

Navigating Transitions: Factor Analysis of Competencies in Military Officers

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Abstract:

The current paper's purpose is to develop a competency model for the retired armed forces officers which would assist in identification of the major competencies of Military officers and would allow HR professional in better recruitment and further human resource development of the organizations. This study uses literature review and expert opinion to arrive at a set of competencies which characterize Military officers. The competencies, thus identified are factor analysed to reduce it to the critical competencies which forms the basis of the competency model. An analysis of the literature identifies various competencies including skills and traits which are the characteristics of military officers. These are validated through expert opinions to arrive at a set of 28 competencies which define the managerial traits of Military officers. The Military officers develop these competencies over their service period. Further factor analysis reduces these factors to a cluster of six critical competencies developed into a model, which would form the basis for various HR based decisions.

The scope of this research paper is limited to the basic managerial competencies which define the Military officers. The paper arrives at a competency model specific to Military officers that would lay the foundation for the HR professionals in recruiting this trained workforce and further help them in planning their development and career progression.

Keywords: Competency, Defence Officers, veterans, military leaders, skills

1. Introduction

The progress of any public or private sector organization is often a result of performance of two of their fundamental resources i.e, Human resource and capital. Gauging the human resource in terms of the capability and performance for all the HR functions has traditionally been a herculean task. Intelligence has been for long a benchmark for testing a prospective employee. In the 1970s the credit of introducing the competency approach into the human resource management goes to David McClelland. His research argued competency to be a better predictor for performance than intelligence (McClelland, 1973). Subsequently, multiple researches and studies have added to the available literature on competency and its various facets. Hence organizations often go for competency based management approaches in order to improve their performance. Apart from

recruitment and staff development, career planning and performance management of the employees are all based on competency.

It is a proven fact that effective management of human resource leads to a competitive advantage for the organization. Competent human resource is a crucial factor in organizational performance. Military officers are a competent workforce and often carry with them a vast experience and diverse expertise. (Vigoda-Gadot et al., 2010) in their study has shown that the competencies gained by military officers can be utilized by civilian employees in maximizing national level of managerial cadre. However, Competency of military officers is a least researched topic. (Belanich et al., 2016) in their research have identified taxonomy of competencies as one of the six major issues associated with the usage of competency management system by an organization. Taxonomy of competencies is defined as different nomenclature or classification of competencies. Dissimilar structures or taxonomy have been utilized in organizations to read the same concept. This point is re-emphasised in the (Selmeski, 2007) report which states that cross cultural competencies are often difficult to communicate. This paper aims to frame a competency model of the military officers which would provide a common terminology for the various managerial competencies possessed by the military officers.

2. Literature Review

The term Competency originally is obtained from the word competence, which means the ability to perform a task. David Mc Clelland of Harvard University in 1973, in his earlier works stressed for testing of competency rather than intelligence (Belanich et al., 2016). As per him academic knowledge and aptitude cannot be a confirmation for a better performance. Rather a combination of few other traits and skill sets combined, will define the competency of one person towards a job. Competency as an underlying characteristics which is casually related to superior job performance of an effective manager has been proved by Boyatzis in his work (Boyatzis, 2014). Off late Competency is defined by many as the capability of applying skill, knowledge, ability, behaviour and personal characteristics to perform an assigned task, job or function in the best possible manner. The US department of Defence defines Competency as observable collection of traits such as knowledge, skills and characteristics which enable one to successfully perform ones job (Belanich et al., 2016).

While competency and its application in various facets of Human Resource Management practices is not new, there appears to be increase in its application along the human resource management functions such as recruitment and selection, performance management, development, and transition (Belanich et al., 2016). One of the practical applications of Competency is by way of competency mapping wherein the individual competencies are mapped against the organizational requirements making the job of HR professional easier. Competency mapping as a tool has always been used for the regular working employees in an organization for their talent management and appraisals. It is now applied for contractual employees seeking employment from other organization which would make them a potential employee (Yuvaraj, 2011). This is where the competency gained by the Defence personnel in their second career comes into play.

