

## **Linking Core Competence to Job Performance: The Mediating Role of Knowledge Orientation**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigates the mechanism that explains the relationship between core competence and job performance with the introduction of a construct that lies between knowledge orientation. Previous studies have found a correlation between the competence of an employee and his or her performance outcomes, but not much research has been conducted that focuses on the processes in-between. The study is based on Dynamic Capabilities theory and Knowledge Based view to suggest that Knowledge orientation is a key behavioral process in triggering and running individual capabilities. The choice of design was quantitative, having a cross-sectional design, with 500 respondents. The mediation analysis was performed using Hayes' PROCESS macro (model 4) with bootstrapping. The findings indicate that core competence has a significant positive impact on knowledge orientation, and that knowledge orientation has a strong positive relationship with job performance. In addition, the core competence-job performance relationship is partially mediated by knowledge orientation, revealing that competence impact job performance both directly and indirectly via knowledge-oriented behaviours. With findings that contribute to theory, the micro foundations of Dynamic Capabilities Theory are extended and knowledge orientation is identified as a key factor between competencies and outcomes of performance. On a practical level, the study implies that it is time to step away from competence-building and create cultures of knowledge sharing in organizations to improve employee effectiveness. The overall findings of this research offer a delicate understanding of the competence–performance relation, showing that that the value of competence lies mainly in the activating processes of knowledge.

**Keywords:** Core Competence, Knowledge Orientation, Job Performance, Dynamic Capabilities Theory, Knowledge-Based View

## Introduction

In the contemporary knowledge-based economy, employee performance is influenced not only by developed core competencies but also by the ability to acquire, apply, and leverage knowledge effectively within dynamic organizational environments (Bieńkowska & Tworek, 2020; Awwad, 2025). Rapid digitalization, evolving market demands, and intensifying competition have elevated knowledge to a critical strategic resource, making continuous learning, adaptability, and innovation essential drivers of employee performance (Awwad, 2025; Lin et al., 2020). Therefore, knowledge-intensive organizations must not only cultivate employee competencies but also foster continuous learning and adaptability, enabling employees to effectively reconfigure their knowledge and skills in response to emerging challenges (Pacheco et al., 2023; Jia et al., 2024). Recent research further emphasizes that knowledge-intensive organizations increasingly rely on adaptive competencies and learning-oriented behaviour to sustain competitive performance in digitally evolving workplaces (Kurniawati & Widodo, 2024).

The traditional perspective of job performance as fixed and task-constrained is becoming unsuitable in the age of technological convergence and strategic ambiguity (Bieńkowska & Tworek, 2020; Awwad, 2025). In knowledge-based environments, performance increasingly depends on problem-solving, innovation, and the continuous application of new knowledge, reflecting a dynamic capability that aligns closely with the principles of Dynamic Capabilities Theory (Bieńkowska & Tworek, 2020, Jia et al., 2024). Thereby, it becomes a theoretical lens that focuses on how an organization and an individual can sense, capture, and convert resources in line with the shifting environments, and performance as an indicator of learning capacity instead of task output alone (Pacheco et al., 2023; Awwad, 2025).

Despite substantial investments in employee training and development, many organizations struggle to translate competence into superior performance outcomes (Naqshbandi et al., 2024; Badie & Rostomyan, 2025). This gap suggests that the effectiveness of competence depends on underlying behavioral mechanisms, particularly knowledge-oriented dispositions that facilitate the conversion of skills into meaningful contributions. Understanding these mechanisms is therefore both a theoretical and practical necessity for enhancing performance in knowledge-intensive organizations (Yin et al., 2019; Kundi et al., 2021).

Moreover, there remains empirical ambiguity regarding the mechanisms through which core competencies translate into job performance. Although research examining the competency–performance relationship has grown substantially, significant theoretical and empirical gaps persist. There is a gap in the adequate explanation of how competencies translate into superior work outcomes and under

what conditions this relationship is strengthened or weakened (Talluri et al., 2024). Although previous frameworks have theorized competencies as strategic resources available to firms (Chitra, 2024; Sulaiman, 2025), little has been theorized and poorly measured on the micro-foundation of the translation of these resources into role-specific performance at the individual level (Rahman et al., 2025).

Core competence, often conceptualized as the integration of technical, behavioural, and cognitive capabilities, is widely assumed to drive high performance (Rahman et al., 2025; Cui, 2026). However, in knowledge-based environments, its operationalization is frequently reduced to decontextualized skill or behaviour checklists, limiting its strategic relevance (Tiong et al., 2025; Shillie & Nchang, 2023). Moreover, the link between competencies and job performance—task, contextual, or adaptive—is often assumed rather than empirically established (Jia et al., 2024; Badie & Rostomyan, 2025). Performance is also typically assessed at an aggregate level without adequately accounting for mediating or moderating influences such as knowledge orientation, organizational learning culture, or support systems that shape competency expression (Awwad, 2025; Lin, et. al., 2020; Sulaiman., 2025). This conceptual ambiguity has constrained theoretical development and limited practitioners' ability to align HRD interventions with strategic outcomes (Davidescu et al., 2020; Akdere & Egan, 2020). Accordingly, there is a critical need to bridge this gap by developing frameworks that not only define the structure of core competence but also empirically examine its differentiated impact on job performance in turbulent, knowledge-intensive contexts.

