

# Employee Competence (Soft and Hard) Outcome of Recruitment and Selection Process

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**Abstract** The literature treated the employee workplace competence term as a dependent variable when it was treated as one of human resource management outcomes. Particularly, few studies have measured the competencies variable as one of the recruitment and selection outcome. And a few researchers judge worker's competency regarding to recruitment and selection, particularly under the hard and soft taxonomy. However, this study will advance the Alsabbah & Ibrahim (2013) work which proposed the competence model to contact recruitment and selection outcome. Accordingly, the study will illustrate how the workplace soft and hard competence were considered by previous studies, as well, the proposed conceptual framework will validate the reasons to consider these workplace competence in evaluating the recruitment and selection outcome.

**Keywords** Recruitment, Selection, Hard Competence, Soft Competence

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## 1. Introduction

A significant amount of literature has shown that a sound recruiting exercise yields high quality employees through a high-quality selection practices and can better forecast future employee performance (Gable, Hollon, & Dangelo, 1992; Heraty & Morley, 1998). In addition, the competency is important because it can efficiently improve both employees and organizational performance (Carroll & McCrackin, 1998). Consequently, the organizations must attain best recruitment and selection practices to obtain competence staff (Promis, 2008; Brown, 2007). It is also true in terms of success of work performance and perceived quality (Blackman, 2006; Sangeetha, 2010), and the creation of a true competitive advantage for organizations (van Birgelen, Wetzels, & van Dolen, 2008).

## 2. The Competence Variable

"Competence" is defined as concept that describes the behavioral prerequisites for job performance and organizational results, indicated by skills attribute, character, quality, ability, capacity and capability (Cumming, et al., 2009; Moore, Cheng, & Dainty; 2002). The study will consider the definition as a competence concept that describes the behavioural prerequisites for job performance

at workplace and organizational results, indicating skills, character, attribute, quality, ability, capacity and capability. After that, from the objective of this study, the study will take into consideration the illustration of a variety of competencies definitions that are used synonymously (Evers & Rush, 1996; Williams, 2005).

Generally uncommonly studies have measured the competencies variable as one of the recruitment or selection process outcome. And few researchers judge worker's competency regarding to recruitment or selection, through evaluating the new workers competency (Bishop, et al. 1983).

However, In relation to recruitment and selection, the literature focused on the competencies is rarely and scatter. A few studies were conducted this relation, but in deficient manner, such that Brown (2007) confirms the correlation with employee competence as the outcome from the recruitment process. However, it was utilized skills at the individual performance term to describe consideration of the board competence. Additionally, MacKenzie, Ployhart, Weekley, & Ehlers (2010); Cabrera & Nguyen (2001) performed just the selection method in relation to (KSA) theme from the employee competence.

Additionally, supplementary literature treated the competencies by reflecting in the employee quality, since it contains the employee skills and abilities. Such that literature was accomplished by (Williams, Labig, & Stone, 1993; Keung & Pine, 2000).

In addition, in such thought of the indistinguishable relation with employee competence, also this relation was conducted under the performance expectation theme, such as Bandow (2004) just conducted the skills are the

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employers expected from the new hired in the USA following the hiring process, but the study did not conduct an empirical examination of the relation between recruitment and selection and competencies.

Moreover, this particular relationship was conducted by previous literature in an ambiguous and indefinite nature. Such that nature was performed the competence or skills as a parts of employee quality which considered by (Williams, Labig, & Stone, 1993; Breaugh, et al. 2003; Keung & Pine, 2000; Scholarios & Lockyer, 1999). Otherwise studies conducted these competencies under “Predict Occupational Success term” to conduct selection methods outcome (Barrett & Depinet, 1991; McClelland, 1998). Furthermore, the relation between two variables of recruitment and selection and competence variable was unclear reviewed when it was carried out under dimensions of job performance in performance appraisal rating, such that concern also was presented by (Taylor & Schmidt’s, 1983; Zottoli & Wanous, 2000; Breaugh, 1981; Barrick & Zimmerman, 2009; Williams, et al., 1993) in the recruitment process. As well as, (Schmidt & Hunter 1998; Murphy & Shiarella 1997; Borman, White & Dorseys 1995; Gomez, 1985; Schmidt, Hunter, & Outerbridge, 1986) were considered the selection process. Moreover, the recruitment and selection were measured by employee effectiveness such as (Sangeetha K, 2010; Fallon, 2009). Some other combine between skill term and performance term by considering “performance-related skills” term to measure the selection method outcome (Damitz, Manzey, Kleinmann, & Severin, 2003).

