

# Leadership Development Programs and Their Effectiveness in Building Future Managers in Sierra Leone

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## Abstract

In an era defined by globalisation and technological transformation, the development of future managers is crucial to the sustainability and competitiveness of organisations. This study examines the effectiveness of Leadership Development Programs (LDPs) in Sierra Leone in equipping emerging leaders with the requisite skills, competencies, and mindsets needed for the digital age of globalisation. Employing a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design, the research integrates quantitative component factor analysis with expert surveys and qualitative document content analysis. A framework of 32 leadership capabilities was established, grouped into five major dimensions: strategic leadership competence, managerial competence, technical and digital skills, operational competence, and global thinking mindset. Findings reveal that while traditional managerial and global mindset competencies are moderately represented in current LDPs, critical gaps exist in digital literacy, strategic foresight, and sustainability. Expert analysis and curriculum review further underscore the inadequate inclusion of technical and systems-oriented capabilities. The study concludes that although current LDPs exhibit strengths in areas such as ethics and cultural sensitivity, they fall short in aligning with the demands of future societies. Recommendations are provided to enhance curriculum relevance, emphasising the integration of digital and strategic competencies into leadership training frameworks.

## Keywords

Leadership Development Programs, Future Managers, Sierra Leone, Strategic Competence, Digital Skills, Curriculum Evaluation, Global Mindset

## 1. Introduction

The responsibility to direct and steer the mechanisms of an organisation towards

realising goals and maximising potential lies with organisational leadership. Effective leadership has been hailed as a key component facilitating organisational performance worldwide across several industries and sectors of the economy (Irianti, Syarifuddin, & Haerani, 2024; Sonmez Cakir & Adiguzel, 2020). While the principles of effective leadership do not vary much across time zones, the business climate in which the leadership operates to ensure the growth of the organisation has become highly dynamic.

In recent times, significant changes have reshaped leadership and organisational processes across the globe. The two major trends that have led to this change are globalisation and emergent technologies (Oluwi, Agbai, & Nwosu, 2021; Alkharafi & Alsabah, 2025; Pawar & Dhumal, 2024). Globalisation creates many opportunities on the one hand and contributes to the increasing complexity of organisations worldwide on the other hand. In addition, it is not an easy task to manage large, diversified teams and to organise operations within a complex global network. According to Jayasuriya (2008), it has widened markets, proliferated the workforce, and placed pressure on competition that demanded more adaptive, culturally sensitive, and collaborative leadership. Simultaneously, rapid technological advancements, particularly in digital tools, automation, and data analytics, have redefined how organisations operate, communicate, and make decisions.

These dynamic shifts demand innovative leadership capable of navigating complexity, fostering agility, and driving continuous improvement within evolving organisational structures (Maranga & Hudspeth, 2016). Successfully executing a unified global strategy in this ever-changing environment requires strong, consistent leadership that can align diverse efforts, maintain coherence, and deliver strategic outcomes across borders. As organisations operate within increasingly complex global networks, effective leadership becomes critical to ensuring adaptability, cohesion, and long-term success (Gottfredson & Crane, 2025). In other words, managers cannot succeed or be effective in today's global business climate unless they have abilities that are genuinely matched with the demands of future societies. This indicates that there is a growing talent gap between the abilities of leadership required to be effective previously, as opposed to their present and future required abilities.

Nasir (2023) opined that leadership in future societies demands a new breed of managers who are adaptive, visionary, and tech-savvy. As societal needs evolve and technology continues to advance, future managers lead diverse and global teams with empathy and innovation. While there is no universally accepted conceptualisation of the concept of future managers, for this study, it is important to state the perspective from which the concept of future managers is tackled in this paper. With the notion that tomorrow is the nearest future in mind, the future here describes a period or an age of development, in which we are presently in the digital age of globalisation (Szyjewski, 2020). Thus, in this paper, future managers are the next generation of decision-makers responsible for shaping how companies operate, how teams are led, and how innovation, efficiency, and values

are implemented in business (Andrási, Körtvési, & Szegedi, 2022; Teofilovic & Starcevic, 2024). They are dynamic, forward-thinking leaders equipped to operate in the digital age of globalisation. They possess a blend of technological proficiency, cultural intelligence, and strategic vision necessary to navigate rapidly evolving global markets and complex organisational landscapes (Jacquemet, Luchini, Rosaz, & Shogren, 2021). Their role transcends traditional management as they act as catalysts for transformation, leveraging digital tools and data-driven insights to shape resilient, inclusive, and future-ready organisations (Sacavém *et al.*, 2025). Future managers serve as the bridge between evolving social expectations and responsive organisational strategies. Thus, the development of future managers is now the focus of leadership development programs.

Leadership development programs (LDPs) are designed to build future managers because the traditional curriculum of structured leadership/management courses in higher educational institutions remains largely focused on conventional management principles. This can be attributed to the fact that foundational principles taught in colleges/universities serve as the building blocks for any advanced leadership development. Most university-based programs are designed to prepare individuals for entry-level leadership roles, providing a solid grounding in essential management concepts (Al Asefer & Zainal Abidin, 2021). However, to progress beyond this level, leadership development programmes become crucial. According to Groenewald, Groenewald, Uy, Kilag, Abendan & Pernites (2024), these programmes offer a platform for acquiring specific leadership skills and competencies required at more advanced stages. They are particularly effective because they deliver dynamic, customised training tailored to the needs of practising managers, making them an excellent method for developing targeted leadership capabilities.

In a bid to tackle the talent gap for future managers globally, management professionals, Human Resources Practitioners, and Educational Institutions are designing and enrolling participants in Future Managers Leadership Development programmes (Nurmala & Hermina, 2024; Maheshwari & Yadav, 2019). As a result, ongoing research is evaluating the effectiveness and impact of these LDPs in building future managers; other studies are focused on identifying the skills and competencies required by future managers.