Traditional reliance on skill possession as the primary driver of employee performance is increasingly being replaced by the dynamic processes of knowledge acquisition, sharing, and application in contemporary knowledge-based organizations (Andrej et al., 2023). This shift underscores the growing importance of knowledge orientation (KO), defined as a set of attitudes, values, and practices that support continuous learning, unlearning, and relearning in organizational contexts. Rather than being a static trait, KO functions as a dynamic mediating construct that shapes how core competencies are internalized and translated into high performance outcomes (Massaro et al., 2019). While core competencies provide latent potential, it is KO that determines whether these capabilities are effectively mobilized, adapted, and applied in task-specific situations (Peng, 2024). For instance, employees may possess strong analytical skills, but without a knowledge-seeking and learning-supportive mindset, such skills remain underutilized (Wang and Chen, 2026). KO is further embedded in organizational social structures and both formal and informal networks that either enable or constrain knowledge behaviours (Peng, 2024). Although its role in firm-level innovation and performance has been widely acknowledged, its mediating function at

the individual level in translating competencies into job outcomes remains underexplored (Farooq, 2023; Korayim et al., 2025).

This study addresses this gap by examining how knowledge orientation mediates the relationship between core competence and job performance within the framework of Dynamic Capabilities Theory (Teece, 2018; Ferraris et al., 2020), integrating insights from Knowledge Management literature. It reconceptualizes individual skills within knowledge-centric environments by first examining the impact of core competencies (technical, behavioural, and cognitive) on job outcomes such as task performance and contextual adaptability (Rani & Devi, 2025), and second by investigating KO as an enabling or inhibiting mechanism in this relationship (Gold et al., 2001). The study further empirically tests these relationships using validated scales and SEM analysis to strengthen competency-based theory. Overall, it bridges competency theory and knowledge management by positioning KO as a central mechanism in capability deployment, offering both theoretical advancement and practical implications for designing knowledge-driven HR development systems.

Guided by the identified gaps and objectives, this study addresses the central question of how individual-level core competencies influence job performance and the mediating role of knowledge orientation in this relationship. While existing literature emphasizes competencies as key determinants of performance outcomes (Kurniawati & Widodo, 2024; Wiemann et al., 2024), the underlying mechanisms of this relationship—particularly in knowledge-based contexts—remain underdeveloped and insufficiently tested (Sandaruwan et al., 2024). In this regard, knowledge orientation (KO) is proposed as a mediating mechanism, conceptualized not only as an organizational enabler but also as an individual disposition and set of practices that shape how knowledge is acquired, shared, and applied (Karsikas et al., 2025). Employees with high levels of KO are more likely to translate their competencies into enhanced task performance and innovation, especially when supported by conducive organizational systems and cultures (Sasmita et al., 2023; Guo et al., 2023; Wang & Chen, 2026; Wang et al., 2024). This perspective forms the basis for the research questions guiding the present study.

RQ1: What is the role of core competencies in job performance in knowledge-intensive work environments?

RQ2: Do core competencies relate to job performance through knowledge orientation?

## **Review of Literature and Development of Hypothesis**

### **Core Competence and Job Performance**

Employee competence is widely recognized as a strong predictor of job performance in knowledge-based organizations, where success increasingly depends on employees' ability to apply specialized knowledge, solve problems, and adapt to evolving job demands. Core competence reflects an integrated combination of knowledge, technical skills, and behavioural attributes that collectively provide organizations with a strategic advantage (Kurniawati & Widodo, 2024). It extends beyond basic skill sets to include deep domain expertise, adaptability, and the effective application of knowledge in complex situations. Recent studies further confirm that highly competent employees contribute significantly to operational efficiency, innovation, and strategic outcomes (Wiemann et al., 2024; Karsikas et al., 2025).

The relationship between competence and performance is strongly grounded in organizational and knowledge management literature. Dynamic Capabilities Theory posits that organizational performance is driven by the ability to integrate and reconfigure capabilities in response to environmental changes (Teece, 2018; Wilden & Teece, 2019). Within this framework, employee competence functions as a critical organizational asset that enhances flexibility, responsiveness, and decision-making effectiveness. Supporting this view, recent research highlights that competence-based capabilities strengthen organizational agility and competitiveness, particularly in knowledge-intensive contexts (Horng et al., 2022; Dejardin et al., 2023).

More recent data also show that competency is directly linked to employee-level performance outcomes. Technical and behavioral skills affect productivity, task performance, and operational efficiency (Pacher et al., 2024; Wiemann et al., 2024). Similarly, Kurniawati and Widodo (2024) state that core competencies will improve strategic performance, as employees with strong competencies are better able to overcome organizational challenges and develop creative solutions. Competence also enhances staff working capabilities in knowledge-intensive sectors, such as information management, teamwork, and facilitating learning within the organization (Ferraris et al., 2020).

Competence has gained heightened importance in digitally transformed workplaces, where knowledge workers are required to remain agile and continuously update their skills in response to rapid technological change, particularly in AI-driven environments (Chen, Lin & Liu, 2026; Chitra, 2024). In this context, competencies are no longer static attributes but evolving capabilities that must be continuously developed to sustain high performance. Supporting this view, Korayim et al. (2025) demonstrate that AI-related competencies and intellectual capital significantly enhance employee

outcomes and overall organizational effectiveness, emphasizing the dynamic nature of competence in contemporary work settings.

Within the knowledge management literature, competence development is consistently associated with employees' ability to effectively apply and share knowledge, thereby enhancing performance outcomes. Knowledge-based human resource practices have been shown to strengthen innovation and intellectual capital by continuously upgrading employees' capabilities (Kianto et al., 2019). Similarly, Andrej et al. (2023) highlight that knowledge management and leadership practices positively influence organizational performance by fostering competence development and learning-oriented behaviours.

Building on this evidence, it is argued that when employees perceive their jobs as requiring high levels of core competence, they are more likely to demonstrate stronger task performance (Gürbüz, Bakker, & Brouwers, 2026). Although prior research supports a positive competence–performance relationship, more recent studies suggest that competence alone may not guarantee improved performance unless it is accompanied by active learning, knowledge sharing, and application behaviours (Chen, Lin & Liu, 2026). Employees may possess strong technical skills, but these competencies may not translate into effective performance if they lack the motivation to continuously learn, share, and apply knowledge in dynamic work environments (Sandaruwan et al., 2024). This highlights the need to focus on how perceived competence in job roles translates into actual performance outcomes. Accordingly, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: When employees view their jobs as having high levels of core competence, they will perform better on those tasks.