There are various competency dictionaries for various corporate organizations, government agencies and international agencies. (*Competency Model* ® ©2012, 2012) of Society of Human Resource Management defines the competency at four different levels as early level, mid, senior and executive level. In Indian context the Government of India has a taxonomy of competencies for the Indian Civil Services (GoI, 2014). Similarly the United Nations define its competency models under three verticals of Core Values followed by Core competencies and Managerial or Functional competencies (United Nations, 2014). Various researchers have identified and clustered competencies of military leaders or defence officers in various forms. Whereas, these studies in past have universal and overlapping competencies to project, none of these studies talk about the competencies which have utility in civil world. (Young & Dulewicz, 2005) in their research have collaborated these competencies into four clusters while (Wolters et al., 2014) have spoken about various leadership competencies of defence officers. Various doctrines of the three wings of armed forces also mention few core values and skills which denote the competencies of the serving personnel. (Meerits & Kivipõld, 2020) in their study have compared the leadership competencies of various foreign militaries across spectrum. This study found commonality in the leadership competencies among military leaders.

Defence Officers Competency

There is not a single or unifying approach where a subject as complex and ambiguous as competency can be assessed (General et al., 2013). Based on the survey and interviews of Defence Officers serving at various Defence think tanks around India, following competencies which define a Defence personnel, as obtained from the questionnaire of 149 respondents were verified. The following twenty eight competencies were arrived at. Detailed explanation of each of these competencies as obtained through interviews and discussions is explained below.

PERFORMANCE	COMPETENCY	DEFINATION
	COMMUNICATION ABILITY	The ability to communicate effectively both in writing and orally with managers, staffs, colleagues, clients and public, and conveying information precisely, accurately and in a time bound manner to relevant individual or groups. This includes both the ability to listen to the colleagues and conveying the idea in brief and crisp manner to the intended audience. Defence officers leading men in field show exemplary communication skills in receiving and conveying the orders.
	STRATEGIC THINKING	Strategic thinking refers to how an individual looks beyond the immediate and considers long term goals of the organization and uses all his resources in alignment of these efforts in the strategic direction. All higher level planning in defence forces are done keeping the larger picture of national security in picture. Same traits are valued at the managerial level in corporate organizations.

PLANNING & ORGANISING	The ability to plan, coordinate, organise and monitor activities and other related functions or tasks for self and team members. This includes team planning, risk management and holding the team members accountable for their jobs. This is similar in defence and corporate where the project or task received from the higher echelons is executed on ground through a coordinated team effort.
RESOURCEFULNESS	For both the corporate and defence services, resource is limited. This forms one of the major constraints in planning. Resourcefulness is defined as best utilization of the available resources in hand to deliver the strategic objective of the organization.
DISCIPLINE	Discipline forms the core of defence services. This basic competency engrained in the services forms the fundamental of other management competencies. Discipline is defined as self control measure ensured by obeying rules and be consistent and punctual in the job which one is entrusted with. A disciplined manager or a leader goes a long way in instilling the same traits in other team members.
MOTIVATING & CONTROLLING	Motivating and controlling the team means the ability to control the team, ability to inspire trust and confidence, to lead by example and to be good listener to understand peoples concern at work. This competency allows leaders to maintain internal controls at work place and create an environment which prevent conflicts of interest. These competencies are central to both the defence and corporate sector alike.
DEVELOPING	Developing is defined as developing and upgrading people in terms of their performance and further towards fulfilling their potential. Human Resource is one of the two basic inputs in an organization apart from capital. Continuous training and development, professional up gradation, and awareness build up of its employees, leads to better result for the organization.

	JUDGEMENT SKILLS	Judgement is defined as the ability to critically analyse the available problem and situation and take a calculated decision based on the facts rather than assumptions. It includes the conduct of the action and intimation to the management and to take tough decisions when necessary. Any military commander is entrusted with this authority in time of needs which is similarly replicated in civil world.
PERSONAL	ETHICS & INTEGRITY	Ethics is defined as the discipline that separates good from bad and right from wrong . Integrity is defined as consistently behaviour in an open, fair and transparent manner, honouring one's commitments and working to uphold the organizational values. These core competencies in any individual are the hallmark of a positive work environment. Defence officers are selected with this trait as one the factors for recruitment.
	ANALYTICAL THINKING	Analytical thinking is the application of one's cognitive ability involving breaking the problem into smaller parts, analysing its implication and proposing a step by step manner progress. This is done at a tactical level and involves quick decision without much consultation from the higher formation. This competency is gained over the period by defence officers with experience and is handy in decision making in any critical situation.
	INITIATIVE	Initiative means that one identifies what needs to be done on his own judgement and takes action to perform the job. It is an individual competency where an individual seeks actively to improve projects, activities, work methods and processes. This competency of an individual is acknowledged both in defence as well as corporate sector.
	LEADERSHIP	Leadership is defined as the ability to direct and guide a team towards an organizational goal. It consist of many facets and is includes motivating people to actively participate in assigned task and achieve high performance. A leader just like in defence services sets goals, creates a work environment, delegates, motivates and leads the team by example.

