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HR Competencies: Understanding the Impact on HR and Organizational Performance in Saudi Arabia

ABSTRACT

With growing emphasis being placed on HR competencies as a means to increasing HR's effectiveness (Ramlall, 2006) in Saudi Arabia, this research study seeks to i) determine if competencies are predictive of success in the HR profession, ii) understand how competencies vary by type of position within HR (entry level, manager, director and executives), iii) determine if there is a relationship between specific competencies and particular responsibilities of HR professionals, and iv) determine the relationship among education, years of HR experience, competencies, and compensation.

Numerous areas are identified as gaps between competencies HR professionals should possess compared to current competencies necessary to function effectively as strategic business partners. As Saudi HR professionals continue to advance the HR profession and add value to their organizations, it is necessary for there to be emphasis on having the appropriate education, participate in continuing education, and critically measure the impact of their efforts.

20 Researchers in the field of strategic human resource management (HRM) and human resource
21 development (HRD) have emphasized the view that systems of human resource (HR) practices
22 may lead to higher firm performance and be sources of sustained competitive advantages
23 (Wright, Dunford, & Snell, 2001). For clarification purposes, the discussion of HR practices in
24 this paper will include both HRM and HRD.

25 HR competencies deal with the knowledge, skills, and values that successful human
26 resource (HR) professionals demonstrate in all types of positions, companies, and geographies
27 (Ulrich, Younger, Brockbank, & Ulrich, 2012). The techniques help those professionals
28 architect, coach, design, and facilitate programs for effective operations resulting in more
29 efficient and content organizations.

30 In competing in today's tumultuous global economy, there are numerous opportunities
31 and challenges facing Saudi Arabian firms. It is expected that the HR function in these firms
32 partner effectively in helping the firm to create and sustain competitive advantages. To function
33 effectively in HR, Brockbank, Ulrich, & Beatty (1999) argued that for HR to be a profession, HR
34 professionals must master the necessary competencies and that mastery of HR knowledge comes
35 from knowing the concepts, language, logic, research, and practices of HR. Furthermore,
36 mastery of abilities comes from being able to apply the knowledge to specific business settings.

37 With growing emphasis being placed on HR competencies as a means to increasing HR's
38 effectiveness, this research would seeks to i) determine if competencies are predictive of success
39 in the HR profession in Saudi Arabia, ii) understand how competencies vary by type of position
40 within HR (entry level, manager, director and executives), iii) determine if there is a relationship
41 between specific competencies and particular responsibilities of HR professionals, and iv)
42 determine the relationship among education, years of HR experience, competencies, and

43 compensation. Competence of an individual as defined by Becker, Huselid, and Ulrich (2001) is
44 the knowledge, skills, abilities, or personality characteristics that directly influence one's
45 performance.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

48 To sustain the transformation of the HR function, HR professionals must develop and
49 demonstrate a new set of competencies to fulfill their changing roles and responsibilities (Yeung,
50 Woolcock, & Sullivan, 1996). In the widely cited and used "Michigan's HR Competency
51 Research," (Brockbank, Ulrich, & James, 1997) the researchers identified five major
52 competencies expected of HR professionals: i) strategic contribution, ii) personal credibility, iii)
53 HR delivery, iv) business knowledge, and v) HR technology. Becker et al., (2001) suggested
54 adding strategic HR performance management as a sixth competency.

55 According to Becker et al., (2001) the strategic performance management strategies are
56 probably a little different and support the notion that HR managers must think differently about
57 HR. The core dimensions of this competency are: a) critical casual thinking, b) understanding
58 principles of good measurement, c) estimating causal relationships, and d) communicating HR
59 strategic performance results to senior line managers. It is argued that with a stronger
60 competency in strategic performance management, an HR professional would be better able to
61 show correlation and causal relationships between HR systems and financial outcomes, customer
62 value proposition, and even competitive advantages.

63 As Ulrich, et al., (1997) pointed out, HR must be competent with strategic contribution
64 and as Becker et al.,(2001) noted, HR must be fully competent with strategic performance
65 management. In a study conducted by Wright, McMahan, Snell, & Gerhart (2001) the authors

66 found that it is not only HR professionals who see value in HR practices, but that top line
67 executives believe that a number of HR activities are critical to the firm's competitive advantage.

68 A competency model can serve as an integrative framework for an organization's entire
69 HR system. It can help align the HR system vertically with the organization's strategic
70 objectives, or horizontally with other HR functions, to ensure harmony and consistency across
71 the many facets of HR activities that impact human performance (Rothwell & Wellins, 2004).
72 Moreover, taking talent-management expertise forward is central to the future success of the
73 entire HR profession (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2003). The authors reiterate that the HR profession
74 "can evolve into a true decision science of talent and aspire to the level of influence of
75 disciplines such as finance and marketing." To achieve such success as a profession, specific
76 resources and capabilities of a company may be used to permanently influence its goals (Zaugg
77 & Thom, 2003). In order for these potentials to be developed into competitive advantages, they
78 must be scarce, valuable, and permanent; additionally their ability to be imitated, transferred, or
79 substituted must be limited (Wenger, 1999: 53 ff.) as cited in Zaugg & Thom (2003).