Though there are quite a number of institutions in Sierra Leone offering Leadership Development Programmes, there is a dearth of studies in Sierra Leone assessing their effectiveness or impact in developing specific capabilities of future managers to initiate and manage innovation and strategic business leadership in the Sierra Leone business climate. Thus, this paper seeks to determine if the present LDPs available in Sierra Leone are aligned to meet future managerial challenges. To answer this question, two specific objectives were formulated:

- 1) To determine the skills, competencies, and mindsets required by future managers in the context of future societies.
- 2) To examine the effectiveness of current Leadership Development Programmes in developing future managers in Sierra Leone.

## 2. Literature Review

Organizations seeking to improve individual capabilities and motivate group performance in increasingly complicated circumstances have made leadership development a strategic focus. As global concerns demand more adaptable and visionary leadership, Leadership Development Programs (LDPs) have gained popularity as intentional means to cultivate future-ready leaders. The impact of these projects is of interest to academics and practitioners, particularly with regard to how results are defined, measured, and sustained in various contexts. Recent empirical research has shifted its focus to capture the multifaceted effects of LDPs, which include everything from broader organizational benefits to personal development and behavioral change. In order to illustrate how participant experiences, program content, and institutional environments interact to influence the efficacy of leadership development initiatives, this section synthesizes important empirical research that investigates these dimensions. The theoretical foundation that underpins the study is also covered.

### 2.1. Empirical Studies

Leadership development programs (LDPs) have emerged as essential tools in cultivating effective leadership across diverse sectors, aiming to build individual competencies and drive organisational performance. However, the effectiveness of these programs varies across contexts, depending on factors such as participant experience, program structure, and organisational culture. A growing body of research has sought to examine the multifaceted impacts of LDPs, exploring outcomes at the personal, behavioural, and institutional levels.

Leadership development programs (LDPs) are well known to be transformative in the individual sense, especially in fostering personal growth and career development. Other studies have highlighted the focus of the participants in measuring such developmental outcomes regarding how leadership training influences self-awareness, skill development, and career development. As pointed out by [Hochghan, NajafBeigi, & Mirsepasi \(2024\)](#), it is important to capture the views of participants in order to determine the efficacy of LDPs. Their study employed thematic analysis to evaluate the perceptions of 18 participants and found five crucial outcome domains, including personal growth, changes in their skill acquisition, becoming a professional, the ability to apply their learned skills in the workplace, and impact in their organisations. The participants noted that they experienced improved self-awareness, improved leadership potential, better networking, and strategic contribution in their respective organisations, supporting the overall value of LDPs. Such articles emphasize practical personal and professional consequences of LDPs and, in particular, in niche areas like healthcare and nursing, where leadership skills go hand in hand with job performance and career preparedness. Similarly, a quasi-experimental study conducted by [Omer \(2024\)](#) in the nursing field revealed that LDPs greatly enhanced nurses' self-perceptions of leadership competences in five areas: technical, human, conceptual, leadership,

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and financial management skills. These results support the transformative potential of LDPs in fostering leadership skills and equipping people for more strategic positions.

LDPs are essential in changing a person's perception of themselves as a leader, which in turn affects their visible leadership behaviors. The ways in which LDPs influence transformative leadership behavior are examined in greater detail by [Shams, Dailey, & Steffensmeier \(2024\)](#). Their mixed-methods study demonstrates a favorable relationship between the implementation of leadership behaviors and leadership self-views, including self-efficacy, identity, and awareness. It has been shown that LDPs bridge the gap between leadership education and its practical application by enhancing self-concept and encouraging an experimental mindset. Data from a time-series study by [Packard & Jones \(2015\)](#), which included participants and their supervisors from eight different businesses, lend more credence to these conclusions. Significant improvements in self-efficacy and on-the-job performance were shown in the study when evaluation methodologies were combined, suggesting that LDPs offer measurable advantages outside of training environments. By employing mixed-methods and longitudinal designs, these studies offer an interventional perspective on the gap between leadership theory and practice, offering more specific information on how LDPs might be utilized to support transformative leadership.

This set of articles examined the psychological and cognitive dynamics that inform the transition of leadership, particularly in self-efficacy, leadership identity, and the actualisation of behaviour.

While individual development is a vital outcome of LDPs, their broader value lies in their capacity to improve organizational performance and leadership effectiveness. The impact of LDPs on more general organizational results has been the subject of numerous studies. Based on the survey data collected in a cross-sectional study among 300 employees, [Zafar, Zaki, & Mustafa \(2023\)](#) found a strong relationship between perceived leadership effectiveness and the presence of LDPs. Their regression study established that there was a twenty times greater likelihood of successful leadership in organizations that possessed LDPs. This finding indicates the importance of organized leadership development to the realization of an organization. In addition, [Soegiarto et al. \(2024\)](#) measured the overall impacts of employee empowerment and mentorship, together with LDPs in Indonesian companies. LDPs used to predict this organizational performance explained 67.4 percent of the overall change in their regression data, indicating that LDPs were an important predictor of the success of organizational performance. These findings substantiate the belief that leadership development should be accompanied by other methods of empowerment in order to achieve optimum organizational advantage. This perspective is corroborated by the study of [Longe & Needham \(2023\)](#), based on a single-case qualitative analysis revealing 11 main themes on the role of LDPs in organizational performance and succession planning. The participants highlighted the importance of alignment to great leaders, a favorable organizational

culture, and formal and informal learning of leadership. The above studies jointly indicate that well-designed LDPs can contribute both to the long-term success and resilience of organizations and to the development of individual capability.