### **Core Competence and Knowledge Orientation**

Knowledge orientation reflects employees' tendency to learn, acquire, share, and continuously apply knowledge in organizational settings, and is considered essential for performance in knowledge-based environments (Al Zoubi et al., 2026). It represents a behavioural and cognitive commitment that goes beyond possessing knowledge to actively using it for continuous improvement.

From a knowledge-based view of the firm, knowledge is a key source of competitive advantage, and employees with stronger core competencies are more likely to develop confidence, absorptive capacity, and engagement in knowledge-seeking and sharing behaviours (Ali et al., 2026). Thus, competence is expected to facilitate stronger knowledge orientation by enabling employees to participate more actively in organizational learning processes.

Empirical evidence supports this relationship, showing that proactive learning behaviours enhance adaptability and continuous learning (Biancone et al., 2026; Wang et al., 2024), while competent employees are more likely to engage in knowledge management activities due to their awareness of its value (Karsikas et al., 2025). Knowledge-oriented leadership further strengthens employee learning and performance through improved knowledge absorption (Jia et al., 2024).

In knowledge-intensive and digitally enabled environments, this link becomes even more critical, as technologies such as AI and intelligent systems transform how knowledge is accessed, shared, and applied (Gürbüz, Bakker, & Brouwers, 2026; Nazeer et al., 2023; Yang, 2024). Employees with higher competence are more likely to engage in knowledge-sharing behaviours due to greater confidence in collaboration and contribution (Kianto et al., 2019), thereby enhancing organizational adaptability and innovation. However, despite growing attention to knowledge management systems, limited research has examined employee competence as a direct driver of knowledge-oriented behaviour (Farooq, 2023). Accordingly, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H2: Core competence has a positive relationship with knowledge orientation.

### **Knowledge Orientation and Job Performance**

Knowledge orientation has emerged as a key determinant of employee performance in increasingly learning- and innovation-driven organizations. Employees who actively seek, apply, and share knowledge are better able to adapt to changing job demands, solve problems effectively, and improve work processes (Wang & Chen, 2026).

Empirical studies consistently support this link. Knowledge-management practices enhance performance by promoting information sharing and operational efficiency (Sandaruwan et al., 2024), while knowledge-sharing behaviours improve collaboration and overall work effectiveness (Sasmita et al., 2023). Similarly, knowledge orientation strengthens innovation capability, adaptability, and competitive advantage through enhanced organizational learning and absorptive capacity (Horng et al., 2022; Jia et al., 2024). It also improves coordination and decision-making by reducing information gaps and fostering collaboration among employees (Kianto et al., 2019).

In digital and hybrid work environments, knowledge orientation becomes even more critical, as continuous learning and knowledge-sharing behaviours directly influence engagement and performance outcomes (Naqshbandi et al., 2024; Rahman et al., 2025). Knowledge workers with strong knowledge orientation also demonstrate greater initiative, creativity, and adaptability, contributing not only to immediate task

performance but also to long-term organizational innovation and resilience (Wang et al., 2024).

Despite its importance, many organizations still fail to fully develop knowledge-oriented cultures, often treating knowledge as a technical skill rather than a behavioural and motivational construct (Farooq, 2023). This highlights the need to further examine its performance implications. Accordingly, this study proposes:

H3: Knowledge orientation positively affects job performance.

### **Mediating Role of Knowledge Orientation**

Although prior research confirms a direct link between core competence and job performance, recent literature increasingly suggests that this relationship is partly explained through knowledge-related behavioural mechanisms. In knowledge-intensive environments, competence alone is insufficient unless employees actively engage in knowledge use, sharing, and development within their work processes.

From a Dynamic Capabilities Theory perspective, competencies generate value when they are continuously reconfigured and integrated in response to changing organizational demands (Javed et al., 2026; Teece, 2018). Within this logic, knowledge orientation functions as a key behavioural mechanism that enables employees to translate competence into effective performance outcomes by fostering learning, collaboration, and problem-solving (Karsikas et al., 2025).

Empirical evidence supports this mediating role. Studies show that knowledge-sharing behaviour acts as a mechanism linking employee capabilities to job performance (Sasmita et al., 2023), while proactive engagement in learning and developmental processes enhances performance through job crafting and knowledge-based behaviours (Guo et al., 2023). Similarly, knowledge management practices and organizational learning capability have been found to mediate the relationship between leadership, competencies, and performance outcomes (Jia et al., 2024). Additional research also indicates that competent employees who actively engage in knowledge-seeking and collaborative behaviours demonstrate higher adaptability and innovation, leading to improved performance (Wang et al., 2024; Karsikas et al., 2025).

In rapidly changing digital and AI-driven environments, this mechanism becomes even more critical, as continuous learning and adaptation are essential for sustaining performance (Chitra, 2024; Korayim et al., 2025).

Accordingly, this study proposes that knowledge orientation mediates the relationship between core competence and job performance.