### 3. Hard and Soft Competencies

The definitions of hard and soft skills distinguish between the hard technical skills of performing the job and the soft behavioral skills required in the workplace. Hard skills refer to the skills in the technical category, dealing with data and administrative skills. Soft skills are defined as the “interpersonal, human, people or behavioral skills needed to apply technical skills and knowledge in the workplace” (Weber et al. 2009; De Villiers, 2010). Also, the core competencies for today’s workplace are: soft skills and hard skills. Soft skills are viewed as complements to hard skills and are requirements for successful workplace performance.

Hard skills are those skills associated with specific technical knowledge and task-oriented skills (Ashbaugh, 2003). Hard skills are primarily mental or cognitive in nature. They are most likely influenced by an individual’s intelligence quotient (IQ) (Rainsbury, Hodges, Burchell, & Lay, 2002).

Soft skills are often associated with interpersonal, emotional, and behavioral skills and place more importance on personal behavior and managing human relationships (Buhler, 2001; Douglas & Christain 2002; Rainsbury et al., 2002). Soft skills are primarily affective and behavioral in

nature, and most likely influenced by an individual’s emotional quotient (EQ).

In view of the fact that hard/technical skills may differ according to context and functional role (e.g. for an auditor or events manager, project management may be regarded as a hard skill, whilst the same skill may be deemed to be a soft skill for a debtors or line manager), two domains of competencies will first be defined and then subdivided into subskill competency categories. Both the domains and the categories are not mutually exclusive and are illustrative rather than comprehensive (De Villiers, 2010). Also, hard/technical skills may differ according to context and functional role (e.g. for an auditor or events manager, project management may be regarded as a hard skill, whilst the same skill may be deemed to be a soft skill for a debtors or line manager) (De Villiers, 2010).

In relation to important of hard and soft, Coll, Zegwaard, & Hodges (2002) found that comparison of hard skills and soft skills are important. Hence, it shows that the science and technology students, like their business student counterparts, perceive soft skills to be as equally important as hard skills. Also, in determining the importance of the two competencies of hard and soft skills, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) claims that employers afford 20 percent of the weighting to hard skills (amenable to certification) and 80 per cent to noncertified soft skills (CBI, 2007; Moss and Tilly, 1996; Keep and James, 2010). Also between sectors the importance of soft and hard competences was also investigated, Keep & James (2010) argue that employers in different sectors may place very different relative weighting on soft skills. It seems likely that sectors such as hotels and catering and retailing will value soft skills higher than non-service sector employers (Keep & James, 2010).

### 4. Reasons for Preferring Hard and Soft Competence

The researcher considers soft and hard domain of competencies to indicate the employee competency, and consider the recruitment and selection outcome at the Palestinian authority, for four motives.

First: the importance of soft and cognitive/ hard competences for employee, also required by the organization, since hard and soft skills needed in modern organizations. Also, both skills are considered for job success and organizational effectiveness (Snyder, et al., 2006). For the soft competence, the previous studies consider the important for job performance such as (Spencer and Spencer, 1993; Desman, et al, 2011; Snyder, et al. 2006; Coll & Zegwaard; 2006; Evers & Rush 1996; Promis, 2008). Furthermore, Heimler (2010) considered the basic (soft) competency skills to be important for job performance. Furthermore, it has shown that hard skills components such as thinking critically and solving problems are technical skills and important for employees.

However, Dunne and Rawlins (2000) also realize the competence importance and assume that mastery of technical skills within disciplinary content is more important to employees (Robinson, and Garton, 2008; Whitefield & Kloot, 2006; Schleifer and Greenawalt, 1996).

Second: the hard and soft competencies are represent most of the competencies needed for workplace success and performance, Thus Spencer & Spencer (1993) identified a number of competency categories which were combined under cognitive/ hard and behavior/soft competency where the authors claim that it accounts for 80-95% of the distinguishing features of superior performers in technical and managerial positions (Rainsbury, Hodges, Burchell & Lay, 2002; Coll, Zegwaard, & Hodges, 2002).

Third: these competencies classification (hard and soft) were employed by the more recent literature which also, revealed that these skills are the most important and top skills required for success of graduates such as: professional knowledge, interpersonal competencies, management competencies, leadership competencies, and critical thinking competencies (Holtzman & Kraft, 2011, DeLaune, 2004, Gault, et. al, 2010, Heimler, 2010, Martensen & Gronholdt, 2009, Desman et al, 2011).