The way that LDPs are planned, carried out, and supported inside organizational structures also affects how effective they are. [Baron & Agustina \(2017\)](#)'s research was dedicated to the effectiveness of leadership management training among the top executives in the Indonesian electrical industry. They found that well-conducted programs guided the participants to acquire the competences, planning, problem-solving, and control abilities required to align organization objectives to human resources. In an article on the multi-case study in Silicon Valley, [Flores \(2017\)](#) explored approaches to the improvement of LDPs in the business environment. Successful modular, phased training systems, CEO involvement, and a learning-focused culture were some of the key themes. Based on these findings, leadership development achieves the best result when it is promoted by the senior management and embedded in the organizational culture. These works were based on the examination of various situational and strategic factors that include program design, cultural fit, leadership engagement, and incremental learning platforms, which influence the outcomes of leadership development. These research findings present the need to employ a conscious and considerate approach when designing leadership programs within organizations, to accompany the evolution of organizational goals.

Lastly, the credibility and value of leadership development research depend on the strength of its testing techniques. Ranging from desk research and theory-based frameworks to systematic literature research and time-series designs, some research papers attempted to answer methodological styles applied to determine the effectiveness of LDPs. To facilitate the drawing of a most often-reported pathway of the consequences of LDPs in the sphere of healthcare, [Flaig et al. \(2020\)](#) sought to review 23 papers in the related literature. Common benefits include better job satisfaction, networking, communication skills, confidence, and management expertise. The authors do, however, warn that the current body of data is lacking in objective measurements and longitudinal depth, emphasizing the urgent need for more thorough, long-term evaluation studies. Additionally, [Puspita \(2024\)](#) evaluated the impact of LDPs on management effectiveness in Indonesia using a desk study technique. According to the review's findings, LDPs greatly enhanced employee involvement, team management, and decision-making. The study promotes organizational policies and tailored program designs that support leadership development initiatives. It was recommended that frameworks like social learning theories, human capital, and transformational leadership be used in future research.

## **2.2. Theoretical Framework**

Leadership development programs (LDPs) refer to organized intervention programs that can improve the knowledge, skills, and behaviors required for effective leadership. Although they are increasingly being used in different industries, there

are concerns about how they can be evaluated in a methodical way. According to Savaya & Waysman (2005), a logic model of a program is an effective method for program design and assessment of LDPs. It is an organized outline that interconnects contributions, tasks, outputs, results, and implications in a progressive and rational consecutive order. Applied to leadership development, the logic model can help not only explain the purpose and design of the given program, but also provide a solid foundation for its evaluation in terms of content and results (Rajashekara *et al.*, 2020).

By definition, a program logic model starts with its inputs, including facilitators, learning materials, funding, and time. The following activities are possible with the help of such inputs: workshops, mentoring sessions, simulations, and feedback sessions (Roman, Talley, Sierka, George, Van de Water, & Aye, 2025). The short-term outputs may be in terms of the number of trained persons, the number of training hours, or the number of modules. More to the point, logic models direct the focus to outcomes, short- and medium-term knowledge, leadership behaviours or decision-making capacities, and ultimately, to impacts, including improved organisational performance, innovation, or culture transformation (Kekahio, Lawton, Cicchinelli, & Brandon, 2014). With these elements explicitly mapped, program designers and evaluators are now able to understand how success can be measured and what success would constitute.

Moreover, leadership development activities that include learning modules on emotional intelligence, strategic thinking, team building, and ethical decision-making content can be used as vital indicators of gauging program effectiveness (Fuller *et al.*, 2025). This content represents the developmental goals, and their relevance, proficiency, and delivery channels are variable factors that affect change in participants. Evaluators can measure whether these are internalised by participants through different measures, such as 360-degree feedback, behaviour change measurement, etc. Nevertheless, when the methods described above cannot be used, then a content-based analysis can provide the same results.

Furthermore, the outcome-focused character of the logic model is well suited to the application of content-based evaluation. It guarantees that evaluations go beyond attendance or satisfaction levels and explore whether the abilities and talents ingrained in the program's curriculum result in discernible leadership behaviors and organizational enhancements. A systematic, theory-driven approach to program planning and effectiveness evaluation is thus made possible by connecting logic models to LDPs, thereby reaffirming that the content of leadership development is not only essential to the process but also crucial to its measurement.

### 3. Methodology

The study employed a mixed-method approach to study the effectiveness of leadership development programs in Sierra Leone in relation to the development of the required capabilities of future managers. Mixed methods utilized both quantitative and qualitative research methods to improve the reliability and potential

for generalization of findings. Quantitative research methods are based on a positivist research approach, while qualitative research methods follow the interpretivist research approach. The use of mixed methods in this paper is also justified by the research approach in itself. To evaluate the effectiveness of LDPs in building 'future managers' in Sierra Leone, first, the study developed a future manager leadership skills framework, and then, relying on this skills framework, the capacity of current LDPs in Sierra Leone to inculcate the identified capabilities was evaluated based on a program logic model as explained in the theoretical framework section of this paper.

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used in a sequential explanatory design. The sequential explanatory design is primarily intended to use qualitative findings to help explain and interpret the results of a predominantly quantitative study (Haynes-Brown, 2025). In the context of leadership research, Hastings & Sunderman (2019) demonstrated that this research design can be effectively employed to deepen the understanding of quantitative data.