80 With a shifting role of HR given the changing business demands, organizations must
81 establish new covenants with customers, manage disruptive technologies, create new forms of
82 engagements with employees and face scrutiny of investors who determine a firm's market value
83 by assessing its intangibles, not just its present or past earnings (Ulrich & Beatty, 2001). Tied to
84 the changing demands of the HR professions are the new competencies enabling HR to be
85 effective in driving firm performance and creating sustainable competitive advantages.

86 Recent studies related to HRD programs in Saudi Arabia, show that in the private sector
87 especially in small and medium size companies (SMEs) that these programs are not developed
88 structurally or functionally. However, the case is different in large government and private

89 companies (Achoui, 2009). Another recent study shows the need for better HR benchmarking.
90 Kadasah & Al Ahmari (2013) found that the practice of benchmarking in Saudi Arabian
91 organizations' is not in advance level. The sequence of the application of benchmarking is found
92 to be as follows; marketing, operations, quality, finance and human resources, respectively.

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METHODOLOGY

95 This study included HR professionals in Saudi Arabia. The authors e-mailed, mailed, and
96 posted surveys online. The study utilized a cross-sectional design collecting data at one point in
97 time versus a longitudinal research where data are collected from a sample at different points in
98 time in order to study changes or continuity in the sample's characteristics (Gall, Borg, & Gall,
99 1996). The target population was HR professionals in Saudi Arabia. HR professionals for the
100 purpose of this study include individuals who practice in the field of human resources and hold
101 full-time positions. Forty-six HR professionals responded to the survey.

102

Survey Design

104 The purpose of this study was to i) determine if competencies are predictive of success in
105 the HR profession in Saudi Arabia, ii) understand how competencies vary by type of position
106 within HR (entry level, manager, director and executives), iii) determine if there is a relationship
107 between specific competencies and particular responsibilities of HR professionals, and iv)
108 determine the relationship among education, years of HR experience, competencies, and
109 compensation. Based on theories, concepts, and frameworks discussed in the literature review,
110 the author designed a survey as the primary means of data collection for the study.

111 The instrument included multiple sections. The first section focused on information of
112 the participants' position classification (job title), industry, years employed in HR, years in
113 current position, and highest educational attainment. The second section of the survey dealt with
114 the participants identifying the competencies, skills, and attributes HR professionals should
115 possess and the competencies the participants' employers emphasize in various employment
116 practices. Compensation information will also be included in this section. The third section of
117 the survey listed 12 specific strategies and activities based on the review of literature and
118 empirical studies (Becker & Huselid, 1998; Brockbank et al., 1999; Giannantonio & Amy,
119 2002). A scale of 1 – 5 was used to indicate the level of competence needed in one's job and
120 second, the level of the employee's competence for the specific HR activity.

121 As a way to determine the construct validity of the instrument and to enhance its
122 effectiveness, a pilot study was conducted on a stratified sample of 8 HR professionals including
123 Senior Executives, HR Managers, and HR Generalists. Respondents were asked to review the
124 instrument and provide feedback on the utility of the questions, recommend additional questions,
125 eliminate questions, and determine if the questions will be able to collect the appropriate data
126 needed to fulfill the purpose of the study. Items that were consistently identified by the focus
127 group were included in the final survey.

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Survey Data Analysis

131 The main objective of this research was to determine and understand the competencies, skills
132 that human resources professionals in Saudi Arabia possess, and its relations with the
133 management behaviors. Also the study aims to understand the importance of these competencies,

134 and the availability of these competencies for the human resources professionals. Also the survey
135 is intended to achieve many other objectives such: to predict the availability of these
136 competencies in predicting and how they participate in predicting the level of success of human
137 resources professionals, determining if there is a significant relationship among specific
138 competency and particular responsibilities, in addition to examine if there is a relation between
139 the variables (education, and experience) with the competencies and compensation. To achieve
140 these aims and objectives , secondary data has been collected by a designed questionnaire. SPSS
141 has been used for data entering, and to analyze the data results.

142 In order to analyze the data , descriptive statistics techniques have been used such as frequencies,
143 percentages, averages, correlations, and inductive statistical method such as analysis of variances
144 (ANOVA) and Students' T-test statistics. In addition to that Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is used
145 to measure the questionnaire internal consistency.

146 Based on the above data analysis will proceed as the following scenario:

- 147 1. testing the questionnaire method reliability and validity .
- 148 2. describing the sample of the study according to the variables:(position, industry, years of
149 experiences in HR, years of experience in the current job, and education).
- 150 3. determining the competencies, skills and characteristics available to HR professionals .
- 151 4. analysis of the sample attitudes about the importance of the availability of competencies,
152 and personal skills for the HR professionals to implement and practice main strategies,
153 activities that related to their jobs.
- 154 5. estimating the percentages of time the HR professional spent on doing his job tasks.

