' self-regulation and productivity. Moreover, researchers may investigate how digital self-leadership tools influence engagement, motivation, and adaptive performance, especially in hybrid or remote work environments where autonomy and self-regulation are increasingly critical.

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