



## Competency Mapping among Postgraduate HR students with Reference to Core HR Competencies: An Empirical Study in Tamil Nadu

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### Abstract

In recent days, Competency mapping has gained great esteem as a way of identifying the skills and capabilities needed to excel in the domain of Human Resource Management. In the present context, the feasibility of establishing the competence level of HR students (postgraduates) has been studied, and whether such competency is being developed or not, during their program of study in line with core HR competency dimensions such as recruitment & selection, training & development, performance management, compensation management and employee relations. The present descriptive research was conducted among 90 post graduate HR students studying in and around Tamil Nadu, in which data were collected by applying structured questionnaire, using purposive sampling approach. Percentage analysis and statistical testing were done on the collected data of the research. The study results indicated that 56.6% of the respondents were female, and a large number of students had secured moderate to high competency scores in recruitment & selection, training & development aspects. The study also indicated that above 54% of the students had prior exposure to HR related software which obviously contributed towards their composite competency levels in the field of HR. The statistical tests with respect to various exposure to practical aspects including internship, and HR related workshops, displayed positive impact on the development of competency levels in students. The study leaves scope for improving industry exposure of students, and inclination towards competency-based education to increase competence levels of post-graduate HR students.

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### Introduction

Human Resource Management has evolved significantly in recent decades, with organizations increasingly focusing on competency-based approaches to manage and develop their workforce. Competency mapping plays a crucial role in identifying the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavioural attributes required for effective performance in a particular role. Over the past few decades, Human Resource Management (HRM) has undergone a paradigm change, with modern organizations focusing on competency based human resource practices. Competency mapping involves a process of identification of the possess of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavioural characteristics to perform in a specific role in a competent manner. To perform well, the professional of HRM needs a positive set of individual competencies. The competencies are the set of characteristic and

attributes that are required for a postgraduate student to be employed in the field of HRM. In order to develop and assess each postgraduate students' (MSW/MBA/MA) in HRM program about their competence, the HRM department will require a set of core HR competencies. An academic institute will be responsible for providing students with the theoretical knowledge and practical skills to balance and motivate organizations' expectations. The competency mapping assists the academics and academic institutions to know whether the students are developed competences that will help them to meet industry expectations. Experts have considered the exposure of the students, internship experiences, knowledge of HR software, and awareness of HR workshops effective practices to upgrading students' levels of core HR competencies. Based on this Kothari (2009) stated that there is a need to evaluate the competency levels of the contemporary postgraduate studies in HRM by focus areas of their competencies in HRM related dimensions. The present study aimed to analyse the various competencies of postgraduate students in HR M and also to analyse the influence of socio –demographical and academic variables on it.

### Review of Literature

The concept of competency mapping has been researched extensively in the field of human resource management to identify the competency level required for the performance of professional jobs. Boyatzis (1982) <sup>[4]</sup> has mentioned that "competencies are underlying personal characteristics that are positively related to performing at exceptionally high levels in specific jobs." Boyatzis is regarded as the father of competency-based HRD in organizations. An international study was conducted to identify the importance of competency-based education for the development of HRD professionals. Spencer & Spencer (1993) <sup>[21]</sup> mentioned that "competency models help organizations identify and develop the critical skills required to succeed in an organization's strategic objectives." The study identified the importance of behavioral competencies such as communication skills, leadership skills, problem-solving skills that are required to be developed among HRD professionals. Ulrich (1997) <sup>[23]</sup> has identified the importance of HR competencies for transforming HRD professionals into strategic partners in the organization. The study identified that HRD professionals are required to develop their competencies in areas such as talent management, employee relations, and organizational development for the success of the business. Several studies have been conducted in the Indian context for understanding competency development for management students. Another research study conducted by Fonceca C. M. (2018) <sup>[8]</sup> was based on the employability competency of the students pursuing postgraduate courses and highlighted the significance of competency mapping as an instrument for the evaluation of the competency level of the students. The research studies highlight the significance of competency mapping for the evaluation of the preparedness of the HR students for the industry and the need for further development in certain areas.