155 6. sample responses concerning the importance and level of competencies, skills required
 156 for HR professionals to work as strategic partner to executive management in the
 157 corporate.

158 In the following we will proceed forward in data analysis:

159 First : Questionnaire method reliability and validity

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164 Table No.1, shows reliability analysis

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.930	24

165

166 From the above table we noticed that the value of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is reaching
 167 (0.93) which is exceeding the (0.70) , the recommended value of the method reliability and
 168 validity . therefore, we believe that the questionnaire method has a high validity, that
 169 guarantee the outcomes of the study.

170

171 Second : analysis of the sample demographic characteristics

172 Sample demographic characteristics include : (position, industry , years of experience in HR,
 173 years of working in the current job, and education level.

174 Table No.2, sample distributed according to position.

position					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	employee	32	69.6	69.6	69.6
	manager	14	30.4	30.4	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

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176 From the above, we observed that 69.6% of the participants are employees, whereas 30.4%
 177 are managers. Therefore, the employees have the highest percent of participation in our
 178 current study.

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184 Fig No.1 sample distributed according to position .

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186 Table No.3, sample distributed according to industry

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industry sector					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
industry	Academic	8	17.4	17.4	17.4
	Transformation	7	15.2	15.2	32.6
	Commercial	11	23.9	23.9	56.5
	Health care	8	17.4	17.4	73.9
	Construction	12	26.1	26.1	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

188 From the above statistics, we noticed that 17.4% of the respondents working in academic
 189 establishment, whereas 15.2% in transformation industry, while 23.9% in the commercial sector,
 190 where 17.4% in medical services field, while 26.1% working in construction firms.

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194 Table No.4, sample distributed according to number of working years in Human resources.

working years in HR					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent

less than 2 years	9	19.6	19.6	19.6
2- to 5 years	13	28.3	28.3	47.8
6- to 10 years	18	39.1	39.1	87.0
more than 10 years	6	13.0	13.0	100.0
Total	46	100.0	100.0	

195

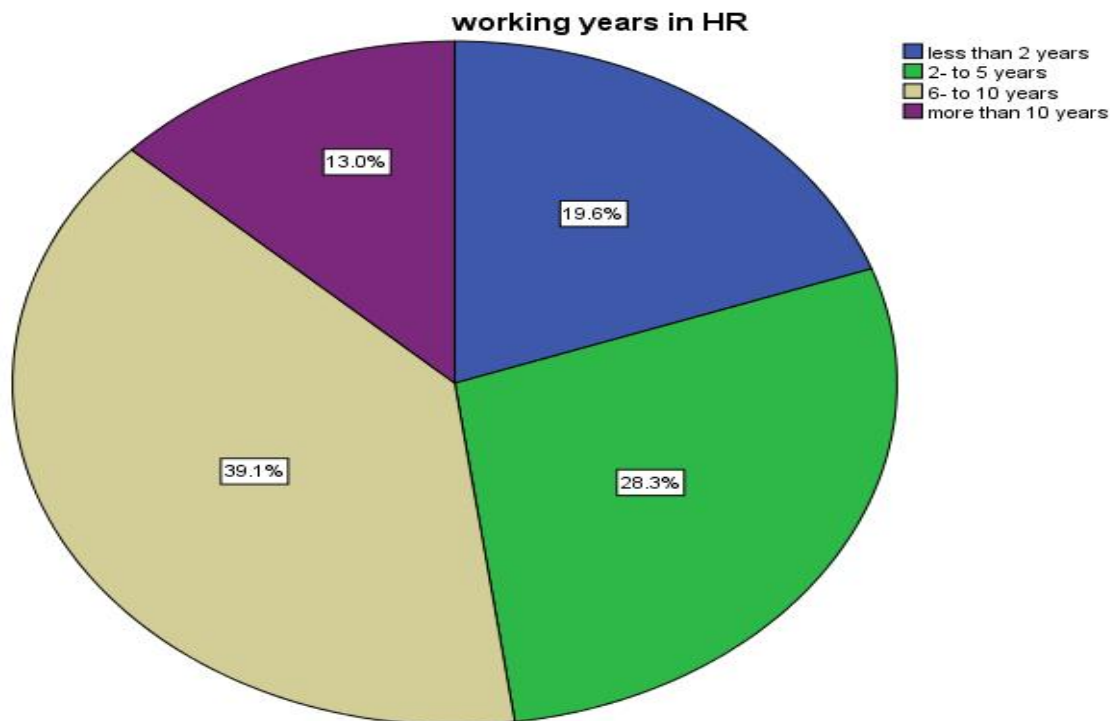
196 From the above table , we noticed that 19.6% of the participants working in HR for less than 2

197 years, whereas 28.3% their working years between 2- to 5 years, while 39.1% working between

198 6-10 years, where 13.0% their working years in HR is more than 10 years.

199 Therefore, there are 52.1% their years of working in HR more than 5 years, what would an effect

200 on the evaluation of human resources professionals needed competencies and skills.



201

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203 Fig. No.3 sample distributed according to working years in HR

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210 Table No.5, sample distributed according to number of working years in the current job .