PEOPLE	TEAM WORK	The ability to work well in groups and teams, building camaraderie with the team members in achieving the desired task is called Team work. This type of trait is people centric and considers the team as stepping stone to the final goal. The individual builds a constructive working relationship where each individual in the team is consulted, delegated with work and supported to achieve the end result. Corporate sector appreciates this trait as much as the defence service does.
	DELEGATION	Delegation as is self explanatory involves entrusting certain work or tasks to the other staff or members and assisting them to achieve the final result. This factor allows individual team members to feel a part of the organization and further leads to personal development of the individual. This trait exhibited by the leader in field or managers in corporate builds trust in the team members and improves performance.
	COOPERATION	Cooperation is a means of developing understanding, cohesion, and respect for organizational objectives and endeavours. It facilitates cohesion and camaraderie, and motivates partners/team members to accomplish joint goals. With this trait the leader takes each member of the team along, considering their positive and negatives and aligning them towards a common goal.
	DIVERSITY	Diversity is a people centric trait of an individual which supports a team work which diverse background. It believes in the principles that a team with diverse background like ethnicity, religion, colour and sex have individual bit to contribute to the project and may add value to the task. Defence forces have always been as diverse as possible and corporate sector is following this footsteps.
PERSEVERANCE	HARD WORK	Persistence hard work is known to give better results. All the planning and organizing would be useless unless supported by hard work over a period of time. This competency of an individual provides an endurance to a task at hand and helps one achieve the required goal.

	RESILIENCE	Resilience means the ability to adapt to and work with a variety of situations. It means how an individuals or group is find a solution to an unexpected problem or situation and come out of it. This competency both in field and market helps an individual to leads the organization through adversity tenacity.
PRESENCE	ORGANIZATIONAL AWARENESS	Organizational awareness is defined as the complete information about ones job both at the tactical level and strategic level. This competency of an individual allows one to perform better as one is able to connect the dots between the output of his or her project and the ultimate organizational role. Defence officers, weather working in field or in aid to civil authorities adjusts their work, meeting the overall goal of armed forces. Similarly a factory level manager can supervise his subordinates towards the organizational goals.
	TECHNOLOGICAL ABILITY	Technological ability is the professional competence or skill based expertise in a particular job. Even at managerial level, qualification in the system and its related activities is a pre requisite for an effective supervision. These qualifications can be sought by vocational training or an university degree/diploma. Organizations and military world over continuously train their manpower for particular roles which improves their competence.
	EMPATHY	It is the characteristics of an individual to be present, to understand, of being aware or being sensitive to the pain or requirement of others. A true leader in armed forces or a team lead in corporate should have this quality in order to better manage human resource. This trait gives the ability to an individual to better harness the HR capability of a team or a group
PERSPECTIVE	INNOVATIVE	Innovative traits allow one to think with a different perspective and give an out of box solution to problems. An innovative individual would keep up-to-date with relevant knowledge and technology and would advocate the application of acquired knowledge. Innovation is the key to progress in the competitive corporate world. Defence officers by virtue of their experience have always improvised the available resources to meet the desired goal.

VISION	Vision defines what an organization aspires to achieve in future. A person with this competency would hold a holistic view of business beyond functional boundaries, scan the environment, organise information, would continuously give feedback to top management and thus would work towards the final goal. A visionary leader in forces or in corporate consolidates all tasks towards a single aim.
PROBLEM SOLVING ABILITY	Problem solving ability is defined as the ability of an individual which applies critical thinking and cognitive skills to gather information about the problem and keeping all the stakeholders in picture would evaluate the solution. The individual utilizes the available resources to find a solution to the problem in an effective way.
STAMINA	Stamina defines the physical capacity of a person to sustain in a prolonged and stressful activity. This is developed over a period through physical exercise and training. Defence officers are often rated high on these traits owing to their work environment and nature of job. Many corporate and civil job requirements ask for good mental and physical requirements owing to the diversity of job profiles.
COMMAND	Regimental structure of the armed forces gives it a command structure. A command should be crisp and brief and delivered in a manner that it meets its intended aim. Defence officers are groomed in such traits. It forms a backbone of strong military leadership. Effective communication is also a pre requisite for corporate sector.
COURAGE	Courage is a mental and moral strength to face difficult situation without any fear. Armed forces officers are supposed to be courageous in this regard. Courage gives the ability to an individual to take decisions in tough times without fear.
BRAVERY	Bravery is the central characteristics of any soldier to display the traits of heroism, spirit, courage and valour in times of need. It is an admirable quality of being able to confront frightening thing, leading from the front. Such traits are displayed by armed forces personnel in line of fire. Bravery gives one the confidence to take risk in business.