In this study's sequential explanatory design, there are three phases: two quantitative phases and one qualitative phase. The first phase is quantitative; it focused on developing a future manager leadership skills framework by identifying key skills, competencies, and mindsets required by managers to lead effectively in today's global business climate. This was achieved via a survey to willing participants who were mainly HR practitioners, managers, leadership training consultants, and entrepreneurs in Sierra Leone. The survey instrument is found in Appendix A. The survey instrument was designed using a 5-point Likert scale of importance (Joshi, Kale, Chandel, & Pal, 2015; Koo & Yang, 2025). The sample size for this phase consisted of 396 participants, calculated from the Taro Yamane formula for unknown population size (Adam, 2020), and selected using a combination of random and convenience sampling methods. The method of analysis employed in this phase is component factor analysis. This method was used to identify the key capabilities that are required by future managers (Shrestha, 2021). The second phase, which is also quantitative, employed an expert survey method to determine the relevance and effectiveness of Leadership Development Programs (LDPs) in Sierra Leone. In this phase, the participants were HR practitioners (with over 7 years of experience) or leadership training consultants. Participants who were either HR practitioners or leadership training consultants in the first phase, with over 7 years of experience, were approached to participate in the expert survey. Thirty-two HR practitioners indicated willingness to participate in the expert survey and thus formed the sample for the second phase of the research process. Data collected in this phase were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The third and last phase was qualitative; here, the researcher employed document content analysis to determine the relevance of Leadership Development Programs in building future managers. Thus, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and third phases of the research design both sought to address the same research objective, employing two relatively opposite research methods to improve the depth of the study's findings. Results from the document

content analysis and the descriptive statistics were compared for similarities, and conclusions were drawn accordingly.

## 4. Results & Discussion

### 4.1. Demographic Profile of Participants

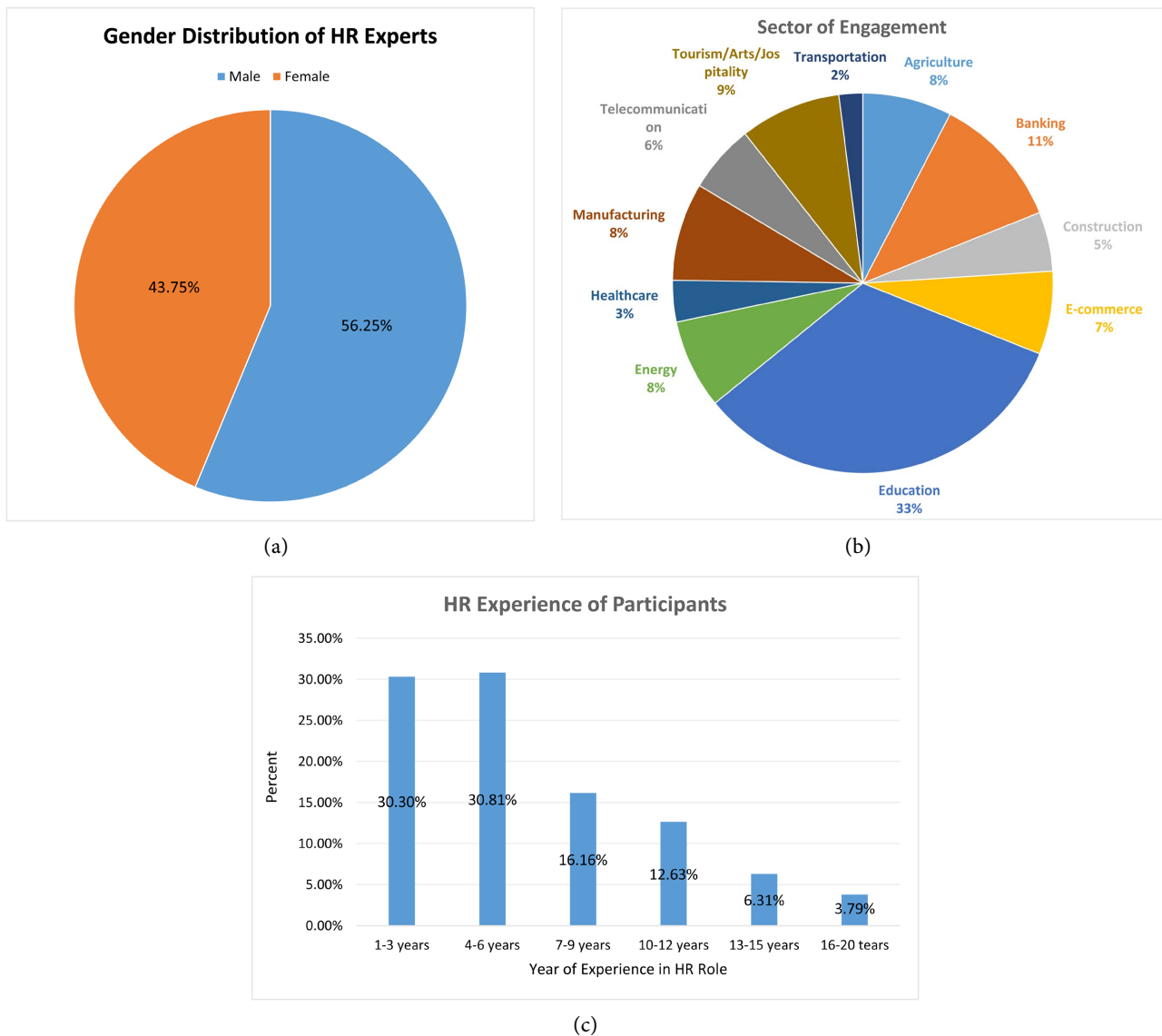
The result from the sequential exploratory research is presented systematically in this section, beginning with the demographic profile of participants in the 1<sup>st</sup> phase. Afterward, the results of the component factor analysis are presented. The findings of the component analysis served as themes and codes for content analysis of selected leadership development program curricula to establish their effectiveness in developing the skills, competencies, and mindset established by the component factor analysis. Lastly, an expert analysis is presented to enhance the reliability of the content analysis implemented in NVivo 15.