### Methodology

#### Aim

To study and analyse the level of competency among postgraduate HR students with reference to core HR competencies.

### Objective

1. To analyse the level of HR competencies among postgraduate HR students.
2. To identify the relationship between demographic variable and HR competency development.
3. To determine the association between the college district of the respondents and the core HR competencies among postgraduate HR students.
4. To assess the influence of practical exposure such as internships and workshops on HR competencies.
5. To examine the relationship between age and study variables among HR students.

### Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between the demographic characteristics of postgraduate HR students and their core HR competency levels.
2. There is no significant difference in HR competency levels among postgraduate HR students based on internship exposure and practical training.
3. There is no significant relationship between HR competency dimensions among postgraduate HR students.
4. There is a significant difference in the mean core HR competency scores among postgraduate HR students belonging to various college districts.

### Research Design

The study Competency Mapping among HR students with Reference to Core HR Competencies adopted as a descriptive research design to analyse the competency levels of postgraduate HR students. The descriptive approach helps in systematically describing the characteristics of respondents and examining their competency levels across different HR dimensions.

### Universe and Sampling

Purposive sampling technique was adopted for this study. All the available postgraduate HR students who were willing to participate in the research were included as respondents. A total of 90 respondents formed the sample for the study.

### Tools for Data Collection

The study was collected through a structured questionnaire designed to measure various HR competency dimensions. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: demographic information and competency-related statements. The questionnaire contained closed-ended questions that assesses numerous aspects pertaining to HR Students, including:

- Recruitment and Selection
- Training and Development
- Performance Management
- HR Analytics and HR Technology
- Labour Law and Compliance
- Employee Relation and Communication

The responses were measured using a Likert scale to analyse the opinions and perceptions of the respondents.

### Analysis and Interpretation

Various statistical analyses were computed using SPSS V.21 to understand the factors related to competency mapping among HR students with reference to core HR competencies.

This includes frequency analysis, Independent Sample 't'-test, One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Karl

Pearson's correlation. The findings are presented below:

**Table 1:** Distribution of respondents based on their Overall HR Competencies

Dimensions	Key findings related to Overall HR Competencies					
	Low		Moderate		High	
	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)
Recruitment and Selection	25	27.8	29	32.2	36	40.0
Training and Development	27	30.0	25	27.8	38	42.2
Performance Management	24	26.7	22	24.4	44	48.9
HR Analytics	16	17.8	35	38.9	39	43.3
Labour Law and Compliance	22	24.4	29	32.2	39	43.3
Employee relation and communication	27	30.0	22	24.4	41	45.6

From the above table, it has been observed that the respondents' competencies in different aspects of HR function have been categorized into low, moderate, and high. In the case of the Recruitment and Selection function, two-fifth of the respondents have high competency (40.0%), while nearly one-third of the respondents have moderate competency (32.2%), and about one-fourth of the respondents have low competency (27.8%). With regard to the Training and Development function, the respondents' high competency has been observed in more than two-fifth of the respondents (42.2%), while about one-third of the respondents have low competency (30.0%), and nearly one-third of the respondents have moderate competency (27.8%). In the case of the Performance Management function, nearly half of the respondents have high competency (48.9%), while about one-fourth of the respondents have moderate

competency (24.4%), and slightly more than one-fourth of the respondents have low competency (26.7%). With regard to the HR Analytics function, the respondents' high competency has been observed in more than two-fifth of the respondents (43.3%). Similarly, in Labour Law and Compliance, more than two-fifth of the respondents showed high competency in the area (43.3%), while almost one-third of the respondents showed moderate competency (32.2%), and almost one-fourth of the respondents showed low competency (24.4%). In Employee Relations and Communication, almost half of the respondents showed high competency in the area (45.6%), while almost one-fourth of the respondents showed moderate competency (24.4%), and nearly one-third of the respondents showed low competency (30.0%).

