# Measuring Managerial Competencies in Management Program

Dr. Asha Alexander*    Farah A. Al-Moaibed

Department of Business Administration, Jubail University College Female branch, P.O Box 10074,   Jubail Industrial City 31961, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

* Corresponding author Email: alexandera@ucj.edu.sa, asha_alexander@sify.com

 **Abstract**

Global applicants to graduate management schools are increasingly as diverse as the program offerings .Last year, women made up a progressive record worldwide of those taking the standardized entrance test for management programs. This   momentum has also been gaining by leaps and bounds even in Islamic country like Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Management colleges have therefore been challenged with the task of developing students with managerial competency for the competitive advantage. This research aims to   measure characteristics that are representatives of core dimensions of the five basic managerial competencies (a) Communication Competency (b) Planning and Administration Competency (c) Teamwork Competency (d) Multicultural Competency and  (e) Self-Management Competency in university female students of Eastern province of Saudi Arabia. Students benefit by having their managerial competencies defined and develop self awareness by self assessment inventory. This research will be a value addition in Saudi scenario as it will help universities integrate managerial competencies into the program by developmental exercises which will enhance professional development of students and  satisfy community needs of  advancement. Self-Management Competency scores were found to be highest among the student while they were above average in Communication, Planning and Administration, Teamwork, and Multicultural Competency.

**Keywords:** Managerial competency, Planning and administration, Communication,     Teamwork, Multicultural

## 1.       Introduction

With the advancement of globalization, the number of opportunities for the skilled and competent has grown tremendously. As a consequence, management programs in world are mushrooming at a rapid pace. Some of the well acclaimed management personalities of the world have graduated from the best management schools in world. This itself is testimony to the outstanding teaching and training offered at these institutes. Women too have made up a progressive record  worldwide of pursuing management programs(Jennifer Lewington 2013,Widget Finn 2012).This momentum has  been gaining by leaps and bounds even in Saudi Arabia .The Kingdom having strict Islamic values has brought with it increasing opportunities for women in both education and employment . One of the main objectives of management program is to contribute to the development and prosperity of Saudi society through openness to the developed world while observing the principles of Islam. The logic behind management programs is that formal training will offer a more efficient and effective means of acquiring the necessary competencies required to enact managerial roles. (Pfeffer  & Fong, 2002). But the university college management programs are often criticized by various organizational stakeholders as out-of-touch with the real world. Further it has been said that the most critical competencies are least represented in management curriculum. (Robert S. Rubin and Erich C. Dierdorff, 2009).

A number of scholars have strongly urged management schools to seriously reconsider their current approach to management education (Bennis &O'Toole, 2005; Ghoshal, 2005; Khurana, 2007; Mintzberg, 2004; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002).Management colleges have therefore been challenged with the task of developing students into outstanding managers by inculcating a list of core competencies for the competitive advantage ( Camuffo, Arnaldo  etal 2009 ). The degree of competency development during the management program enhances career advancement in general and competencies like planning, result orientation, networking, organizational awareness, system thinking and use of technology in particular. "Managerial competencies " are sets of knowledge, skills, behaviors and attitudes that a person needs to be effective in a wide range of managerial jobs and various types of organizations(Hellriegel etal 2008 ) .Competencies can be developed (Richard E. Boyatzis, 2009).This research assessed the students in five competencies relevant to their needs which include: (a) Communication Competency (b) Planning and Administration Competency (c) Teamwork Competency (d) Multicultural Competency (e) Self-Management Competency. These competencies are featured throughout text material in the management program .Self-assessment instruments will help them gain insight into the current area of strength and be alerted to areas most needing

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improvement. The advisory program of college also counsel students in overcoming the areas of weakness.

## 2. Literature Review

David McClelland (1973) is credited with initiating the idea of "competency" and implementing it into the human resource literature (Dubois, 1993). Boyatzis (1982) is credited with popularizing the term in his book "The Competent Manager" as a combination of a motive, trait, skill aspect of one's self-image or social role, or a body of relevant knowledge. Cooper and Graham (2001) identified fifty seven core competencies while Liles and Mustian (2004) identified seven core competencies as critical to successful performance of extension workers. According to Glenn M. McEvoy( 2005) the traits and motives identified as critical to success in an HR career were adaptability, proactively, respect conscientiousness, quick study courage , integrity, energy level, and self-esteem and the four categories of skills were cognitive , communication , collaborative , and consulting .

Research published over the last 30 years shows us that outstanding leaders, managers,          advanced professionals and people in key jobs from sales to bank tellers, appear to require three clusters of behavioral habits namely (1) expertise and experience (2) knowledge  (3) an assortment of basic cognitive competencies, such as memory and deductive reasoning. (Bray et al., 1974; Boyatzis, 1982; Kotter, 1982;Campbell et al., 1970;  Spencer and Spencer, 1993;  Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2002). Competencies are a behavioral approach to emotional, social, and cognitive intelligence be it bank executives, public school principals, R&D managers or military pilots. It further indicates that these competencies can be developed in adults and there were no significant differences between male and female leaders in their demonstration of emotional and social intelligence competencies (Margaret M. Hopkins etal 2008). Research studies by Liu Yah Olan (2012) on   mid-level managers in Sichuan, Wittaya Chansiri (2009) on public university supporting-line administrators in Thailand, Neda Tiraieyari etal (2010) investigation on Malaysian extension workers at the department of agriculture, Rubin Pillay (2008), analysis of hospital managers in South Africa, Kak etal (2001) studies on Healthcare Providers and Candace Blayney (2009) on Canadian hotel general managers has depicted  that competencies required by employee's are job and sector specific.