**Figure 1(a)** displays the gender profile of the 1<sup>st</sup> phase, while **Figure 1(b)** and **Figure 1(c)** display the years of experience of participants in an HR role and the sector of engagement of participants in the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of the study.

The gender distribution of the 396 participants in the first phase of the study assessing how well leadership development programs produce future managers is depicted in **Figure 1(a)**, and it indicates a well-balanced representation. Male participants made up 47.73% of the total, while female participants made up 52.27%, as the pie chart shows. The study's findings are more credible because of the almost equal gender distribution, which offers a solid foundation for evaluating the programs' efficacy without experiencing substantial gender bias.

The breakdown of experience in an HR-type role of participants is shown in **Figure 1(b)**. The experience of the participants regarding HR was categorized into six groups as Novice (1 to 3 years), Beginner (4 to 6 years), Intermediate (7 to 9 years), Competent (10 to 12 years), Advanced (13 to 15 years), and Expert (16 to 20 years). As indicated in the figure, a substantial percentage of the sample represented the Novice (30.30%) group, Beginner (30.81%) group, and Intermediate (16.16%) group, with the three groups forming a significant percentage of about 77 percent of the total sample. These HR professionals in their early to mid-career stages are actively involved in the rapidly changing workplaces of today, where future managers are increasingly expected to possess agility, innovation, digital fluency, inclusion, and strategic adaptation. They are perhaps in a better position to recognize and assess the applicability of new leadership competencies because they operate in these contemporary organizational environments, particularly those that correspond with managerial expectations both now and in the future. Participants in the Competent (9.34%), Advanced (5.31%), and Expert (3.79%) categories form a smaller number but come with the depth and value of experience with leadership development activities. Their points of view, however, might be more traditional, based on expectations of traditional paradigms of leadership, which are more focused on top-down authority, operational control, and stability (which, though valid aspects, might not be sufficient in the scenario of future

managers who have to be agile in the modern work environment). In conclusion, the participant pool's makeup shows a good representation of those who are most aware of the abilities, attitudes, and competencies influencing contemporary leadership. This makes the insights produced more credible, especially regarding how well leadership development programs match the changing demands of aspiring managers.



**Figure 1.** (a) Gender profile of participants in the 1<sup>st</sup> phase; (b) Level of Experience of Participants in HR Roles; (c) Participants' Sector of Engagement.

**Figure 1(c)** shows the number of participants in the sectors in which they are engaged. They are well distributed in different sectors, indicating a wide coverage of industries in the research study measuring the effectiveness of leadership development programs. Based on the information, the participants represent various industries, including agriculture and energy, manufacturing, and telecommunica-

tions, which points to a cross-industry and cross-sectoral approach to leadership training. The highest percentage of participants belongs to the Education sector (33.08%). The sector's inherent linkage with professional development and capacity building may be the reason for this preponderance of representation. Feedback from education professionals is especially pertinent when evaluating leadership development programs, since they are frequently early adopters and ardent supporters of formal leadership training. Their participation might also be an indication of a larger desire to cultivate future administrators and academic leaders. Other areas that engage the most are Healthcare (11.36%), Banking (8.59%), and Telecommunications (7.59%). All these are industries characterised by high rates of change, regulation, and the need for resilient and flexible aspects of leadership, which are likely the drivers of demand in leadership training needs. Their integration into the conversation offers good guidance on what skills of management could be anticipated in the high-stakes and time-sensitive communities. The other interesting proportions involve the Construction (7.07%), Tourism/Arts/Hospitality (5.81%), and Energy (5.05%), which are underexplored areas in leadership research overall. Other industries, including Transportation (3.54%), Manufacturing (3.33%), Healthcare (5.05%), and Agriculture (2.02%), are also not well represented; however, their various provisions, however minimal they may be, contribute to the study, because they include voices of industries traditionally in operation and logistics. This increases the generalizability of the findings of the study since these industries are very different.

## 4.2. Component Factor Analysis

To assess the suitability of the dataset for factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were conducted, as shown in **Table 1** below.

**Table 1.** KMO and bartlett's test.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.938
Approx. Chi-Square		34710.710
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	1431
	Sig.	0.000

From **Table 1**, the KMO value of 0.938 far exceeds the commonly accepted threshold of 0.6, and even the more rigorous benchmark of 0.8, indicating excellent sampling adequacy. A KMO value above 0.9 is often interpreted as "marvellous" (Kaiser, 1974), suggesting that the variables share a high degree of common variance, which is essential for meaningful factor extraction. Additionally, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded an Approximate Chi-Square value of 34710.710 with 1431 degrees of freedom and a significance level (p-value) of .000. This outcome, which is statistically significant, shows that there are enough correlations

between the variables to support the use of factor analysis and that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix. When taken as a whole, these findings demonstrate that the dataset is very suitable for factor analysis and that latent constructs or dimensions within the data may be reliably identified by exploring the underlying structure. This is especially relevant in studies that examine dimensions like abilities, competences, and mindsets as in this case.

The number of latent factors that are underpinning the greater number of observed variables was determined using the scree plot analysis and the total variance findings as shown in the appendix. Both outcomes indicate that there are five components. The Kaiser criterion (eigenvalues greater than one) indicates that we need to keep the first five components, and cumulative variance indicates that these components capture most of the variance. Such components provide a strong but sparse model of the underlying structure in data, which establishes a significant reduction in dimensionality whilst maintaining critical data. The amount of variance explained by Component 1 is 23.12%; by Component 2 it is 22.02%; by Component 3 it is 14.84%; by Component 4 it is 12.09%; and by Component 5 it is 6.39%. The five constructs explain 78.46% of the total variance after rotation, which is a very strong finding in the field of behavioural or social science research. The components are displayed in the table below.