H4: The relationship between core competence and job performance is mediated by knowledge orientation

### **Theoretical Framework**

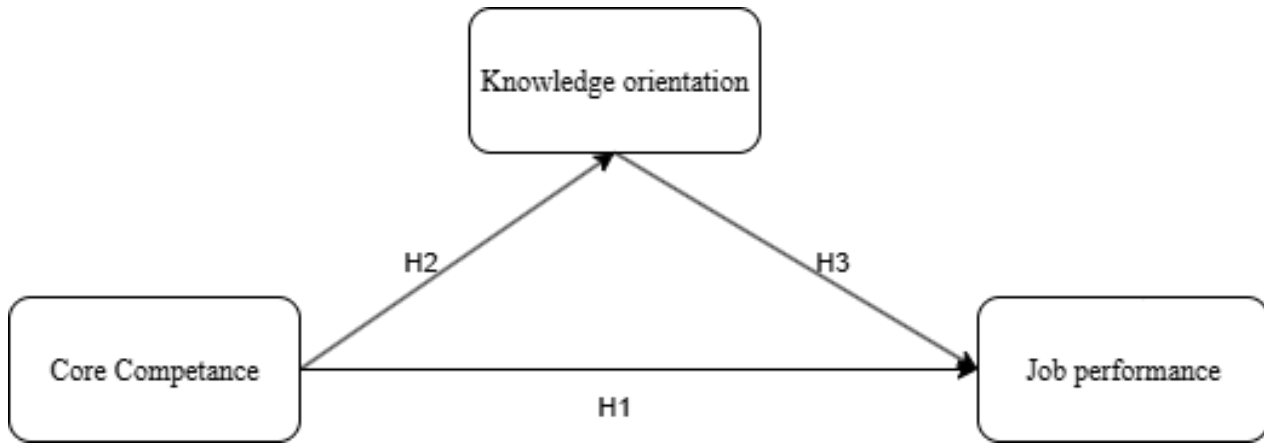
The theoretical framework of this study integrates the Resource-Based View (RBV) and the Knowledge-Based View (KBV) to explain how core competence translates into job performance through knowledge orientation as a mediating mechanism. RBV posits that sustained performance advantages stem from valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources (Barney, 1991). In this study, core competence—comprising employees' skills, expertise, and abilities—is conceptualized as a strategic resource that underpins performance. However, resource possession alone is insufficient unless effectively mobilized toward learning and innovation processes.

Extending RBV, KBV emphasizes knowledge as the most critical strategic resource and highlights that sustainable advantage depends on an organization's ability to create, transfer, and apply knowledge effectively (Ferraris et al., 2020). Within this perspective, knowledge orientation represents the key behavioural mechanism through which employees acquire, internalize, and utilize knowledge, thereby enabling the conversion of core competence into performance outcomes.

The proposed mediation model is further supported by Dynamic Capabilities Theory (Teece, Pisano & Shuen, 1997), which argues that performance depends not only on resource endowments but also on the ability to reconfigure and deploy them in response to environmental change. Knowledge orientation strengthens this adaptive capability by facilitating learning, knowledge sharing, and continuous improvement, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of core competencies in driving job performance outcomes such as innovation, adaptability, and collaboration.

Both theoretical and empirical evidence support this mediated relationship, suggesting that knowledge-based behaviours represent critical pathways through which competencies influence performance. Accordingly, the model proposes partial mediation, acknowledging that core competence may exert both direct and indirect effects on job performance through knowledge orientation.

Overall, this framework provides a comprehensive explanation of how and why competencies translate into performance, shifting the focus from merely possessing knowledge and skills to effectively mobilizing them through knowledge-oriented behaviours in dynamic organizational contexts. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework****Research Methodology**

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional design within a positivist and deductive framework to examine the relationships among core competence, knowledge orientation, and job performance. The approach is suitable for testing hypotheses and assessing statistically significant relationships between constructs at a single point in time rather than longitudinal behavioural changes.

**Population and Sampling**

The target population comprised full-time employees in knowledge-intensive industries like information technology, healthcare, education and professional services in Pakistan. A stratified sampling process ensured that employee levels across the organization were fairly represented, including entry-level, middle-level, and senior management. To improve the reliability of the findings and statistical adequacy, a sample of approximately 500 respondents was targeted, as larger samples are recommended for reliable estimation and model fit assessment (Hair et al., 2019).

**Measurement Scales**

All constructs were assessed using validated multi-item scales from previous research. All measurement items were graded on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree (Appendix B). The core competence was measured through the competence scale by Wickramasinghe and Zoysa (2009), measuring technical competence, interpersonal competence and conceptual/ creative competence. Similarly, the knowledge orientation was measured using three items adopted from Gold et al. (2001), which assessed knowledge acquisition, sharing, and

application. Job performance was measured using a 4-item shortened version of Williams and Anderson (1991) that assessed in-role behavior and OCB at the individual and organizational levels. A pilot study of 50 respondents was conducted prior to the survey to ensure understanding of the adopted items, and minor wording edits were made based on participant feedback.

### **Data Collection Procedure and Analysis Strategy**

The data were collected using an online survey, circulated through professional digital networks, and organizational contacts. A sample of 500 was targeted. The participation was voluntary only, and anonymity and confidentiality were assured to reduce apprehension about evaluation and social desirability bias. Since the study relied on self-reported data collected via a single survey instrument, thereby, several procedural remedies were adopted to minimize the potential influence of common method bias (CMB), following the recommendations of Podsakoff et al. (2003). It was emphasized that there were no right or wrong answers in the questionnaire, and participants were encouraged to provide honest responses. In addition, the survey employed clear and concise wording, and the items measuring different constructs were organized into separate sections so that the respondents' ability to infer relationships amongst the variables is reduced. These procedural safeguards were incorporated to mitigate the likelihood that common method variance would affect the study results. The details are given in Appendix A.

### **Results**

The Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents, showing that the sample comprised 58.2% male and 41.8% female employees, indicating a reasonably balanced gender representation. Most respondents were between 31 and 40 years of age (42.0%), followed by those aged 21–30 years (36.2%), suggesting that the majority were in active stages of their professional careers. In terms of work experience, 36.8% of respondents had 4–7 years of experience, while 29.2% had 1–3 years, reflecting a workforce with moderate professional exposure. The respondents were also fairly distributed across HR, Finance, Operations, Marketing, and IT departments, ensuring representation from diverse functional areas. Overall, the demographic profile indicates a diverse and experienced sample, providing a suitable basis for examining the relationships among core competence, knowledge orientation, and job performance.