3. Research Methodology

The primary data for the research is gathered through a questionnaire circulated amongst 149 retired defence officers with more than 10 years of service. Secondary data were gathered through various competency compendiums of the United Nations, Indian Civil Services and the Indian Armed Forces websites.

Further data analysis of the information gathered through the questionnaire was done using SPSS 20 software. Reliability check of the gathered data was done to confirm further test. This was followed by factor analysis of the obtained competencies in order to arrive at the cluster of competencies which are important in second career of defence officers. These clusters of competencies would be further used to arrive at a competency model.

Data Analysis and Results

The reliability analysis of the data obtained was done using Cronbach’s Alpha (α) Coefficient. Cronbach’s Alpha is an index of reliability and it accounts for the deviation. A higher value of α of 0.7 and above is an excellent alpha value. This coefficient is also known the internal consistency reliability of the test as it measures how reliable the data is for further testing. Adopting constructs or variables that have already been validated by means of interviews with the experts, content validity of the variables was verified. The data was collected via on-line Google Form survey and the reliability measure of Cronbach alpha has been observed as 0.918 (Table 1).

Table: 1 Reliability Analysis of Questionnaire Data

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.918	28

From the Table 1, the Cronbach’s Alpha (α) coefficient for the 28 items is 0.918, which is much greater than 0.7 and thus suggest that the items or variables have relatively good internal consistency and it is reliable for repeated tests.

Reliability analysis is followed by “Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Barlett’s” test of sphericity. These tests are performed to establish the sampling adequacy of data. These tests are pre requisite for the factor analysis and confirms the suitability of data for factor analysis. A “KMO value above 0.5 and Bartlett’s test significance level less than 0.05” is an indication of significant correlation in the data set. From table 2, it is seen that the KMO is 0.865 which is more than 0.5 and thus the data is acceptable to perform data reduction by factor analysis. Further bartlett’s test significance level is $0.000 < 0.05$, indicating that the variables are corelated, which make it adequate to perform factor analysis. It also implies that the participants strongly agree with individual items.

Table: 2 Assessment of Data Adequacy for Factor Analysis

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.865
	Approx. Chi-Square	2062.202
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	378
	Sig.	.000

Factor Analysis on “principal component analysis” or PCA is carried out to find out whether certain factors (here competencies) can be clustered together implying some underlying relation among the factors or some of them can be removed, as redundant. Fig. 1 depicts the the Scree Plot output of factor analysis. Factor analysis was performed in the current study in order to reduce down to the competencies which describe a military veteran in their second career.