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years of working in current job					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	less than one year	8	17.4	17.4	17.4
	from 1- to 4 years	20	43.5	43.5	60.9
	from 5- to 10 years	14	30.4	30.4	91.3
	more than 10 years	4	8.7	8.7	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

212 From the above table, it is clearly seen that 17.4% work less than 1 year in the current job in HR,

213 whereas 43.5% working years between 1-4 years, while 30.4% work from 5- to 10 years, where

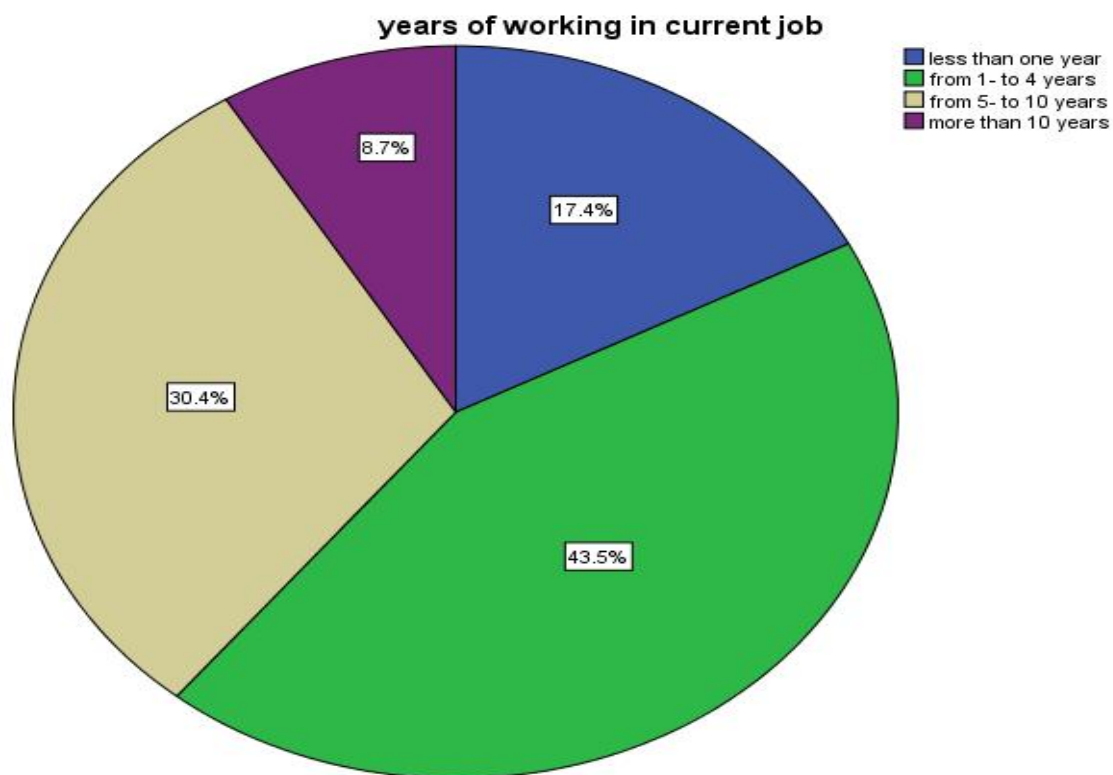
214 8.7% work for more than 10 years.

215 Thus, it obvious that the majority of participants work in the current job from 1-4 years, and they
216 represented 43.5% of the total.

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222 Fig. No.4, sample distributed according to working years in the current job.

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233 Table No.6, sample distributed according to education level .

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education					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Bachelor	32	69.6	69.6	69.6
	Master	4	8.7	8.7	78.3
	diploma	4	8.7	8.7	87.0
	secondary	2	4.3	4.3	91.3
	high diploma	2	4.3	4.3	95.7
	Phd	2	4.3	4.3	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