Table 1  
*Demographic Profile of Respondents*

| Characteristics | Measuring Group | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|----------------|
| Gender          | Male            | 291       | 58.2           |
|                 | Female          | 209       | 41.8           |
|                 | Total           | 500       | 100.0          |
| Age             | 21–30 Years     | 181       | 36.2           |
|                 | 31–40 Years     | 210       | 42.0           |
|                 | 41–50 Years     | 91        | 18.2           |
|                 | 51+ Years       | 18        | 3.6            |
|                 | Total           | 500       | 100.0          |
|                 |                 |           |                |
| Work Experience | 1–3 Years       | 146       | 29.2           |
|                 | 4–7 Years       | 184       | 36.8           |
|                 | 8–12 Years      | 119       | 23.8           |
|                 | 13+ Years       | 51        | 10.2           |
|                 | Total           | 500       | 100.0          |
|                 |                 |           |                |
| Department      | HR              | 105       | 21.0           |
|                 | Finance         | 101       | 20.2           |
|                 | Operations      | 93        | 18.6           |
|                 | Marketing       | 109       | 21.8           |
|                 | IT              | 92        | 18.4           |
|                 | Total           | 500       | 100.0          |
|                 |                 |           |                |

The descriptive statistics for each variable in Table 2 show the standard deviation, means, composite means, and skewness, indicating that the data is normally distributed. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the validity of the measurement model and to verify whether the observed items adequately represented their respective latent constructs in Table 3. The standardized factor loadings ranged from 0.7 to 0.80, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.50, which indicates that the measurement items were strong indicators of their underlying constructs and supports the adequacy of the proposed measurement model.

Table 2  
*Descriptive Statistics of Measurement Items*

| Construct               | Item      | N   | Min | Max | Mean | SD    | Skewness |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----|-----|-----|------|-------|----------|
| Core Competence (CC)    | CC1       | 500 | 1   | 5   | 3.03 | 1.290 |          |
|                         | CC2       | 500 | 1   | 5   | 3.01 | 1.240 |          |
|                         | CC3       | 500 | 1   | 5   | 2.99 | 1.286 |          |
|                         | (CC_Mean) | 500 | 1   | 5   | 3.01 | 1.091 | -0.010   |
| Knowledge Outcomes (KO) | KO1       | 500 | 1   | 5   | 3.02 | 1.252 |          |
|                         | KO2       | 500 | 1   | 5   | 3.02 | 1.245 |          |
|                         | KO3       | 500 | 1   | 5   | 3.03 | 1.269 |          |
|                         | (KO_Mean) | 500 | 1   | 5   | 3.02 | 1.055 | -0.071   |
| Job Performance (JP)    | JP1       | 500 | 1   | 5   | 2.99 | 1.237 |          |
|                         | JP2       | 500 | 1   | 5   | 3.02 | 1.289 |          |
|                         | JP3       | 500 | 1   | 5   | 3.02 | 1.293 |          |
|                         | (JP_Mean) | 500 | 1   | 5   | 3.01 | 1.025 | -0.131   |

Note: Composite mean skewness values are within the acceptable range of  $\pm 2$ , indicating approximate normality

Table 3  
*Confirmatory Factor Analysis — Factor Loadings and Item Reliability*

| Construct          | No of Items | Unstandardized Loading | SE    | C.R.   | Standardized Loading ( $\lambda$ ) | R <sup>2</sup> (SMC) |
|--------------------|-------------|------------------------|-------|--------|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Core Competene     | CC1         | 1.000                  | —     | —      | 0.805                              | 0.649                |
|                    | CC2         | 0.873                  | 0.057 | 15.361 | 0.732                              | 0.535                |
|                    | CC3         | 0.985                  | 0.061 | 16.136 | 0.796                              | 0.633                |
| Knowledge Outcomes | KO1         | 1.000                  | —     | —      | 0.759                              | 0.576                |
|                    | KO2         | 0.984                  | 0.069 | 14.315 | 0.751                              | 0.563                |
|                    | KO3         | 0.979                  | 0.069 | 14.124 | 0.733                              | 0.537                |
| Job Performace     | JP1         | 1.110                  | 0.078 | 14.174 | 0.759                              | 0.575                |
|                    | JP2         | 1.144                  | 0.081 | 14.059 | 0.750                              | 0.563                |
|                    | JP3         | 1.158                  | 0.082 | 14.154 | 0.757                              | 0.573                |
|                    | JP4         | 1.000                  | —     | —      | 0.694                              | 0.468                |

Note: \*\*\* $p < .001$ . All standardized factor loadings exceed the recommended threshold of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019). C.R. = Critical Ratio; SE = Standard Error; SMC = Squared Multiple Correlation.

Moreover, in Table 4 A, 4B and 4C, the model demonstrated an acceptable fit to the data with CFI of  $1 > 0.90$ , TLI of  $1.002 > 0.90$ , and RMSEA of  $0.000 < 0.08$ , indicating satisfactory model fitness. The Cronbach Alpha of 0.820 (CC), 0.792 (KO), and 0.827 (JP) reflected reliability, and AVE  $> 0.50$  for all variables reflected convergent validity, and  $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$  for each construct exceeded its correlations with all other constructs, establishing discriminant validity. This confirmed that the measurement items reliably captured the intended constructs.