Fourth: the hard and soft competencies were considered in the selection process. Such soft / behavioral competence can be measured by several selection methods such as an interview; Analysis presentation, and general mental ability test (Lievens, Harris, Van Keer, & Bisqueret, 2003; Bertua, Anderson & Salgado, 2005; Blickle, et al., 2011). Also for the component of cognitive/ hard competence such technical expertise, thinking competence, were considered in selecting methods and decision selection, and also, performance evaluation. The employer conduct the general mental ability (GMA) test to measure these competencies, to distinguish between candidates in the selection methods and selection decision process (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998; Bertua, Anderson & Salgado, 2005; Blickle, et al., 2011).

The fifth reason is performed particular for cognitive hard competency with three components; (technical expertise, analytical thinking and conceptual competencies), they were classified that can measure employee competency at different job positions, and utilized for different graduates professionals from different schools (Breuning, Parker, & Ishiyama, 2001; McClelland 1998; Billing (2007). As well, These competencies can be transferable between jobs (Gick and Holyoak, 1987; Boyatzis, 2008).

## 5. The Relationship between Variables

The literature treated the employee workplace competence as a dependent variable when it was treated as one of human resource management outcomes (e.g., Ey, 2006). However, the literature considers the relationship between recruitment and selection and employee competence for success. Such employer practices ultimately influence the employee job success (Gill, 2007, Vance & Foundation, 2006). Thus, the employers invest resources in

recruitment and selection process because they expect the investment to enable them to hire the highest quality and competency workers (Bishop, Barron, & Hollenbeek, 1983). Also the organization business successfully recruits and selects is obtaining competence and quality employees (Howard, 1999; Bozionelos, 2005; Bishop, et al., 1983; Bartram et al. 2002; McClelland, 1998; vorgelegt von, 2008; Breugh et al, 2003; Ley & Albert, 2003; Ey, 2006; Yng Ling, 2003; Keep and James, 2010). Also, In a clear system, there is a Positive relationships were considered between perceived effectiveness recruitment and new hires qualities and competencies (Rynes & Boudreau, 1986).

The literature identified the competencies that are conducted by the literature in order of achieving success in the job. Also the literature identified, having the right mix of competencies and then utilizing those skills is a key for predictors of manager's effectiveness (Fallon, 2009). Also the competency of new recruits depends upon an organization's recruitment practice (Keunga & Pineb, 2000).

As well, under Performance Expectations theme, Bandow (2004) examined the competencies for newly hired (IT) professionals in the US subsequent of the hiring process. From the pilot study, the author carries out that Personal or individual as well as technical skills are the most skills should appear in the new hired. From the Personal were consider communication skills, teams work, and decision making and problem solving competencies.

Furthermore, in the selection process, and based on the basis of systemic approach recruitment and selection, Hunthausen, (2000) investigates recruitment and selection system validity of the US airline based on predictors task and contextual performance and multidimensional job performance. However, the supervisor competence evaluation was utilized to judgment incumbent job performance in the dimensions and skill measurements job performance, from the soft competencies they were: written communication skills; oral communication skills; organizational ability; negotiation skills; quantitative skills; decision making ability; analytical ability\ problem; teamwork; employee development; flexibility; initiative, perseverance; leadership; and contentious improvement.

Also, Williams, Labig, & Stone, (1993) reports that different recruitment sources produced sharply different levels of prehire knowledge and new hires. However, recruitment sources reached differently qualified applicants in terms of nursing skills experience, and quality. These soft competencies were summaries, Leadership, teaching and collaboration, planning and evaluation, interpersonal relations and communication. Furthermore, Barrick & Zimmerman, (2009) states that the applicants, who knew current employees by such referral such as employee referral; and number of friends and family, were higher skills in performance. From the hard competencies was Job knowledge, but from the soft were interpersonal skills, communication skills, initiative, and punctuality.

Gault, Leach & Duey (2010) highlighted that the

majority of employers felt the internship contributed value to the intern in terms of future competencies for job performance. However, the internships recruitment method can predict the employee competencies. From the hard competence was professional behavior, but from the soft competence were initiative and self-motivation, acceptance of criticism, and demeanor, and ethical behavior. Moreover, Rynes, & Boudreau (1986) perform the positive

relationships between perceived employee effectiveness in competencies and different recruiter method, also with, recruiter selection criteria and Critical skill areas in hard competencies was professional and technical expertise. Along with, Borman, White & Dorsey's (1995) for US Army soldiers, the positive relation between cognitive ability test, and thinking competence (hard), and interpersonal competencies (soft).