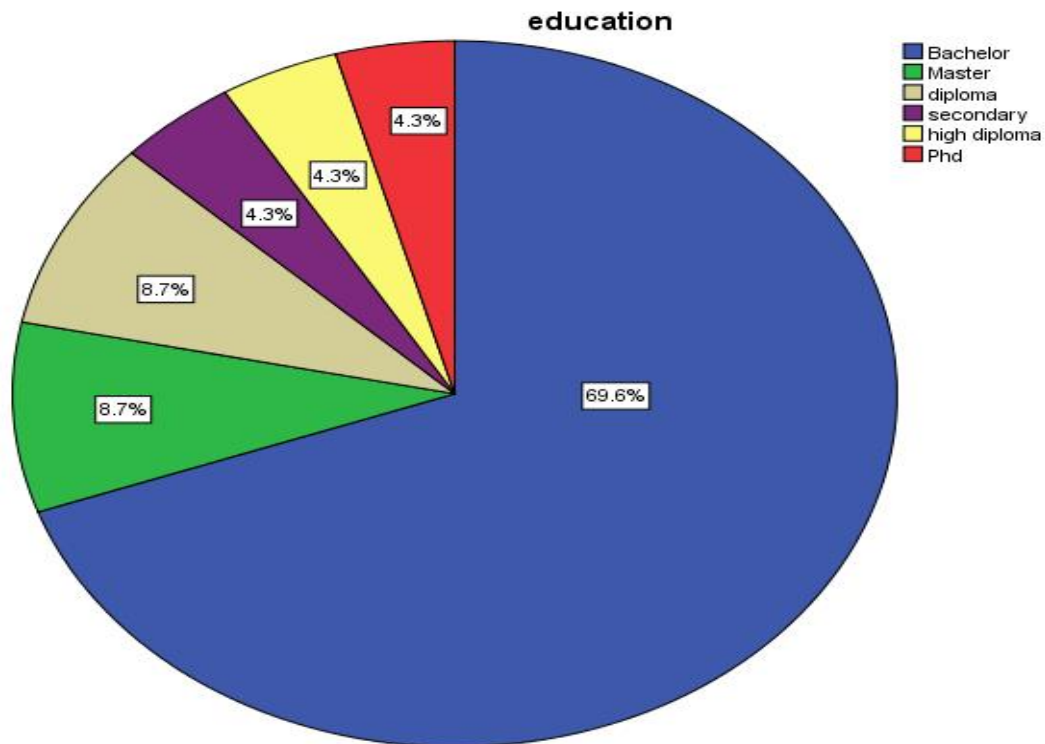
235

236 From the above statistics, it is obvious that the majority of the participants education level is

237 bachelor degree, whereas 8.7% hold master degree, while 8.7% diploma, where 4.3% for

238 secondary , high diploma and Phd. Successively.

239



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242 Fig. No.5, sample distributed according to education level.

243

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245 3. determining the competencies, skills and characteristics available to HR professionals.

246 Table No.7, shows the most important competencies, skills, and characteristics that HR

247 professionals possessed to work as strategic partner to executive management in the their

248 companies.

Competencies, skills	Frequencies	Percent %
Leadership	6	13.0
Communication skills	2	4.3
Strategic planning	7	15.2

Interpersonal skills	25	54.3
Working experience	6	13.0
Total	46	100.0

249

250 From table No.7, it is obviously seen that one of the most important competency that HR
 251 professional possess in order to work as professional in HR, is the interpersonal skills with
 252 54.3%, followed by strategic planning with 15.2% , while working experience and leadership
 253 have comes in the same rating with 13.0% each, whereas only 4.3% for communication skills.

254

255 Table No.8, shows correlation relationship between competencies & skills of HR professional
 256 and salary .

	Correlation coefficient	P-value
	-0.385**	0.01

257 ** correlation is significant at the (0.01) level.

258 From the above table, it is obviously seen that the value of Person's correlation coefficient is
 259 reaching (-0.385) with negative sign and statistically significant at (0.01), which indicated that
 260 there is a significant inverse relationship between competencies, skills and the salary. That
 261 means, the salary has negative effects on HR professionals to possess the needed competencies .

262

263

264

265 Table No.9, shows the most important competencies, skills, and characteristics that company
 266 take into consideration when selecting, rewarding, and promoting HR professionals to work as
 267 strategic partner to executive management in the corporate.

	Frequencies	Percent %
Knowledge competencies	18	39.1
Management relationship	6	13.0
Organizational competencies	15	32.6
Evaluation competencies	7	15.3
Total	46	100.0

268
 269 From table No.9, it is obviously seen that the most important competency that the company take
 270 into consideration when selecting, recruiting a human resources professionals is the
 271 knowledge competency with the percent 39.1%, followed by organizational competency
 272 with 32.6% , while evaluation competencies come in the third rating with 15.3%, then
 273 management relationship with 13.0%.

274 Hence, we conclude that the most important competencies for companies when selecting,
 275 recruiting HR, are the knowledge competencies and organizational competencies.

276
 277 Table No. 10, participants attitudes in concern with the extent of importance of the
 278 competencies to enable HR professionals to be effective in practicing the following strategies,
 279 activities that drive the firm performance .

Strategies & activities	High	Extremely moderate	Moderate	Less moderate	Low	average

				e		
understanding the business	16(34.8)	12(26.1)	12(26.1)	5(10.9)	1(2.2)	3.80
deliver human resources practices	12(26.1)	8(17.4)	20(43.5)	4(8.7)	2(4.3)	3.52
manage changes effectively	16(34.8)	11(23.9)	13(28.3)	4(8.7)	2(4.3)	3.76
manage cultures effectively	10(21.7)	8(17.4)	19(41.3)	7(15.2)	2(4.3)	3.37
participates in strategic planning	16(34.8)	8(17.4)	10(21.7)	10(21.7)	2(4.3)	3.57
possesses adequate technical competencies in HR	20(43.5)	9(19.6)	14(30.4)	2(4.3)	1(2.2)	3.98
possesses adequate competencies in OD	6(13.0)	6(13.0)	10(21.7)	3(6.5)	0(0.0)	3.60
understand and uses management accounting concepts and practices	14(30.4)	10(21.7)	12(26.1)	8(17.4)	2(4.3)	3.57
understands and uses marketing strategies	8(17.4)	7(15.2)	13(28.3)	11(23.9)	7(15.2)	2.96
measures HR practices to determine effectiveness	10(21.7)	12(26.1)	14(30.4)	7(15.2)	3(6.5)	3.41
stays abreast with applicable research findings	7(15.2)	6(13.0)	13(28.3)	14(30.4)	6(13.0)	2.87
reads academic and	7(15.2)	8(17.4)	10(21.7)	10(21.7)	11(23.9)	2.78