Table 4A  
*Model Fit Indices — Confirmatory Factor Analysis*

| Fit Index                    | Value          | Recommended Threshold |
|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| $\chi^2$ (CMIN)              | 29.678         | —                     |
| Degrees of Freedom (df)      | 32             | —                     |
| $\chi^2/\text{df}$ (CMIN/DF) | 0.927          | $< 3.0$ (Kline, 2016) |
| p-value                      | .585           | $> .05$               |
| NFI (Normed Fit Index)       | 0.984          | $> 0.90$              |
| RFI (Relative Fit Index)     | 0.978          | $> 0.90$              |
| IFI (Incremental Fit Index)  | 1.001          | $> 0.90$              |
| TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)     | 1.002          | $> 0.90$              |
| CFI (Comparative Fit Index)  | 1.000          | $> 0.95$              |
| RMSEA                        | 0.000          | $< 0.08$              |
| RMSEA 90% CI                 | [0.000, 0.030] | Upper $< 0.08$        |
| PCLOSE                       | 1.000          | $> 0.05$              |
| AIC                          | 95.678         | Lower = better fit    |
| ECVI                         | 0.192          | Lower = better fit    |

*Note: Model fit indices indicate excellent model fit. The measurement model demonstrates strong psychometric properties supporting the use of structural equation modeling.*

Table 4b  
*Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity*

| Construct               | Items | Cronbach's $\alpha$ | Composite Reliability (CR) | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) |
|-------------------------|-------|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Core Competence (CC)    | 3     | 0.820               | 0.837                      | 0.632                            |
| Knowledge Outcomes (KO) | 3     | 0.792               | 0.809                      | 0.586                            |
| Job Performance (JP)    | 4     | 0.827               | 0.838                      | 0.566                            |

*Note: Acceptable thresholds:  $\alpha > 0.70$ ; CR  $> 0.70$ ; AVE  $> 0.50$ . All constructs meet recommended thresholds, confirming convergent validity.*

Table 4c  
*Discriminant Validity Analysis*

| Construct                  | 1        | 2        | 3     |
|----------------------------|----------|----------|-------|
| 1. Core Competence (CC)    | 0.795    |          |       |
| 2. Knowledge Outcomes (KO) | 0.455*** | 0.765    |       |
| 3. Job Performance (JP)    | 0.399*** | 0.469*** | 0.752 |

Note: Discriminant validity is established when  $\sqrt{AVE}$  for each construct exceeds its correlations with all other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Table 5  
*Mediation Analysis*

| Path Coefficients   | $\beta$ (Unstd.) | SE    | t / C.R. | P    | $\beta$ (Std.) | 95% CI [LL, UL] |
|---------------------|------------------|-------|----------|------|----------------|-----------------|
| CC $\rightarrow$ KO | 0.416            | 0.052 | 7.966    | ***  | 0.455          | [0.316, 0.528]  |
| KO $\rightarrow$ JP | 0.417            | 0.058 | 7.192    | ***  | 0.469          | [0.306, 0.532]  |
| CC $\rightarrow$ JP | 0.151            | 0.047 | 3.232    | .001 | 0.186          | [0.062, 0.242]  |
| CC $\rightarrow$ JP | 0.325            | —     | —        | —    | 0.399          | [0.300, 0.414]  |

*Regression Model Summary*

| Outcome Variable        | Predictor(s) | R     | R <sup>2</sup> | F      | df       | p    |
|-------------------------|--------------|-------|----------------|--------|----------|------|
| Knowledge Outcomes (KO) | CC           | 0.370 | 0.137          | 79.160 | (1, 498) | .000 |
| Job Performance (JP)    | CC + KO      | 0.480 | 0.231          | 74.529 | (2, 497) | .000 |

*Indirect Effect — Bootstrap Mediation Test*

| Indirect Path                        | Effect ( $\beta$ ) | BootSE | 95% Boot CI [LL, UL] | Mediation Type    |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|--------|----------------------|-------------------|
| CC $\rightarrow$ KO $\rightarrow$ JP | 0.132              | 0.020  | [0.095, 0.174]       | Partial Mediation |

Note:  $\beta$  (Unstd.) = Unstandardized coefficients from AMOS;  $\beta$  (Std.) = Standardized coefficients. 95% CI derived from bias-corrected bootstrap (5,000 samples). \*\*\* $p < .001$ . Indirect effect estimated using PROCESS Macro Model 4 with 5,000 bootstrap resamples.

The 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval [0.095, 0.174] excludes zero, confirming significant mediation.

The mediation was tested with Hayes' PROCESS Macro- Model 4 in SPSS with the use of 5,000 bootstrap samples and 95% CIs (Clement & Bradley, 2022). The mediation analysis in Table 5, provides strong support for the proposed indirect effect of core competence on job performance through knowledge orientation. Core competence exhibited a significant positive effect on knowledge orientation ( $\beta = 0.455$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that employees with higher levels of competence are more likely to develop a stronger orientation toward acquiring, sharing, and utilizing knowledge. In turn, knowledge orientation significantly enhanced job performance ( $\beta = 0.469$ ,  $p < .001$ ), suggesting that knowledge-focused employees perform their jobs more effectively.

The direct effect of core competence on job performance remained significant even after including knowledge orientation in the model ( $\beta = 0.186$ ,  $p = .001$ ), while the indirect effect through knowledge orientation was also significant ( $\beta = 0.132$ , 95% CI [0.095, 0.174]). Since the confidence interval did not include zero and both the direct and indirect effects were significant, the results indicate partial mediation. This suggests that core competence improves job performance both directly and indirectly by fostering employees' knowledge orientation. Furthermore, the model explained 13.7% of the variance in knowledge orientation and 23.1% of the variance in job performance, demonstrating satisfactory explanatory power. Table 6 provides a summary of all hypothesis checks.