Corporate recruiters routinely assert that  management  programs could be more relevant by doing more to inculcate "soft skills" such as leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills (Eberhardt ,McGee, & Moser, 1997; GMAC, 2006).Research also shows that students increasingly harbor negative attitudes toward learning such soft skills (Rynes et al., 2003). In recognition of the importance of helping Management students develop competencies the American Association of Collegiate School of Management also identified competencies in their eligibility procedures and standard for management accreditation (AACSB International 2006).  The Competencies understudy was at par with them.

Planning & administration competency involves deciding what tasks need to be done, determining how they can be done, allocating resources to enable them to be done, and then monitoring progress to ensure that they are done. Teamwork competency requires accomplishing tasks through small groups of people who are collectively responsible and whose work is interdependent. Multicultural competency is performing managerial work for an organization that utilizes human, financial, and material resources from multiple countries and serves markets that span multiple cultures Self-management competency refers to taking responsibility for your life at work and beyond (Hellriegel et al 2009). A Muslim manager in any organization is characterized by being Allah-conscious and Allah-fearing.  He incorporates Islamic principles in management   from both moral and spiritual dimensions. The most crucial principles are knowledge, commanding good and forbidding bad, amanah (trust), justice, shura (consultation),brotherhood, moral and ethical behavior, responsibility (trustworthiness), muhasabah (accountability), and, motivation (Mohamad Johdi Salleh,2012 ). The Muslim managers of global business world must not only possess Islamic management   skills to survive in the competitive market but continuously upgrade these skills to become a successful leader (Syed Mohammad Ather, 2007).

The only study on competencies in Saudi Arabia include the possible relationship between Saudi students' first language Arabic and second language English writings (Alnufaie, M., and Grenfell, M. 2012). Thus there exists a literature gap on measuring managerial competencies among female management students in Saudi Arabia, so a small attempt has been made by researchers in this area with the following objective understudy:(1)To measure characteristics that is representatives of core dimensions of the five basic managerial competencies namely Communication Competency, Planning and Administration Competency, Teamwork Competency, Multicultural Competency and Self-Management Competency.(2)To analyze the Association     between Communication Competency, Planning and Administration Competency, Teamwork Competency,  Multicultural Competency and

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Self-Management Competency.

## 3.Research Methodology

The data were collected by self-administered questionnaires distributed to female management students of University Colleges in the Eastern province of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The duration of each program is four academic years plus one academic year for the preparatory program. The four years spent as an undergraduate at a university college    are typically known as the freshman, sophomore, junior and senior .The questionnaire was prepared in English. A two-sided two pages self-assessment questionnaire was designed that listed a number of characteristics that are representative of the core dimensions of the five managerial competencies. The focus of this questionnaire was to determine the current level of student's attainment in these competencies. The dimensions of five managerial competencies under study are shown in      Figure .1. In total, there were thirty-nine questions that were grouped into categories based on the five management competencies. Each questionnaire included a cover letter clarifying the nature and the purpose of the study.

To ensure full understanding of the questions and to get more accurate results the questionnaire was fully explained to the students in their classes. The  respondents were required to indicate on a five-point rating scale provided for each statement  that applied best to them .Each of the  statements describes a level of attainment on a dimension of a managerial competency. Participants were invited to participate on a voluntary basis; the non-probability convenience sample was selected as direct access to students was available yielding high response rate. From 125 questionnaires distributed, 102 responses were received. The responses obtained were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) software for window for reliability and descriptive statistics and correlations. The scores of managerial Competencies for the female students were calculated as per  Hellriegel etal (2008).The average score for each competency was multiplied by 20 to obtain a total score out of 100 and a scale was given to interpret these scores which include: 20-39 means the student has little relevant experience and are quite weak in this competency, 40-59 means the student is generally weak in this competency but is performing satisfactory or better on a few characteristics, 60-74 means the student is about average in this competency and above average or better on some characteristics, 75-89 means the student is above average in this competency and outstanding on a number of characteristics, and 90-100 means the student is outstanding in this competency. The    dimension of strategic competency was not found feasible so was not included in the study.