practitioner journals on a regular basis						
Total						3.43

280

281 The statistics in the above table shows the participants responses concerning the importance of
 282 the of competencies and skills that HR professionals should possess to practice the strategies,
 283 activities to work as strategic partners with the senior managers in company, the statistics have
 284 shown that the competencies, skills are extremely moderate important for HR professionals in
 285 Saudi Arabia firms to implement the following strategies and activities:

286 ▪ possesses adequate technical competencies in HR.

287 ▪ understanding the business.

288 ▪ manage changes effectively.

289 ▪ participates in strategic planning.

290 The previous responses are supported by the average means values comes as follows : (3.98,
 291 3.80, 3.76, 3.60, and 3.57).

292 Moreover the competencies and skills are moderately important to HR professionals to
 293 implement the following strategies and activities:

294 ▪ understands and uses marketing strategies

295 ▪ stays abreast with applicable research findings

296 ▪ reads academic and practitioner journals on a regular basis

297 the responses to the above items of strategies and activities are supported by the average means
 298 values (2.96, 2.87, and 2.78) .

299 Thus, we conclude that HR professionals or the management in Saudi firms don't take careful
 300 attention to the competencies, skills HR professionals must possess to help in implementing the
 301 strategies and activities that make the firms succeed.

302 table No.11, sample attitudes in concern of the extent of availability of competencies, skills for
 303 HR professionals to implement the strategies, activities that considered as standard to HR
 304 professionalism .

Strategies & activities	High	Extremely moderate	moderate	Less moderate	Low	average
understanding the business	10(21.7)	14(30.4)	14(30.4)	4(8.7)	4(8.7)	3.48
deliver human resources practices	7(15.2)	14(30.4)	14(30.4)	6(13.0)	5(10.9)	3.26
manage changes effectively	9(19.6)	16(34.8)	15(32.6)	1(2.2)	5(10.9)	3.50
manage cultures effectively	9(19.6)	8(17.4)	14(30.4)	8(17.4)	7(15.2)	3.09
participates in strategic planning	8(17.4)	11(23.9)	11(23.9)	10(21.7)	6(13.0)	3.11
possesses adequate technical competencies in HR	9(19.6)	13(28.3)	14(30.4)	7(15.2)	3(6.5)	3.39
possesses adequate competencies in OD	2(4.3)	7(15.2)	10(21.7)	5(10.9)	0(0.0)	3.25
understand and uses management accounting concepts and practices	9(19.6)	9(19.6)	13(28.3)	10(21.7)	5(10.9)	3.15
understands and uses	4(8.7)	7(15.2)	14(30.4)	14(30.4)	7(15.2)	2.72

marketing strategies						
measures HR practices to determine effectiveness	2(4.3)	11(23.9)	16(34.8)	10(21.7)	7(15.2)	2.80
stays abreast with applicable research findings	1(2.2)	8(17.4)	12(26.1)	11(23.9)	14(30.4)	2.37
reads academic and practitioner journals on a regular basis	6(13.0)	6(13.0)	6(13.0)	9(19.6)	19(41.3)	2.37
Total						3.04

305

306 The statistics in table No.11, displays the participants responses concerning extent of availability
307 of competencies, skills and personal experiences for HR professionals to implement the
308 strategies, activities that considered as standard to HR professionalism. The statistics have shown
309 that the only competencies, skills that are extremely moderate available for HR professionals in
310 Saudi Arabia firms related to the following strategies and activities: manage changes effectively,
311 and understanding the business.

312 While the competencies, skills to implement the following strategies and activities are
313 moderately available as the means value ranged between (3.39 –to 2.72) :

- 314 ▪ possesses adequate technical competencies in HR
- 315 ▪ deliver human resources practices
- 316 ▪ possesses adequate competencies in OD
- 317 ▪ understand and uses management accounting concepts and practices
- 318 ▪ participates in strategic planning

- 319 ▪ manage cultures effectively
- 320 ▪ measures HR practices to determine effectiveness
- 321 ▪ understands and uses marketing strategies
- 322 ▪ also from table No.11, we noticed that the competencies including : stays abreast with
- 323 applicable research findings, and reads academic and practitioner journals on a regular basis,
- 324 are less moderately available to HR professional working in Saudi firms.
- 325
- 326
- 327 Table No.12, explain the estimated time in percentages the HR professional stays in thinking
- 328 about and practicing the following tasks :