Table 6  
*Hypothesis Testing Summary*

| #  | Hypothesis                         | Std. $\beta$ | SE    | p    | Decision  |
|----|------------------------------------|--------------|-------|------|-----------|
| H1 | CC positively predicts JP (direct) | 0.186        | 0.047 | .001 | Supported |
| H2 | CC positively predicts KO          | 0.455        | 0.052 | ***  | Supported |
| H3 | KO positively predicts JP          | 0.469        | 0.058 | ***  | Supported |
| H4 | KO mediates CC $\rightarrow$ JP    | 0.213*       | 0.020 | ***  | Supported |

Note: \*\*\* $p < .001$ . \*Standardized indirect effect from AMOS. Bootstrap CI for H4 from PROCESS (5,000 resamples). Direct effect remains significant confirming partial mediation.

## Discussion

The findings indicate that employee competence alone is insufficient to fully explain job performance. Rather, competencies yield superior performance outcomes when they are complemented by knowledge-oriented behaviours, including learning, knowledge sharing, and knowledge application. Consistent with the proposed model, core competence was found to significantly predict both knowledge orientation and job performance, while knowledge orientation exerted a positive effect on job performance and partially mediated the competence–performance relationship. These findings underscore knowledge orientation as a critical mechanism through which employee

competencies are translated into tangible performance outcomes (Mustafa, et. al., 2026).

The results provide further evidence that the relationship between core competence and job performance is not solely direct. Although competence remains an important determinant of employee effectiveness, the present study demonstrates that its impact is strengthened when employees actively engage in knowledge-related behaviours (Jiang et al., 2020; Wiemann et al., 2024). The significant mediating effect suggests that competent employees are more likely to leverage their capabilities through continuous learning, knowledge exchange, and practical application, thereby enhancing their performance (Awwad, 2025; Badie & Rostomyan, 2025).

Given that the sample predominantly comprised employees in the early and middle stages of their careers with moderate work experience and representation from diverse functional departments, the findings highlight the importance of fostering knowledge-oriented practices across organizational contexts to maximize the value of employee competencies (Biancone et al., 2026; Mustafa et al., 2026).

Moreover, these findings also align with recent research emphasizing adaptive learning, proactive behaviour, and knowledge-sharing activities as essential drivers of organizational effectiveness (Guo et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024). In increasingly knowledge-intensive and digitally evolving workplaces, employees must not only possess competencies but also continuously acquire, disseminate, and apply knowledge to remain effective. Accordingly, the study shifts attention from the passive possession of competencies to their active utilization through knowledge-oriented behaviours. Nonetheless, competence provides the foundation for performance, whereas knowledge orientation appears to be the key factor enabling the effective conversion of competence into superior job outcomes.

### **Theoretical Contributions**

This study adds to the Dynamic Capabilities Theory by providing evidence that employee behavior and learning processes are sources of the organization's capabilities. The results indicate that core competence is an important internal resource and that knowledge orientation is a behavioral mechanism that enables employees to mobilize and use it to enhance their performance.

The significant mediation effect corroborates the notion that competencies are valuable when employees engage in knowledge-related behaviors, including learning, co-creating, and sharing knowledge (Teece, 2018; Wilden & Teece, 2019). Recent studies also highlight the growing importance of adaptive learning and ongoing knowledge acquisition in today's fast-changing work environments (Karsikas et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2024). The results thus confirm the increasingly emerging view

concerning the dynamic capabilities that are not only organizational routines but also heavily rely on the capacity of employees to continuously acquire and apply knowledge.

It also contributes to the Knowledge-Based View, as it shows that knowledge-related behavior is a key mechanism linking competence to performance outcomes. This study suggests that the application and dissemination of knowledge are equally important for enhancing employee effectiveness. The findings are also in line with recent studies reporting that employees' involvement in knowledge-sharing and learning activities is associated with their contributions to innovation, collaboration, and organizational performance (Ferraris et al., 2020; Sasmita et al., 2023; Sandaruwan et al., 2024). It is proposed that the mediating role of knowledge orientation further enriches prior knowledge management research and enables an organization to better understand how employee competencies should be used strategically.

The findings also reposition knowledge orientation as a key explanatory mechanism rather than merely a supporting organizational factor. The concept of knowledge orientation has previously been studied in the context of innovation or organizational learning processes. This finding, however, is contrary to the present results, which show that knowledge orientation directly affects the contribution of employee competence to performance. This contribution is especially important in a digital and knowledge-intensive workplace where workers need to be flexible, cooperative, and efficient in managing information. The latest research also indicates that knowledge-oriented staff exhibit greater adaptability, pro-activity, and collaboration in problem solving (Guo et al., 2023; Medina-Garrido et al., 2024). Based on this, the study identifies knowledge orientation as an important strategic competency that is key to employee and organizational performance.

### **Practical Implications**

The findings offer several organizational implications. Competence development alone may not be sufficient to improve employee performance unless supported by continuous learning and knowledge-sharing opportunities. Organizations should therefore promote knowledge-oriented behaviours through learning cultures, mentoring, collaboration, and knowledge-management systems, which have been linked to greater employee productivity and adaptability (Sandaruwan et al., 2024). Additionally, performance management systems should incorporate knowledge-related behaviours such as learning capability, collaboration, adaptability, and knowledge sharing to foster sustainable performance and innovation.

### **Limitations and future research**

Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations. The cross-sectional design restricts the ability to establish long-term causal relationships among the variables. Longitudinal or experimental methods could be used in future studies to explore changes over time in competence, knowledge orientation, and performance.

The explained variance also indicates that other factors, such as leadership behavior, organizational support, motivation, and psychological empowerment, may affect employee performance. Moreover, intermediate factors such as digital competence, organizational climate, and employees' adaptability were not investigated and could prove to be more fruitful for understanding in the future. Future research may also explore the influence of emerging technologies and AI-driven work environments on knowledge-oriented behaviours and employee performance.