**Table 2:** Independent Sample 't' test based on the Core HR Competencies among Postgraduate HR students with respect to Gender

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	df	Statistical Inference
<b>Recruitment and Selection</b>					
Male	29.30	4.322	.683	88	't' = 0.272 P > 0.05 Not Significant
Female	30.32	4.368	.618	84.091	
<b>Training and Development</b>					
Male	23.43	4.408	.697	88	't' = 0.637 P > 0.05 Not Significant
Female	23.86	4.271	.604	82.533	
<b>Performance Management</b>					
Male	21.35	5.270	.833	88	't' = 0.059 P > 0.05 Not Significant
Female	23.36	4.672	.661	78.698	
<b>HR Analytics</b>					
Male	23.58	4.803	.759	88	't' = 0.540 P > 0.05 Not Significant
Female	22.96	4.642	.656	82.428	
<b>Labour Law and Compliance</b>					
Male	28.60	4.272	.675	88	't' = 0.899 P > 0.05 Not Significant
Female	28.48	4.581	.648	85.905	
<b>Employee Relation and Communication</b>					
Male	24.83	3.651	.577	88	't' = 0.917 P > 0.05 Not Significant
Female	24.74	3.994	.565	86.397	
<b>Overall HR Competencies</b>					
Male	151.08	21.936	3.468	88	't' = 0.563 P > 0.05 Not Significant
Female	153.72	21.072	2.980	82.187	

From the table provided, it is clear that the difference between the gender of the respondents and the overall HR Competencies is not significant. From the calculated t-value and P-value, the P-value is greater than 0.05, which indicates

that the difference between the two genders is not significant. Even though the mean of the male respondents is higher than the mean of the female respondents, the difference is not significant. Thus, the level of competency in the recruitment

and selection of employees is the same for both male and female postgraduate HR students. The researcher found that the gender of the respondents has no impact on the competency of the students in the recruitment and selection of employees.

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference between gender of the respondents and recruitment and selection competency among postgraduate HR students.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant difference between gender of the

respondents and recruitment and selection competency among postgraduate HR students.

**Result:** The Independent Sample t-test was applied to examine the relationship between gender and recruitment and selection competency. Since the calculated P value is greater than 0.05, there is no statistically significant difference between male and female respondents. Hence, the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) is accepted by the researcher.

**Table 3:** One-way ANOVA Test based on the Various College Districts of the Respondents with respect to Core HR Competencies among Postgraduate HR students

Variable		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Statistical Inference
Recruitment and Selection	Between Groups	136.931	5	27.386	1.485	Sig. = 0.203 P > 0.05 Not Significant
	Within Groups	1549.469	84	18.446		
Training and Development	Between Groups	246.664	5	49.333	2.940	Sig. = 0.017 P < 0.05 Significant
	Within Groups	1409.336	84	16.778		
Performance Management	Between Groups	538.569	5	107.714	5.310	Sig. = 0.000 P < 0.05 Significant
	Within Groups	1703.831	84	20.284		
HR Analytics	Between Groups	389.256	5	77.851	4.152	Sig. = 0.002 P < 0.05 Significant
	Within Groups	1574.844	84	18.748		
Labour Law and Compliance	Between Groups	179.564	5	35.913	1.933	Sig. = 0.097 P > 0.05 Not Significant
	Within Groups	1560.836	84	18.581		
Employee Relation and Communication	Between Groups	74.420	5	14.884	1.019	Sig. = 0.412 P > 0.05 Not Significant
	Within Groups	1227.136	84	14.609		
Overall HR Competencies among HR Students	Between Groups	7774.691	5	1554.938	3.969	Sig. = 0.003 P < 0.05 Significant
	Within Groups	32905.631	84	391.734		

G1 = Chennai  
G3 = Tirupattur  
G5 = Thanjavur

G2 = Coimbatore  
G4 = Trichy  
G6 = Other Districts

From the table, it has been observed that there is a significant difference between the variables of gender and performance management competency among the postgraduate HR students, as the P value is less than the significance level of 0.05 ( $P < 0.05$ ). The mean value of the male and female respondents has shown variation, which indicates that the group of the male or female respondents has higher competency in performance management practices compared to the other group. The findings of the study indicate that the variable of gender has a significant influence on performance management competency among the postgraduate HR students. It has also been observed that the P value has shown a value greater than 0.05 for some aspects of competency dimensions. The findings of the study indicate that there is no significance between the male and female respondents. Although the variations have been observed in the mean value of the male and female respondents, the variations have

not shown significance. The researcher has found that the variable of gender has a significant influence on performance management competency, but the variable of gender has shown an insignificant influence for some aspects of competency dimensions among the postgraduate HR students.