Tasks	Average mean	Standard deviation	Std. Error
change agent	7.85	5.9	1.6
administrative tasks	34.1	18.6	2.8
staffing	19.0	15.7	2.6
compensation	11.4	10.5	2.2
assessing organizational needs	8.7	7.1	1.4
design HR strategies and initiatives	9.2	6.9	1.3
implementing HR strategies and initiatives	11.3	7.4	1.3
serving as an internal consultant	8.8	9.9	2.7
intervene with legal issues	12.1	11.6	3.0
partnership with senior executives on strategy formulation	10.7	6.5	1.5

engaged with labor relation issues	16.6	13.1	2.6
other tasks	17.9	9.7	2.5

329 The above statistics showed the average estimated time the human resources professional stays
 330 in practicing the above tasks, and it is obviously seen that the most important tasks the human
 331 resources professional spent time to practice include : administrative tasks, staffing , other task,
 332 and engagement with labor relation issues.

333 Table No.13 Examining relationship between competencies and number of years working
 334 experience in Human resources management

335

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.569 ^a	12	.654
Likelihood Ratio	12.374	12	.416
Linear-by-Linear Association	.004	1	.948
N of Valid Cases	46		

336 From the above table we noticed that as the value of Person Chi-Square is equal to (9.57)
 337 approximately and statistically not significant at (0.654), this indicated that there is no significant
 338 correlation relationship between the competencies , skills that assumed to be possessed by human
 339 resources professionals and their working experiences. This also mean that the working
 340 experience has no effect on the possess of HR professional to the required competencies help
 341 them to carry their tasks, and responsibilities.

342 Also we examine if there are significant differences between competencies related to working
 343 years experiences as shown in ANOVA table No.14 below:

344 Table No.14, analysis of variances results

ANOVA					
competencies required for HR professional					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	52.300	15	3.487	.486	.913
Within Groups	107.700	15	7.180		
Total	160.000	30			

345 From the above table , it is clearly seen when conducting analysis of variances techniques to
 346 detect if there are significant variation between HR professionals possessing of competencies
 347 attributed to differences of working experiences, it obvious that there is no significant variations
 348 as the F value is equal to (0.486) and statistically not significant .

349

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353 Table No.15 Examining relationship between competencies and education level .

354 To test for this relation between competencies and education level, Chi-Square technique has
 355 been performed as shown in the below table :

356

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	31.555 ^a	20	.048
Likelihood Ratio	25.754	20	.174
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.537	1	.060
N of Valid Cases	46		

357

358 From the statistics, we noticed that the value of Person Chi-Square is equal to (32.56) with
 359 significant level less than (0.05) , therefore, we conclude that there is a significant relationship
 360 between the education level and competencies availability to HR professionals. This means that
 361 as the human resources professionals acquired high level of education they are supposed to have
 362 sufficient competencies help to manage to human resources in the company and participate
 363 actively in the all activities.

364

365 Table No.16, testing the relationship between scores on competencies and the abilities of HR
 366 professionals to implement the strategies and activities related to their jobs.

Correlations			
		average scores of strategies and activities	Total scores of human resources possessing of competencies
average scores of strategies and activities	Pearson Correlation	1	-.543- ^{**}

	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	46	32
Total scores of human resources possessing of competencies	Pearson Correlation	-.543 ^{**}	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	32	32
** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

367

368 From the above table, it is obviously seen that the Person Correlation coefficient is equal to
369 (0.543-) at significant level less than (0.01) , this indicated that there is a negative relationship
370 between statistically significant at the (0.01) level . This may be interpreted as that low
371 possessing of the required competencies has a negative effect on HR professionals to carry on
372 their assigned tasks and responsibilities.

373 Thus we conclude that HR professionals in Saudi organization don't possess the required
374 competencies that support them to implement the strategies and activities, and thus they are
375 unable to work as strategic partners in the companies they work for .

376

377 **Final findings :**

378 Based on data analysis of the study, we concluded with the following findings:

- 379 1. The study revealed that the most important competency that HR professionals possessed is
380 the interpersonal skills with 54.3% percent.
- 381 2. The study detected that there is a statistically significant and inverse correlation relationship
382 between competencies, and salaries obtained by HR in their organizations at (0.01) significant

383 level. That means, the salaries affect negatively on HR professionals to possess the needed
384 competencies.

385 3. The study showed that the most important competencies participants employers' emphasize
386 and take into consideration in various employment practice (selection, recruitment,
387 promotion) are knowledgement and organizational competencies, with 39.1%, and 32.6%
388 successively .

389

390 4. In response to the importance of competencies that HR professionals should possess to
391 practice the specific strategies, activities and work as strategic partners with the senior
392 executives in the firm, the study showed that competencies, are extremely moderate important
393 for HR professionals in Saudi Arabia firms to implement the following strategies and
394 activities:

- 395 ▪ possesses adequate technical competencies in HR.
- 396 ▪ understanding the business.
- 397 ▪ manage changes effectively.
- 398 ▪ participates in strategic planning.

