

# Designing a Model of Key Human Resource Competencies in the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company

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## Abstract

The Kermanshah Power Distribution Company is a human-centered organization. Therefore, the competencies of its employees must be enhanced to enable them to achieve optimal performance. In this context, the present study aims to propose a model of key human resource competencies in the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company. This research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing the grounded theory method to identify the factors of the model within the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company. Finally, recommendations and necessary suggestions for improving key human resource competencies in the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company were provided. Based on the findings of the grounded theory, 24 subcategories were identified, which were categorized into six main categories: (1) causal conditions for evaluating key human resource competencies, (2) attention to key human resource competencies, (3) intervening conditions for evaluating key human resource competencies, (4) contextual conditions for evaluating key human resource competencies, (5) strategies for evaluating key human resource competencies, and (6) outcomes of evaluating key human resource competencies. The findings suggest that in the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company, intervening conditions influence causal conditions, and causal conditions affect attention to competencies. On the other hand, intervening conditions directly impact strategies.

**Keywords:** *key competencies, human resources, Kermanshah Power Distribution Company, grounded theory.*

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## 1. Introduction

Today, organizations face intense global competition in an uncertain environment; therefore, they are compelled to maintain an adaptive and innovative vision in line with changes to stay competitive [1]. Researchers have found that in an uncertain environment, having human resource flexibility creates long-term value for organizations through the establishment of a sustainable competitive advantage [2]. Consequently, long-term competitive advantage impacts organizational performance, leading to increased profitability. It has also been emphasized that human resource skills and competencies are effective in delivering services that meet customer needs, and are difficult to imitate or replicate. Therefore, having dynamic human resources leads to achieving sustainable competitive advantage [3, 4].

In the 21st century, the assessment of human resource competencies can employ many innovative ideas that organizations have yet to explore (Ahmed, 2019). Moreover, human resource assessment is an inherent approach for improving services provided to customers in the human resources sector, enhancing efficiency, achieving cost-effective human resources, and aiding human resources in becoming strategic partners [5]. In summary, while the evaluation of human resource competencies has not been extensively researched, it holds great potential and scope for researchers and organizations to appropriately investigate [6, 7].

In today's competitive environment, human resources are one of the main assets of any organization, and their contribution to success is undeniable [8]. Therefore, equipping this unique asset with information, knowledge, and skills is essential to maximizing job performance [9]. Undoubtedly, the training and development system, as one of the main methods of competency development, plays a strategic role in this regard [10].

Competency is a standard commonly used to evaluate human resources in various organizations, allowing for the assessment and development of employees' capabilities that are crucial for the organization [11]. Therefore, it can be said that the development of competencies and their functions can help organizations cope with environmental changes [12].

The appropriate method for evaluating employee competencies is very important. Competency is based on individual competencies or levels of competency and accumulated professional experience. This means that employees must be equipped with specific functional

abilities, i.e., professional competencies to perform their jobs effectively. Hence, in addition to focusing on personnel or human resources and current individual competency requirements, predicting the competencies that determine future success is also crucial [13].

Service organizations, in addition to global transformations and trends, inevitably face some domestic challenges. These challenges include hierarchical organizational structures, slow workflow, low productivity, underperformance, unrealistic evaluations of human resources, and sometimes dissatisfaction among employees and clients, as well as global trends in utilizing information and communication technologies, particularly web and internet technologies, in administrative activities and reaping the benefits thereof [14].

The lack of a shared vision in non-governmental and governmental organizations, and in some cases, the absence of long-term perspectives and targeted programs due to the lack of managerial awareness, which stems from limited experience in this area in Iran and the longer tenure of managers in the public sector, highlights the importance of focusing on human resource management. Additionally, the need for human resource management and attention to personnel evaluations and intra- and extra-organizational activities can be fruitful for integrated human resource management to elevate organizational goals. Human resource assessment is one of the critical areas, but unfortunately, this type of technology has not been effectively and efficiently utilized in Iran's administrative system and human resource management to improve performance [14]. Unfortunately, in Iran, the administrative system and human resource management have not effectively and efficiently used key employee competency evaluations to improve organizational performance [15].

A significant issue faced by administrative organizations in Iran, particularly public organizations such as the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company, is the use of some traditional human resource management methods without evaluating the challenges they face and the extent of their impact on employee roles and their promotion. Therefore, this study seeks to provide a model for key human resource competencies in the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company, addressing the question: What would the model of key human resource competencies in the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company look like?