These results share similar findings with those of [Sulieman \(2021\)](#), which surveyed the managerial skills and competencies of future managers in the UAE. The two studies clustered the skills and competencies into five major groups, but in [Sulieman \(2021\)](#), these were clustered into Personal, Interpersonal, Functional, Technical, and International skills. These categories follow a classical managerial skill set in which interpersonal relations, the execution of tasks, and individual growth are prioritized. Self-awareness, critical thinking, and taking initiatives fall under Personal Skills, which are relevant to Managerial Competence in [Table 2](#), which includes time management, problem-solving, and accountability. In the same vein, the Interpersonal Skills identified by [Sulieman \(2021\)](#) bear close associations with the Strategic Leadership Competence of [Table 2](#), with the common denominators of team coordination, stakeholder engagement, and critical thinking. Therefore, both studies suggest that effective communication and leadership are important pillars in the accomplishment of organizational objectives.

The paper, however, presents newer global and digital competencies in the form of Technical & Digital Skills and Global Thinking Mindset. These skills are cybersecurity competence and cultural competence, equity leadership, and systems thinking. [Sulieman \(2021\)](#) did not identify these components; although it referenced computer and mathematical skills, it did not discuss the topic or highlight digital content analysis and IT-related skills as we did in our current research. Moreover, Operational Competence in [Table 2](#), including scenario planning and lifelong learning, is addressed somewhat implicitly in the section on Functional Skills in [Sulieman \(2021\)](#) but is not provided with separate consideration. This difference signifies that adaptive and strategic foresight are becoming important

leadership needs in contemporary work environments. Finally, International Skills in Sulieman (2021) partially concur with the Global Thinking Mindset of Table 2. Nonetheless, Table 2 suggests a more detailed and sophisticated interpretation, including such attributes as optimism, risk orientation, and human-centred values, with an emphasis on a transformational approach to leadership in the globalized environment.

**Table 2.** Results of component factor analysis.

S	Component	Dimensions
1	Strategic Leadership Competence	Social Impact Analysis, Stakeholder Engagement, Team Coordination, Digital Literacy, Analytical Reasoning, Ethical Decision Making, Sustainability Planning, Critical Thinking, Talent Development
2	Managerial Competence	Goal setting, active listening, accountability, time management, performance evaluation, problem-solving
3	Technical & Digital Skills	Software development, computer programming, digital content analysis, mathematical analysis, IT skills, cybersecurity awareness
4	Operational Competence	Scenario planning, delegation, data analysis, and lifelong learning.
5	Global Thinking Mindset	Global citizenship, optimism, risk-driven, cultural sensitivity, systems thinking, human-centered, and equity-driven

In summary, while both frameworks identify foundational managerial competencies such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication, our results reflect an evolution toward integrating digital fluency, global awareness, and strategic foresight, indicating a more future-oriented leadership development model.

### 4.3. Expert Survey Analysis

This section presents the results of the expert survey. HR experts (those with 10 years of experience and above) who were willing were selected from the participants of the first survey, which was analysed using component factor analysis as presented in the preceding section. The expert survey was a dichotomous questionnaire in which the participants reviewed the curriculum of four selected LDPs in Sierra Leone to assess if the dimensions of the components, as revealed from the factor analysis, were captured in the selected LDP. The gender distribution of the HR experts is presented below as Figure 2, while the analysis of their responses using descriptive statistics and chi-square is also presented for the selected LDP as Table 3.

Table 3 presents a detailed summary of descriptive statistics and Chi-square test results for 32 leadership development capabilities assessed from the curriculum of the selected Leadership Development Program. The Chi-square test was employed to determine whether the distribution of “Yes” and “No” responses to each item was statistically significant, thereby identifying which competencies were strongly affirmed to be present in the curriculum of the selected Leadership

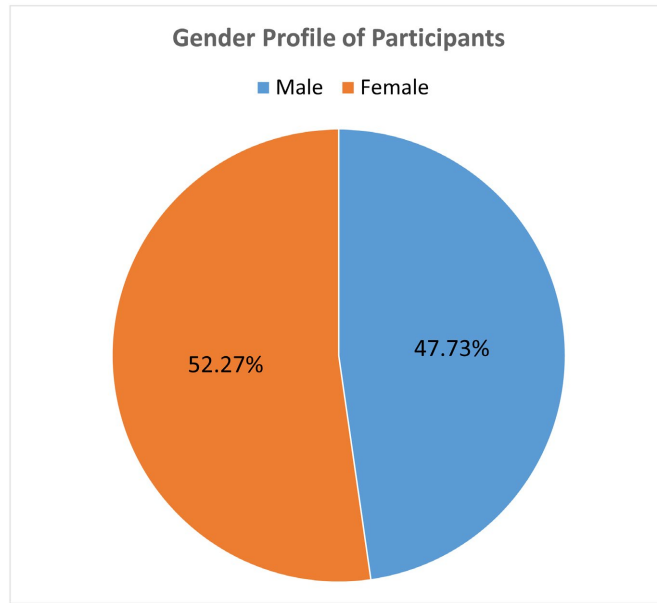


Figure 2. Gender distribution of HR experts.

Table 3. Summary of descriptive statistics and Chi-square for LDP 1.