399

400 5. The study revealed that the competencies including: stays abreast with applicable research
401 findings, and reads academic and practitioner journals on a regular basis, are less moderately
402 available to HR professional working in Saudi firms. Where for implementation of other
403 strategies are extremely moderate and moderate.

404

405 6. The study clarified that, most important tasks the human resources professional spent time
406 to practice include: administrative tasks, staffing , other task, and engagement with labor
407 relation issues.

408
409 7. The study didn't detect any significant correlation relationship between the competencies,
410 skills that assumed to be possessed by human resources professionals and their working
411 experiences. This also means that the working experience has no effect on possessing of HR
412 professional to the required competencies help them to carry their tasks, and responsibilities.

413
414 8. The results proved that there is a significant relationship between the education level and
415 competencies availability to HR professionals. This means that as the human resources
416 professionals acquired higher level of education they are supposed to have sufficient
417 competencies help to manage to human resources in the company and participate actively in
418 the all activities.

419
420
421 9. When testing to find if there is a significant relationship between Total scores of human
422 resources possessing of competencies, and the level of availability of competencies to
423 implement strategies and activities that assumed as standard to HR professionalism, the study
424 showed that there is an inverse correlation relationship .

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Discussions and Conclusion

It is suggested that high performing HR professionals think and act from outside/in which means that HR must turn outside business trends and stakeholder expectations into internal actions. Effective HR professionals are reportedly credible activists which involve doing what they promise, building personal trust relationships and being relied on (Ulrich et al., 2012). As Saudi Arabia continues to focus on strategic HR and building organizational capabilities through people, the HR function becomes an even more critical player.

Although the **strategic** human resource management literature has emphasized the value of the integration of human resource management into **strategic** management, the mechanism through which the **strategic** integration of **HR** functions contributes to the improvement of firm performance is relatively unknown (Kim & Sung-Choon, 2013). This paper helps to provide some understanding of HR in Saudi Arabia and critically, areas in which HR professionals should be focusing on to become strategic business partners.

Strategic participation is important for HR professionals who wish to have increased influence in their organizations (Uen, Ahlstrom, Chen, & Tseng, 2012). In future studies, we intend to examine how different HR practices in Saudi organizations impact firm performance and to also examine the demographics of HR professionals and the relationships to their performance.

With the results, it is the hope that HR practitioners will be able to utilize the information to enhance practices in organizations to enhance firm competitiveness and researchers will be able to build on this knowledge base to create additional new knowledge on HR competencies and the impact on firm performance.

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HR COMPETENCIES SURVEY

509

510 Dear HR professional,

511 This survey is intended to collect data on HR competencies and to help with the understanding of

512 how specific competencies relate to career growth, compensation, and individual and firm

513 performance among other factors.

514

515 The information provided is strictly confidential and at no time will your name or your

516 organization's identity be identified. The results of this study shall be made available to you

517 upon completion.

518

519 Thank you for your participation.

520

521 KAU research team

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524

HR COMPETENCIES SURVEY

525

526 Personal Information:

527

528

529

1. Please identify which category best describes your current position:

530

531 2. Please identify which industry classification best describes organization:

532

533 3. How many years have you worked in HR?

534

535

536 4. How many years have you been working in your current position?

537

538

539 5. What is the highest educational attainment?

540

541

542 6. In your opinion, what competencies, skills, traits, and attributes **should** HRM

543 professionals possess to effectively serve as strategic business partners? *(Please list as*

544 *many as necessary)*

545 a.

546 b.

547 c.

548 d.

549

550

551 7. What competencies does your company emphasize in selecting, rewarding, and

552 promoting HR employees?

553 a.

554 b.

555 c.

556 d.

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558

559 8. Please list your annual salary. \$ -----

560 *(This is to determine the relationship, if any, between particular competencies and*
 561 *compensation)*

562

563 9. Please list the level of importance you place on the following items and your level of
 564 expertise for the respective question:

Item	Importance 1 – Low; 5 High	Personal Expertise 1 – Low; 5 High
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565

1. Understands the business							
2. Delivers HR practices							
3. Manages changes							

effectively						
4. Manages culture effectively						
5. Participates in strategic planning						
6. Possesses adequate technical competence in HR						
7. Possesses adequate competence in OD						
8. Understands and uses management accounting concepts and practices						
9. Understands and uses marketing strategies						
10. Measures HR practices to determine						

effectiveness						
11. Stays abreast with applicable research findings						
12. Reads academic and practitioner journals on a regular basis						

566

567

568 13. On a weekly basis, please list the percentage of your time spent on the following tasks.

569 *(The total should be 100%)*

570

571

572 • Change agent

573 • Administrative tasks

574 • Staffing

575 • Compensation

576 • Assessing organizational needs

577 • Designing HR strategies and initiatives

578 • Implementing HR strategies and initiatives

579 • Serving as an internal consultant

580 • Intervene with legal issues

581 • Partnering with senior executives on strategy formulation

582 • Engaged with labor relations issues

583 • Other tasks (please identify)

584

585 We sincerely thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey.

586