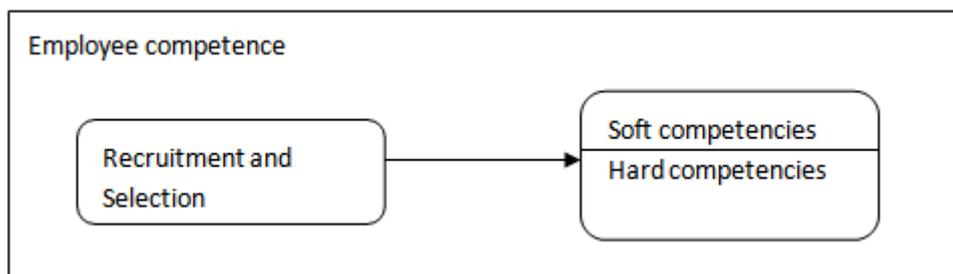
## 6. Proposed Framework

Recruitment and selection would be positively related to incumbent competence. However, based on the preceding discussion of the literature, the following is a proposed conceptual framework:

### Recruitment and Selection and the Employee Competencies (Soft and Hard) outcome

| The author & Year & country             | Sample   | independent variable   | Dependent variable (the hard competencies)                      | Dependent variable (the soft competencies)          | Finding  |
|---|--|--|---|---|--|
| Jattuso & Sinar, (2003) UK              | 40,286 Individuals for sales positions at three major manufacturing corporations | Recruitment source   | Computer and technical skills such as: word processing software |   | Individuals sourced from position-specific job boards will be more skilled than other sources.<br>-The effect of source on an individual qualification score was significant.                        |
| Bishop, Barron, & Hollenbeek (1983) USA | 5,421 employers surveyed   | Referral sources Employment (Agency, School Referral, Government Agency) | Knowledge, relevant work experience                             |   | -New hired employee was recruited by referrals will require less training because the competencies they have at work.<br>-Some recruitment sources typically yield better workers skills than others |
| Bretz Jr & Judge, (1998)                | Rate the quality of the (N = 58) applicants resumes                              | Recruitment methods realistic job preview RJP                            | Work experience competence                                      | Overall applicant's competence                      | Applicant competence was not related to the weight placed on negative information  |
| Collins & Han (2004) USA                | 99 organizations   | Advertisement recruitment method   | Work professional experience skills                             |   | Corporate advertising had direct effects on applicant competence and quality   |
| Castilla (2005) USA                     | 334 of the employees hired   | Personal contacts recruitment method                                     | Work Experience Skills, Computer                                | Language Skills                                     | The employee had got personal contacts appears superior skilled  |
| Barrick & Zimmerman, (2009) USA         | (N = 119) from hired applicants  | Selection methods  | Job knowledge and quantity of work.                             | Interpersonal skills, Communication skills,         | Biodata check predicted skills for job performance rating.   |
| Patterson, et al, (2005) UK             | 46 doctors   | Assessment center selection method                                       | Professional integrity; and clinical expertise                  |   | Assessment center can improve the employee competencies  |
| Bertua, Anderson & Salgado, (2005) UK   | meta-analysis  | Validity of tests of general mental ability (GMA)                        | Cognitive and professional competencies                         |   | Validity of tests for predicting competence for training success and performance   |
| Bozionelos (2005)                       | Observations of actual cases, and empirical research                             | The political selection decisions and criteria                           | Professional Academic competency                                |   | -The political selection decisions resulted by negative outcomes in the new hired competence, and the decline of this particular department.   |
| Marshall, Stone, & Jawahar (2001)       | 120 sales managers and 120 HR managers   | Two types of selection decision makers                                   |   | Higher risk orientation characteristic and attitude | -The highest risk/higher attitude of individual was more selected by sales managers than by HR managers.   |

## PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



**Figure 2.** Recruitment and selection and employee competencies (hard & soft)

## 7. Conclusions

The purpose is to improve the work of Alsabbah & Ibrahim (2013), as well highlighting the main contributions of the current study, the researchers argue that relatively little literature had conducted recruitment and selection, and seldom studies realize the relationship between recruitment and selection processes, and the employee competencies under the hard and soft categorization. Later studies can advance the contribution of the current study in order to contact empirical investigation of this proposed relationship.

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