Participants		Responses			
		Yes	No	Chi-square	Sig
1	Social Impact Analysis	10	22	4.500	0.034
2	Stakeholder Engagement	19	13	1.125	0.289
3	Team Coordination	31	1	28.125	0.000
4	Digital Literacy	10	22	4.500	0.034
5	Analytical Reasoning	25	7	10.125	0.001
6	Ethical Decision-Making	31	1	28.125	0.000
7	Sustainability Planning	10	22	4.500	0.034
8	Talent Development	16	16	0.000	1.000
9	Goal Setting	25	7	10.125	0.001
10	Accountability	31	1	28.125	0.000
11	Time Management	10	22	4.500	0.034
12	Performance Evaluation	16	16	0.000	1.000
13	Active Listening	25	7	10.125	0.001
14	Problem solving	25	7	10.125	0.001
15	Software Development	5	27	15.125	0.000
16	Computer programming	5	27	15.125	0.000
17	Digital content analysis	5	27	15.125	0.000

## Continued

18	Mathematical analysis	12	20	2.000	0.157
19	IT skills	5	27	15.125	0.000
20	Cybersecurity Awareness	10	22	4.500	0.034
21	Global Citizenship	10	22	4.500	0.034
22	Optimistic	25	7	10.125	0.001
23	Risk-driven	25	7	10.125	0.001
24	Cultural sensitivity	25	7	10.125	0.001
25	Systems thinking	14	18	0.500	0.480
26	Human-centered	19	13	1.125	0.289
27	Equity-driven	25	7	10.125	0.001
28	Scenario planning	16	16	0.000	1.000
29	delegation	31	1	28.125	0.000
30	Data analysis	17	15	0.125	0.724
31	Life-long learning	19	13	1.125	0.289
32	Critical thinking	31	1	28.125	0.000

Development Program. The results indicated a statistically significant difference in the distribution of various competencies, as shown in the analysis, meaning that there was consistency in the responses given by participants. It is worth noting here that competencies like Team Coordination, Ethical Decision Making, Accountability, Delegation, and Critical Thinking received overwhelming approval from the participants, with 31 of them giving answers to the effect of Yes and only one giving it a No. These are also the items that received the highest Chi-square values (28.125,  $p = 0.000$ ), indicative of the high agreement in including them in the curriculum of Leadership Development Programs. Likewise, other competencies like Analytical Reasoning, Goal Setting, Active Listening, Problem Solving, and characteristics like being Optimistic, Risk-driven, and Equity-driven also yielded statistically significant results (Chi-square = 10.125,  $p = 0.001$ ), with a large number of participants (25) confirming them. These results indicate that respondents perceive cognitive skills as well as emotional-intelligence-related attributes as the critical leadership qualities for future managers.

Notably, some of the technical and digital skills, namely, Software Development, Computer Programming, Digital Content Analysis, and IT Skills, also showed statistically significant findings (Chi-square = 15.125,  $p = 0.000$ ). Scores for these items, however, were low, with 5 participants giving a response of yes and 27 a response of no, with a high consensus that there should be a no in the curriculum of the Leadership Development Program one (LDP 1). Moreover, such competencies as Social Impact Analysis, Digital Literacy, Time Manage-

ment, Sustainability Planning, Cybersecurity Awareness, and Global Citizenship were not included in the curriculum of the selected leadership development program.

On the one hand, such competencies as Stakeholder Engagement, Talent Development, Performance Evaluation, Life-long Learning, Human-Centred Design, and Scenario Planning were not statistically significant. As an example, such items as Talent Development, Performance Evaluation, and Scenario Planning had divided results of “Yes” and “No” (16 each), which is random and therefore not significant. Such results indicate that there is no complete agreement on whether those competencies were captured or not captured in the curriculum of the evaluated Leadership Development Program. The same thing happened with Stakeholder Engagement and Life-long Learning as well.

In addition, competencies such as Social Impact Analysis, Digital Literacy, Time Management, Sustainability Planning, Cybersecurity Awareness, and Global Citizenship were less affirmed, but their results were still significant (Chi-square = 4.500,  $p = 0.034$ ). The point is that the consistency of the responses would be the important factor here rather than the frequency. This strongly implies that these competencies are not captured in the evaluated Leadership Development Program. In conclusion, the Chi-square analysis shows that traditional leadership skills are widely captured, while digital, analytical, and systems-oriented capabilities are not adequately captured in the curriculum of the evaluated Leadership Development Program.

#### 4.4. Document Content Analysis

A document content analysis of the selected LDP (found in the appendix) was conducted using NVivo software. Results from the component factor analysis were adopted as the themes and codes for the document analysis, as presented below in **Table 4**, while the content analysis is summarised in **Table 5**.

**Table 4.** Themes and codes for document content analysis.

S	Themes	Codes
1	Strategic Leadership Competence	Social Impact Analysis, Stakeholder Engagement, Team Coordination, Digital Literacy, Analytical Reasoning, Ethical Decision Making, Sustainability Planning, Critical Thinking, Talent Development
2	Managerial Competence	Goal setting, active listening, accountability, time management, performance evaluation, problem-solving
3	Technical & Digital Skills	Software development, computer programming, digital content analysis, mathematical analysis, IT skills, cybersecurity awareness
4	Operational Competence	Scenario planning, delegation, data analysis, and lifelong learning.
5	Global Thinking Mindset	Global citizenship, optimism, risk-driven, cultural sensitivity, systems thinking, human-centred, and equity-driven

**Table 5.** Summary of document content analysis.

Themes	Codes	Reference	
Strategic Leadership Competence	Social Impact Analysis	0	
	Stakeholder Engagement	0	
	Team Coordination	1	
	Digital Literacy	0	
	Analytical Reasoning	1	
	Ethical Decision-Making	2	
	Sustainability Planning,	0	
	Critical Thinking	1	
	Talent Development	1	
	Goal setting	1	
	active listening	3	
	accountability	1	
	Managerial Competence	time management	0
performance evaluation		3	
problem solving		2	
Software development		0	
computer programming		0	
Technical & Digital Skills		digital content analysis	0
		mathematical analysis	0
	IT skills	0	
	cybersecurity Awareness	0	
	Scenario planning	0	
Operational Competence	delegation	1	
	data analysis	1	
	Lifelong learning	1	
	Global citizenship,	2	
	optimism	0	
Global Thinking Mindset	risk-driven	1	
	cultural sensitivity	1	
	systems thinking	2	
	human-centered	1	
	equity-driven	2	

Using NVivo, a document analysis of a chosen Leadership Development Program (LDP) curriculum was carried out by identifying whether the key leadership capabilities are addressed or not. The skills were categorised into five general themes: Strategic Leadership Competence, Managerial Competence, Technical and Digital Skills, Operational Competence, and Global Thinking Mindset. A reference count of more than zero in this analysis was taken to mean that a specific capability had been captured in the curriculum, whereas a reference count of zero was taken to mean that the specific capability had not been captured.