## 2. Methodology

This study employed "grounded theory." As such, this research is qualitative and, in terms of purpose, fundamental. This stage helps the researcher understand the phenomenon of "key human resource competencies," explain the relationships between phenomena, and contribute to the body of knowledge on key human resource competencies in the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company. Since no theoretical research has previously addressed the dimensions of key human resource competencies in the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company, this study used grounded theory to formulate and explain this process. There are three approaches to using grounded theory: systematic, emergent, and adaptive. This study used the systematic approach.

After designing the interview protocol and validating it, the research data was collected through interviews with managers and experts working in human resources at the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company. All stages of open coding, selective or focused coding, and theoretical coding, as well as the theoretical model, were derived from the interview texts and the theoretical literature. For conducting in-depth interviews, considering the nature of the research, expert opinions were sought from the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company and other human resource management experts. Additionally, opinions from professors and specialists in the field of human resource management at the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company were used to validate the extracted model. Data collection involved interviews with nine senior managers, middle managers, and human resource experts, or managers and experts from other related departments with at least a bachelor's degree and five years of relevant work experience in the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company, who were well-acquainted with human resource concepts.

Based on the data obtained from the interviews and observations, the first stage of grounded theory, open coding, was conducted.

In this regard, the researcher reviewed the written interview texts, considering the research objectives and questions. In grounded theory, coding can be done in various ways, such as sentence-by-sentence review or word-by-word review or proposition-by-proposition review. Since the researcher had already arrived at codes during the interview, proposition-by-proposition coding was used. These codes represent the concept in the researcher's mind. These codes typically refer to a common subject. During the interview text coding, the researcher used natural or live codes, which were the exact sentences of the interviewees, or sometimes

relied on their own interpretation of the sentences, which is called conceptual coding. Then, based on previous research, a suitable code was assigned to it.

While open coding breaks down the data into various categories, axial coding links the categories and their subcategories based on their characteristics and dimensions. To discover how the categories relate to each other, the researcher uses a paradigm. A paradigm is an analytical tool suggested by Strauss and Corbin for studying data. Strauss and Corbin presented the paradigmatic model to link subcategories in grounded theory through a set of relationships indicating causal conditions, phenomena, context, intervening conditions, action/reaction strategies, and outcomes.

- Causal conditions: Events and occurrences that affect the phenomenon.
- Phenomenon: The main idea, event, or occurrence governed or related to a set of actions/reactions.
- Intervening conditions: Broad and general conditions that facilitate or reduce the strategies of action/reaction.
- Contextual conditions: Specific conditions that affect strategies.
- Action/reaction strategies: Purposeful and directed actions that solve the issue and respond to it.
- Outcomes: Outputs that result from actions/reactions or responses to the phenomenon.

This model enables the researcher to think directly about the data and link them in different ways. Alongside open and axial coding, a pattern was developed indicating the relationships between categories and subcategories. Once these relationships were developed, selective coding was used to facilitate the integration of the categories and subcategories identified in open and axial coding into an emerging theory.

In terms of the validity of the data collection tools (interviews), this study utilized methods such as triangulation, member checks, avoidance of biases, and peer review to ensure validity.

Merriam (2009) proposed three techniques to ensure the reliability of the research findings [16], which were also used in this study:

1. Researcher's position: There are several areas that the researcher must clarify before describing the theory and assumptions. These include the researcher's position regarding the group being studied, the rationale for selecting informants, and the social context in which the data are collected.

2. Triangulation: Triangulation, through the use of multiple data collection and analysis methods, enhances reliability (as well as validity).
3. Peer audit: For the use of an auditor, the researcher should clarify how the data were collected, how the categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the research.

The research team conducted preliminary observations at the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company to understand the case and identify experts. Subsequently, sampling was carried out for the interviews, and ultimately, nine interviews were conducted at the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company.

Based on the research findings, six dimensions (main categories) of the key human resource competency model in the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company were identified as follows:

### 3. Findings

**Table 1.** The Results of Qualitative Analysis

Main Category	Subcategories	Concepts
Causal Conditions for Identifying Key Human Resource Competencies	Need to Retain Specialized Human Resources	Exit of specialized personnel, Exit of experienced personnel
	Need to Provide Outputs with Assurance by the Organization	Providing high-quality services, Reduction in workforce through system efficiency
	Shortage of Specialized Labor in the Job Market	Lack of skilled graduates, Lack of alignment between education and workforce needs
	Reducing Dependency on the Environment	Retaining specialists to meet the country's needs, Preventing the official transfer of personnel to other organizations
Intervening Conditions for Evaluating Key Human Resource Competencies	Labor Market Competitiveness	Reduction in workforce exit, Increase in workforce satisfaction and motivation
	Organizational Laws and Procedures	Organizational regulations, Existence of established and transparent internal procedures, The role of senior management
	Senior Management Support	Employment of specialists in competency identification, Support for holding conferences and workshops, Aligning services
Contextual Conditions for Evaluating Key Human Resource Competencies	Employee Readiness and Capabilities	Acceptance of continuous employee development, Adaptability to change, Continuous education and improvement, Accumulated experience, Internal employee evaluations, Effective evaluation of human resources
	Laws and Regulations of the Country	Strategies and goals of high-level organizations, Reinforcement of internal HR procedures, Government laws, and regulations
	Public Culture	The public's attitude towards the Power Distribution Company, Public awareness, Public trust in scientific fields
The Phenomenon of Attention to Identifying Key Human Resource Competencies	Global Scientific Status	Global accessibility of human resources, Attention from the global scientific community
	Attention to Individual Competencies	Educational competencies, Technical skills, Ethical competencies, Work ethic
Strategies for Evaluating Key Human Resource Competencies	Attention to Organizational Competencies	Organizational culture
	Support for Research Projects in HR Domain	Financial support for research projects, Specialized workshops, Expert opinions, Utilizing HR information systems
	Improvement of Technical Key Competencies	Problem-solving, Analytical thinking, Economic and technical awareness, Crisis management, Time management, Decision-making
	Improvement of Individual Key Competencies	Attraction and retention of personnel, Communication skills, Self-confidence, Ethics, Creativity, Talent, Trust, Innovation
	Improvement of Organizational Key Competencies	Organizational culture, Healthy work environment, Manager-employee relationships, Cross-unit collaboration, Leadership
Outcomes of Evaluating Key Human Resource Competencies	Improvement of Human Resource Systems	Implementation of HR guidelines, Developing HR systems
	Efficiency and Utilization of Human Resources	Specialized personnel, Trusted personnel, Motivated personnel, Loyal and committed personnel, Data-driven and ethical workforce
	Trust and Participation	Increased collaboration, Enhanced trust, Job satisfaction, Strengthened trust

Improved Quality of Electric Power Distribution Services	Improved service delivery, Customer satisfaction and loyalty
Enhanced Human Resource Values	Increased professional and ethical values, Sustainable collaboration, Reduced conflicts, Strengthened culture, Future changes

The category of causal conditions for identifying key human resource competencies consists of five subcategories and ten characteristics. The category of intervening conditions for evaluating key human resource competencies consists of three subcategories and fourteen characteristics. The category of contextual conditions for evaluating key human resource competencies consists of three subcategories and nine characteristics. Figure 3 illustrates the inductive process of forming the category of "contextual conditions for evaluating key human resource competencies." The category of the phenomenon of attention

to identifying key human resource competencies in the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company consists of three subcategories and seven characteristics. The category of strategies for evaluating key human resource competencies consists of six subcategories and forty-one characteristics. The category of outcomes of evaluating key human resource competencies consists of four subcategories and twenty characteristics. Finally, the classification based on the paradigmatic model is summarized and presented in the following:

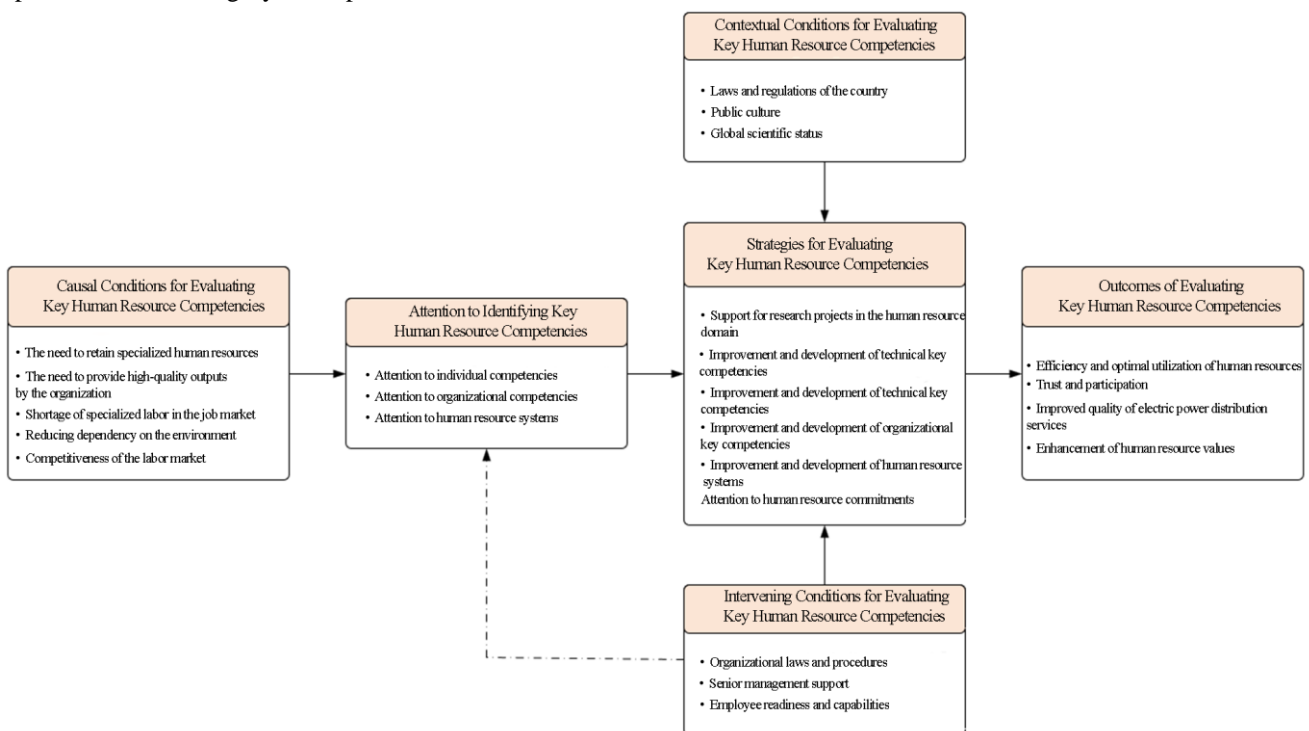


Figure 1. Final Paradigmatic Model

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the results, in the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company, intervening conditions influence causal conditions, and causal conditions affect attention to competencies. On the other hand, intervening conditions directly affect strategies.

In addition to methodological differences that distinguish this research from other similar studies regarding attention to competencies in the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company—considered one of the innovative aspects of this

study—there are also differences in the model and its components that are discussed below:

Despite multiple studies in the field of key human resource competencies, there is still no comprehensive understanding of key human resource competencies [7]. Furthermore, the research results revealed that few studies have so far provided a model of key human resource competencies in Iran's power distribution industry. From this perspective, the present research addresses the lack of a comprehensive model for key human resource competencies in the country's power industry.

For example, Mohammadi and Alvani (2020) conducted a study focused on operationalizing and measuring an employee performance evaluation model in public organizations, centered on sustainable development to improve their productivity. Their study aimed to operationalize and measure a performance evaluation model with a focus on sustainable development within Iran's value system [17]. Similarly, Ghayour (2022) examined employee performance in organizations and the factors influencing it, with a focus on knowledge sharing and management [18].

According to the model and the study's findings, to improve key human resource competencies in the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company, it is recommended to identify key human resource competencies to prevent the departure of specialized and experienced personnel. Doing so will enhance their skills and increase job satisfaction.

Given the significant impact of current human resources on the quality of service delivery, human resources must always be recruited, developed, and employed based on meritocracy.

Since specialized human resources are currently very scarce, and graduates are less inclined to pursue administrative jobs and are facing knowledge decline, organizations should identify and develop plans to retain qualified personnel.

Merit-based development programs, while maintaining independence and avoiding dependency on other organizations, are essential. Selecting and developing competent employees creates organizational independence.

In the competitive labor market, where there is a reduction in labor supply and an increase in demand, organizations must pay greater attention to key human resource competencies.

The Kermanshah Power Distribution Company should focus on individual competencies, organizational competencies, and human resource systems. Attention should be paid to academic, technical, skill-based, and ethical competencies in the realm of individual competencies. In the area of organizational competencies, efforts to boost teamwork morale and improve organizational culture should be emphasized. Additionally, specific human resource guidelines for the development of human resources should be considered.

Qualitative analysis in grounded theory research requires motivated experts and specialists willing to devote enough time for interviews. However, like many internal studies, this research also faced a shortage of genuine experts and

lacked opportunities for interaction and benefiting from the perspectives of all managers and directors at the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company. In some interviews, the experts interviewed were those introduced and approved by the managers. While the participation of managers and directors at the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company could have enriched the content of the study, work obligations and the weak relationship between industry and academia in the country posed limitations.

Considering the potential variability in some model results, future researchers are advised to investigate this model—designed for the Kermanshah Power Distribution Company—in all power distribution companies across the country and compare their findings with the results of this study.

### Authors' Contributions

Authors equally contributed to this article.

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### Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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### Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

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