## 4. Results and Discussion

A pilot study was conducted to determine the usability of the instrument. The findings demonstrate the reliability and validity of the instrument. The reliability information is depicted in Figure. 2. The closer Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to1.0 the greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale. George and Mallery (2003) provide the following rules of thumb: "_ > .9 – Excellent, _ > .8 – Good, _ > .7 – Acceptable, _ > .6 – Questionable, _ > .5 – Poor, and_ < .5 – Unacceptable". All Cronbach's alpha values listed in figure .2. are greater than 0.6 .which shows the the test conducted was reliable and valid.Figure.3. summarizes descriptive analysis in terms of mean and standard deviation. The sample size was 102.The overall mean for managerial competencies  was 3.79.The mean score measurement less than 3.39 is described as low,        3.40-3.79 as moderate and 3.80 as high. Of all the competencies under study, mean of communication was highest while that of planning and administration was least. Figure. 4. Indicates the correlation between all managerial competencies under study. Here Pearson's r is close to 1.This means that there is a strong relationship between all variables. .Pearson's r is positive (+) this means there a positive correlation between variables and the   Sig (2-Tailed) value is 0.000. This means  that  there is  significant positive relationship between  communication competency and planning and administration (r = .841, P < 0.001) .There is also significant relationship between  self management and other competencies under study namely communication (r = .737, P < 0.001),  planning and administration  (r = .820, P < 0.001),      team work (r = .755, P < 0.001) and multicultural  (r = .710, P < 0.001). Thus all managerial competencies are related to each other.

 Figure.5. depicts the scores of Managerial competencies for university college female      management students. Communication Competency which includes dimensions informal communication, formal communication, and negotiation had score of 70. Planning and Administration Competency with dimensions Information gathering, analysis, and problem solving, planning and organizing projects and time management had score of 72. Teamwork Competency with dimensions designing and managing team dynamics had score of 73.3 and Multicultural Competency with dimensions cultural knowledge, openness and sensitivity had score of 64.8. All these scores fall

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between (60 to 74) category. This shows that the students are average in the competency namely communication, planning and administration, teamwork and multicultural and above average or better on some characteristics. Self-Management competency covered four dimensions: integrity and ethical conduct, personal drive and resilience, balancing work and life issue and self-awareness. The average scores in Self-Management Competency is 75.43 which fall in (75-89) category. This means that the students are above average in this competency and outstanding on a number of characteristics. Students can compare their development stages for each of the competencies under study, with the Principles of Islamic management. The most important one includes whether the ultimate goal of their life is harmoniously linked with the worldly aims,the religious value of work is integrated in the work performed, the Islamic ethical values are internalized , self criticism is exercised periodically both at individually and at all levels and Time is well invested or wasted. Thus the students benefit by having their competencies defined and clarified to foster early success in their career and implement a balanced approach between traditional values and openness to growth and development.

## 5. Conclusion

For two decades management schools have claimed they want to attract more women, but
    the numbers enrolling remain disappointing. In 2011, statistics with regard to women in management school showed a positive trend so are the Saudi women entering into management program. The management program in University College is committed to Islamic principles and work values. All Managerial Competencies under study are a crucial vantage point for undergraduate management students. All these competencies are positively correlated .The students are above average in four of the competencies which are Communication Competency, Planning and Administration, Teamwork, and Multicultural Competency. The students obtained slightly higher scores in Self-Management Competency. Besides learning about their current strength and development needs, students gain an appreciation for the importance of continual self assessment throughout their career. It is therefore recommended that universities should deliberate more effort to develop these managerial competencies in students for succeeding in today's global organization.

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**Figure.1. Dimensions of Managerial Competencies**

- **Communication-**informal communication, formal communication and negotiations
- **Teamwork-**Designing teams properly, creating a supportive team environment, and managing team dynamics appropriately**.**
- **Self-Management-**Integrity and ethical conduct; Personal drive & resilience; Balancing work and life issues; Self-awareness and development.
- **Planning and administration-**Information gathering, analysis, and problem solving; planning and organizing projects; time management; and budgeting and financial management.
- **Multicultural-**Cultural knowledge and understanding; Cultural openness and Understanding.

| Figure.2. Reliability Statistics | Communication Competency | Planning and administration competency | Team work competency | Multicultural competency | Self competency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cronbach's Alpha | .799 | .760 | .678 | .705 | .775 |

| Figure. 3. Descriptive Statistics | Communication competency | Planning and administration competency | Team work competency | Multicultural competency | Self competency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean | 3.9059 | 3.1637 | 3.5889 | 3.5461 | 3.7779 |
| Standard Deviation | .43745 | .30662 | .33826 | .39719 | .39026 |

| Figure .4. | Correlations | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Communication Competency** | **Planning and administration Competency** | **Teamwork Competency** | **Multi Cultural competency** | **Self Management Competency** |
| **Communication Competency** | 1 | .841** .000 | .520** .000 | .556** .000 | .737** .000 |
| **Planning and administration Competency** | .841** .000 | 1 | .659** .000 | .587** .000 | .820** .000 |
| **Teamwork Competency** | .520** .000 | .659** .000 | 1 | .639** .000 | .755** .000 |
| **Multicultural Competency** | .556** .000 | .587** .000 | .639** .000 | 1 | .710** .000 |
| **Self management Competency** | .737** .000 | .820** .000 | .755** .000 | .710** .000 | 1 |

**Figure .5. Scores of Managerial Competencies for students**

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