Out of the nine capabilities which are tested in the Strategic Leadership Competence theme, five were captured in the curriculum. These were Team Coordination, Analytical Reasoning, Ethical Decision Making, Critical Thinking, and Talent Development, and each had the number of references equal to one or two. Yet, there are four very essential skills that none of the curricula addressed: Social Impact Analysis, Stakeholder Engagement, Digital Literacy, and Sustainability Planning (reference = 0). The lack of these competencies is a cause for concern as they are strongly important in terms of building strategic, socially conscious, and future-led leadership. This implies that there is a partially inadequate focus on strategic leadership competencies in the chosen program.

Moderate levels of managerial skills were captured in the LDP curriculum. Five competencies were covered out of six provided: Goal Setting, Active Listening, Accountability, Performance Evaluation, and Problem Solving, with Active Listening and Performance Evaluation as the most accentuated (both of them mentioned thrice). Time Management was not measured, and that might be related to a self-regulation ability that people forget about yet need. In general, it indicates a fairly good emphasis on conventional managerial skills within the studied programme.

The theme, Assessment of Technical and Digital Skills, was not represented at all in any of the six competencies. No technical or digital expertise was recorded under Software Development, Computer Programming, Digital Content Analysis, Mathematical Analysis, IT Skills, and Cybersecurity Awareness in any of the documents that were analysed (all references = 0). This reflects a severe deficiency in the curriculum as the world becomes increasingly digitised, and highlights the importance of technology in modern leadership. The complete lack of digital competencies serves to convincingly argue that the programs are out of step with the requirements of 21st-century leadership expectations.

Out of the four operational competencies under consideration, three were identified: Delegation, Data Analysis, and Lifelong Learning, mentioned once each. Scenario Planning was not present in any curriculum. Although there is some evidence reinforcing the inclusion of operational competence capabilities, there is also a low reference frequency, indicating that these are undeveloped within the content of the programs and might not make the leaders more prepared to deal with complexity and future uncertainty.

The Global Thinking Mindset theme showed the most exemplary representa-

tion when a total of six out of the seven competencies were covered in the curricula. The most referenced were Global Citizenship, Systems Thinking, and Equity-driven Leadership (twice), and then Cultural Sensitivity, Risk-driven Mindset, and Human-centred Design are cited. All but Optimism were taken. These findings show that the chosen leadership development program has comparatively more focus on inclusive, globally minded, and equity-based leadership.

In general, the document content analysis demonstrates that although competencies that are concerned with managerial effectiveness and global thinking are rather satisfactorily represented, such crucial domains as strategic foresight, sustainability, and digital competence remain severely underrepresented. Among the 32 evaluated capabilities, only 19 were found in the chosen program, meaning that the curriculum could use an upgrade in the balance and comprehensiveness of the program. The total absence of technical and digital skills is a sign that there is a severe lack of coherence between the program material and the digital leadership skills needed in the contemporary, rapidly developing professional world.

## 5. Conclusion

This work offers an in-depth analysis of the degree of readiness of the Leadership Development Programs (LDPs) in Sierra Leone to successfully tackle the challenges of their future managerial capacity. The study developed five important leadership dimensions that include strategic competence, managerial capability, technical and digital proficiency, operational readiness, and a global thinking mindset as the core in developing future managers. The results suggest that although a part of the managerial and ethical competencies are integrated into a chosen program, some gaps in such growth areas essential to modern leadership as digital skills, sustainability, and strategic foresight exist. Based on the document content analysis, as well as expert assessments, it was found that the vast majority of the reviewed LDP curricula lack technical and digital skills, and some strategic competencies are not equally represented. Such gaps indicate that the curricula are too focused on traditional leadership paradigms and do not capture the dynamism observed in the current global business landscape. Conversely, the themes of equity-based leadership and global citizenship are more pronounced, meaning there is an emerging yet not complete inclination toward inclusive leadership.

Future leadership competencies must be incorporated into the design and delivery of LDPs in order to close the noted talent gap. Policymakers, HR experts, and schools need to collaborate and update courses on leadership to include digital literacy, sustainability, strategic analysis, and flexible learning methods. A paradigm change in current approaches to leadership development is thus encouraged in the study in order to adequately develop the next generation of decision-makers in a complex and changing environment.

## 6. Recommendations

The following suggestions are put forward to enhance the applicability and effi-

cacy of Leadership Development Programs (LDPs) in Sierra Leone for training future managers in light of the empirical findings of this study:

1) It is recommended that LDPs incorporate modules on digital transformation, data-driven leadership, and technological adaptability to align with the demands of the digital age.

2) This study's component factor analysis offers a proven framework with 32 capabilities spread across five dimensions. It is advised that LDP providers examine and modify program materials for future relevance using this framework as a guide.

3) In order to stay up to speed with industry trends, technology breakthroughs, and worldwide issues, it is imperative that LDP content be reviewed and updated on a regular basis, given the dynamic nature of global business and leadership needs.

To cater to the diverse leadership needs across sectors such as education, health, energy, and ICT, LDPs should offer specialization tracks tailored to industry-specific challenges and competencies.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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