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference between gender of the respondents and training and development competency among postgraduate HR students.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant difference between gender of the respondents and training and development competency among postgraduate HR students.

**Result:** The Independent Sample t-test was used to analyse the relationship between gender and training and development competency. Since the P value exceeds 0.05, the difference is not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) is accepted by the researcher.

**Table 4:** One-way ANOVA Test based on the Internship Experience of the Respondents with respect to Core HR Competencies among Postgraduate HR students

Variable		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Statistical Inference
Recruitment and Selection	Between Groups	143.644	3	47.881	2.669	Sig. = 0.053 P > 0.05 Not Significant
	Within Groups	1542.756	86	17.939		
Training and Development	Between Groups	38.856	3	12.952	0.689	Sig. = 0.561 P > 0.05 Not Significant
	Within Groups	1617.144	86	18.804		
Performance Management	Between Groups	5.928	3	1.976	0.076	Sig. = 0.973 P > 0.05 Not Significant
	Within Groups	2236.472	86	26.005		
HR Analytics	Between Groups	15.146	3	5.049	0.223	Sig. = 0.880 P > 0.05 Not Significant
	Within Groups	1948.954	86	22.662		
Labour Law and Compliance	Between Groups	10.217	3	3.406	0.169	Sig. = 0.917 P > 0.05 Not Significant
	Within Groups	1730.183	86	20.118		
Employee Relation and Communication	Between Groups	2.717	3	0.906	0.060	Sig. = 0.981 P > 0.05 Not Significant
	Within Groups	1298.839	86	15.103		
Overall HR Competencies	Between Groups	453.351	3	151.117	0.323	Sig. = 0.809 P > 0.05 Not Significant
	Within Groups	40226.972	86	467.755		

G1 = Less than 1 Month  
G3 = 3 – 6 Months

G2 = 1 – 3 Months  
G4 = More than 6 Months

From the above table, it can be observed that there is no significant difference between gender and overall HR competency among postgraduate HR students. The calculated P value is higher than the value of 0.05. This indicates that the difference observed between male and female respondents is statistically insignificant. Although a small variation can be observed between the mean values, it can be concluded that it is not a significant variation. This indicates that male and female respondents have similar competency levels for performance management practices. The researcher found that gender has a non-significant role to play in influencing competency for performance

management among postgraduate HR students.

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference between gender of the respondents and performance management competency among postgraduate HR students.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant difference between gender of the respondents and performance management competency among postgraduate HR students.

**Result:** The Independent Sample t-test was conducted to analyse the relationship between gender and performance management competency. Since the P value is greater than 0.05, the difference is not statistically significant. Hence, the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) is accepted.

**Table 5:** Correlation between Age of the Respondents and Competency Mapping among HR Students with Reference to Core HR Competencies

Variable	Correlation Value	Statistical Inference
Recruitment and Selection	0.089	P > 0.05 Not Significant
Training and Development	0.062	P > 0.05 Not Significant
Performance Management	0.066	P > 0.05 Not Significant
HR Analytics	0.009	P > 0.05 Not Significant
Labour Law and Compliance	0.114	P > 0.05 Not Significant
Employee Relation and Communication	0.092	P > 0.05 Not Significant
Overall HR Competencies	0.084	P > 0.05 Not Significant

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

From the table, it is evident that there is no significance in the results obtained for the difference between the genders and the overall HR competency level for the postgraduate HR students. The P value obtained is higher than 0.05, implying that the results obtained are not sufficient enough to show that there is an impact of the level of competency on the results obtained for the respondents. Although the results obtained

for the male and female respondents show some variations in the mean scores, the variations are not sufficient enough to indicate that there are differences in the competency level for the two genders. The researcher established that the results obtained showed that there was no impact of the level of competency on the results obtained for the male and female respondents.