### **Conclusion**

The results of this study indicate that knowledge orientation is one explanation for the role of core competence in determining employee performance. The results indicate that employee competence improves performance more when they are involved in learning, knowledge sharing, and knowledge application.

The findings indicate that in the contemporary context of organizations, competency is not enough if employees cannot adapt, learn, and apply knowledge in changing work contexts. Moreover, among the three dimensions of core competence, technical competence exhibited the highest loading on the higher-order construct ( $\lambda = 0.805$ ), followed by cognitive competence ( $\lambda = 0.796$ ) and behavioural competence ( $\lambda = 0.732$ ). This suggests that technical and cognitive competencies are the most salient components of employees' overall competence. Although the mediation analysis was performed at the aggregate construct level, these loadings indicate that technical competence is likely to contribute most strongly to the indirect relationship between core competence and job performance through knowledge orientation, with cognitive competence showing a similarly strong influence. Nevertheless, in future studies, dimension-specific mediation analysis can analyze the relative indirect effects.

The study further reinforces recent arguments that continuous learning, adaptive behaviour, and knowledge-sharing practices are increasingly essential for sustaining employee performance in digitally evolving and knowledge-intensive workplaces (Kurniawati & Widodo, 2024; Wiemann et al., 2024; Karsikas et al., 2025).

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### Appendix A Consolidated Common Method Bias Assessment

#### Harman's Single Factor Test

| Source                                          | Value                            |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Number of items entered                         | 10                               |
| Number of factors extracted (Eigenvalue > 1)    | 3                                |
| Eigenvalue Factor 1                             | 4.121                            |
| Eigenvalue Factor 2                             | 1.608                            |
| Eigenvalue Factor 3                             | 1.242                            |
| Total variance explained (all factors)          | 100.00%                          |
| Variance explained by a single factor (Initial) | 41.21%                           |
| Variance explained by single factor (Extracted) | 34.76%                           |
| Common Method Bias Conclusion                   | <b>Not a significant concern</b> |

#### Factor Matrix Single Factor Solution (All Items)

| Construct                 | Item | Initial<br>Communality | Extracted<br>Communality | Single Factor<br>Loading |
|---------------------------|------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Core Competene</b>     | CC1  | 0.498                  | 0.285                    | 0.534                    |
|                           | CC2  | 0.430                  | 0.280                    | 0.529                    |
|                           | CC3  | 0.489                  | 0.276                    | 0.525                    |
| <b>Knowledge Outcomes</b> | KO1  | 0.438                  | 0.369                    | 0.608                    |
|                           | KO2  | 0.426                  | 0.362                    | 0.601                    |
|                           | KO3  | 0.419                  | 0.328                    | 0.573                    |
| <b>Job Performane</b>     | JP1  | 0.463                  | 0.442                    | 0.665                    |
|                           | JP2  | 0.462                  | 0.378                    | 0.615                    |
|                           | JP3  | 0.464                  | 0.425                    | 0.652                    |
|                           | JP4  | 0.388                  | 0.332                    | 0.576                    |
| <b>Range</b>              |      | 0.388–0.498            | 0.276–0.442              | <b>0.525–0.665</b>       |

#### Multicollinearity Diagnostics (VIF Assessment)

| Predictor               | B     | SE    | $\beta$ | t     | p    | Tolerance    | VIF          |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|---------|-------|------|--------------|--------------|
| (Constant)              | 1.371 | 0.143 |         | 9.599 | .000 |              |              |
| Core Competence (CC)    | 0.176 | 0.040 | 0.188   | 4.436 | .000 | <b>0.863</b> | <b>1.159</b> |
| Knowledge Outcomes (KO) | 0.367 | 0.041 | 0.378   | 8.923 | .000 | <b>0.863</b> | <b>1.159</b> |

#### Collinearity Diagnostics Condition Index

| Dimens<br>ion | Eig<br>env<br>alu<br>e | Conditio<br>n Index | Variance<br>Proportion<br>Constant | Variance<br>Proportion<br>CC | Variance<br>Proportion<br>KO |
|---------------|------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1             | 2.876                  | 1.000               | 0.01                               | 0.01                         | 0.01                         |

|            |       |              |      |      |      |
|------------|-------|--------------|------|------|------|
| 2          | 0.071 | 6.366        | 0.01 | 0.80 | 0.55 |
| 3          | 0.053 | 7.356        | 0.98 | 0.19 | 0.44 |
| <b>Max</b> |       | <b>7.356</b> |      |      |      |

*Note: Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. 1 factor extracted; 5 iterations required. No item loads exclusively or dominantly on a single general factor. Dependent Variable: Job Performance (JO\_Mean).  $R^2 = .231$ ,  $F(2, 497) = 74.529$ ,  $p < .001$ .*

## Appendix B

### Questionnaire

| Construct             | Item Name | Item                                                                    | Source                                    |
|-----------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Core Competence       | CC1       | I have strong technical skills relevant to my job responsibilities.     | Adapted from Wickramasinghe & Zoyza, 2009 |
|                       | CC2       | I am capable of solving complex problems at work.                       |                                           |
|                       | CC3       | I adapt quickly to new tools, systems, or work processes.               |                                           |
| Knowledge Orientation | KO1       | I actively seek out new knowledge to improve my performance.            | Gold et al. (2001)                        |
|                       | KO2       | I share relevant knowledge with my coworkers regularly.                 |                                           |
|                       | KO3       | I continuously look for opportunities to learn and grow professionally. |                                           |
| Job Performance       | JP1       | I consistently meet or exceed the expectations of my job.               | Williams & Anderson (1991)                |
|                       | JP2       | I willingly take on extra responsibilities beyond my job description.   |                                           |
|                       | JP3       | I collaborate effectively with team members to achieve goals.           |                                           |
|                       | JP4       | I complete my work efficiently and on time.                             |                                           |