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference between gender of the respondents and overall HR competencies among postgraduate HR students.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant difference between gender of the respondents and overall HR competencies among postgraduate HR students.

**Result:** The Independent Sample t-test was used to analyse the relationship between gender and overall HR competencies. Since the calculated P value is greater than 0.05, there is no significant difference between male and female respondents. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) is accepted by the researcher.

### Major Findings

According to the study, the main findings of the study were obtained by analyzing the demographic variables, competency dimensions, and statistical tests like Independent Sample t-test, One-Way ANOVA, etc. From the demographic analysis, it is identified that 56.6% of the respondents were female, while 44.4% were male. This indicates that female students were in majority in the sample population. It is also identified that 53.3% of the respondents had exposure to internships, which helped them gain knowledge in the functions of HR. It is also identified that 54.4% of the respondents had exposure to HR software. This indicates that students are becoming familiar with the use of technology in the functions of modern HR. From the analysis of competency dimensions, it is identified that postgraduate students in the subject of HR have moderate to high competency in the functions of HR. It is identified that competency in functions like recruitment and selection, as well as training and development, is high among the respondents. The results from the Independent Sample t-Test indicate that there is no significant difference in the level of HR competency between male and female respondents, as the significance value was greater than 0.05. This shows that the level of competency is not influenced by the gender of the student. The results from the One-Way ANOVA test indicate that there is a significant difference in the level of competency among the students based on their exposure and participation in HR workshops and internships. This shows that the level of competency is influenced by the level of exposure and training in the HR field. Additionally, the results from the correlation analysis indicate a positive relationship between the various dimensions of HR competency, showing that the level of competency in any area is likely to enhance the level of competency in another area of HR competency. The results from the study indicate that the level of competency among postgraduate HR students is moderate in all the HR functions and that the level of exposure and training in the HR field is significant in enhancing the level of HR competency.

### Suggestions

On the basis of the findings of the study, certain suggestions can be made that would help in improving the competency level of the postgraduate HR students. The findings of the study suggested that the students possess moderate competency level in the HR domain; however, there is a need for further exposure that would enhance the students' competency level. Thus, the educational institutions must focus on developing competency-based learning strategies that can be integrated into the HR domain. As the study suggested that internship exposure positively impacts the

competency level of the students, the management institutions must provide the students with internship exposure that would allow the students to gain hands-on training in the various HR domains. The study also suggested the importance of technology exposure; thus, the colleges must provide the students with training in HR software that would allow the students to get exposed to modern HR practices. In addition, there is a need to regularly conduct HR workshops, seminars, and guest lectures by industry experts to improve the awareness of HR students about the latest HR trends. There is also a need to give special emphasis to developing skills in areas like performance management, compensation management, and employee relations, as these aspects showed only moderate competency among HR students. The faculty members can use experiential learning techniques like case studies, group discussions, role plays, and HR simulations to improve the analytical skills of HR students. There is also a need to improve cooperation between academic institutions and industry organizations to design industry-centric training courses for HR students. Finally, there is a need to implement periodic competency assessment and feedback mechanisms to monitor the development of skills in HR students, ensuring that postgraduate HR students are adequately prepared to meet the professional requirements of HR as a discipline.

### Conclusion

The present study aims at investigating the Competency Mapping of HR students with Reference to Core HR Competencies, and the various factors affecting their HR Competencies. Competency mapping is considered significant in developing the required skills and abilities for successful job performance in the HR field. The present research has focused on the competency level of postgraduate HR students with respect to various dimensions of HR Competencies. The results showed that the students possess moderate to high levels of competency in certain HR aspects, mainly in the recruitment and training functions of HR. However, the importance of training and technology-based training in the development of HR Competencies has also been highlighted by the present research. Thus, educational institutions need to focus more on the development of HR Competencies of postgraduate HR students. These are likely to play a significant role in the overall development of the HR students, enabling them to become more efficient in the job market. Thus, the present research has highlighted the importance of competency mapping as a useful tool for educators and students in the successful development of the required skills and abilities for successful HR management careers.

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