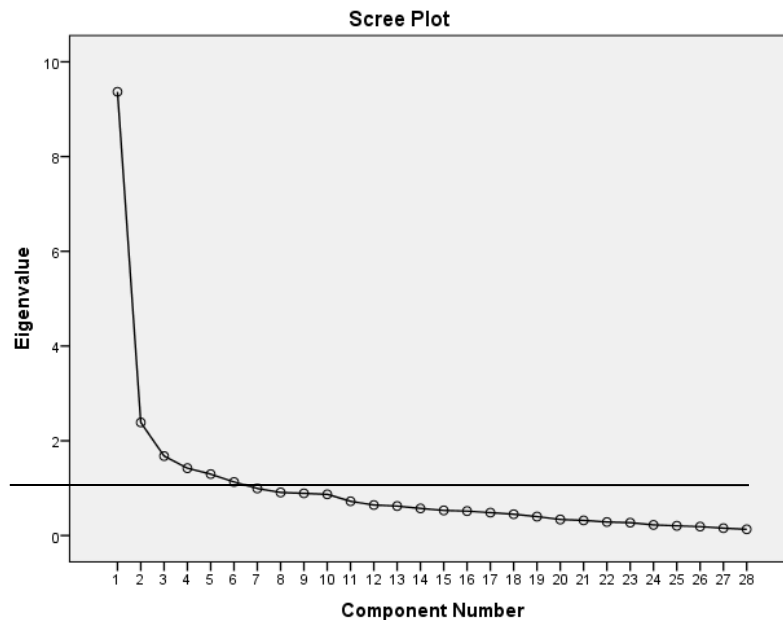


Fig. 1-Factor Analysis Scree Plot

The X axis of the scree plot depicts the factors and the Y axis depicts the corresponding eigen values. The factors whose Eigen values are 9.367, 2.387, 1.678, 1.421, 1.297 and 1.130 are considered. The 9.367 is the Max Eigen value making this factor the most significant, followed by reduced significance of other factors. Since, all these factors are having Eigen value greater than one and share maximum variance hence, they define the most significant cluster of competencies.

Table 3- Table representing Competencies and their Eigen values

Component	Total Variance Explained								
	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	9.367	33.453	33.453	9.367	33.453	33.453	4.709	16.818	16.818
2	2.387	8.525	41.978	2.387	8.525	41.978	3.205	11.445	28.262
3	1.678	5.992	47.969	1.678	5.992	47.969	2.705	9.659	37.921
4	1.421	5.077	53.046	1.421	5.077	53.046	2.272	8.115	46.036
5	1.297	4.631	57.677	1.297	4.631	57.677	2.254	8.049	54.085
6	1.130	4.036	61.713	1.130	4.036	61.713	2.136	7.628	61.713
7	.994	3.549	65.262						
8	.909	3.246	68.508						
9	.891	3.180	71.688						

10	.870	3.107	74.795
11	.723	2.581	77.376
12	.644	2.298	79.674
13	.622	2.223	81.897
14	.572	2.042	83.940
15	.530	1.892	85.832
16	.516	1.843	87.675
17	.483	1.724	89.399
18	.450	1.608	91.007
19	.399	1.427	92.434
20	.338	1.206	93.640
21	.319	1.139	94.779
22	.285	1.018	95.797
23	.272	.972	96.769
24	.225	.803	97.572
25	.205	.730	98.303
26	.189	.673	98.976
27	.155	.553	99.529
28	.132	.471	100.000

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Based on the Factor Analysis as discussed in previous section, factors are compounded together into 6 principal components. These six components represent the six competencies of defence officers as obtained from the study.

Varimax with Kaiser Normalization rotation was carried out in order to do principal component analysis. Through nine iterations, all the six factors emerged which means that the “normalisation converged in 9 iterations”. Table 4 represents the Rotated component matrix, after nine iteration of the available data set.

Table 4- Table representing Rotated Component Matrix

		Rotated Component Matrix ^a							
		Component							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	COMPETENCY	COMPETENCY CLUSTER
1.	.795							COMMUNICATION ABILITY	PERFORMANCE
2.	.697							STRATEGIC THINKING	
3.	.649							PLANNING & ORGANISING	
4.	.751							RESOURCEFULNESS	
5.	.585							DISCIPLINE	
6.	.589							MOTIVATING & CONTROLLING	

7.	.707		DEVELOPING	
8.	.538		JUDGEMENT SKILLS	
9.	.620		ETHICS & INTEGRITY	PERSONAL
10.	.803		ANALYTICAL THINKING	
11.	.614		INITIATIVE	
12.	.723		LEADERSHIP	
13.	.597		TEAM WORK	PEOPLE
14.	.655		DELEGATION	
15.	.720		COOPERATION	
16.	.650		DIVERSITY	
17.	.682		HARD WORK	PERSEVERANCE
18.	.637		RESILLIANCE	
19.	.570		ORGANIZATIONAL AWARENESS	PRESENCE
20.	.576		TECHNOLOGICAL ABILITY	
21.	.650		EMPATHY	
22.	.748		INNOVATIVE	PERSPECTIVE
23.	.638		VISION	
24.	.567		PROBLEM SOLVING ABILITY	
25.			STAMINA	"NO SIGNIFICANT RELATION WITH OTHER FACTORS"
26.			COMMAND	
27.			COURAGE	
28.			BRAVERY	

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 9 iterations.

Table 3 and Table 4 depicts the total variance explained and rotated component matrix of factor analysis. From these two tables, following interpretations can be made. The eigen value of factor 1 is 9.367 with 33.453% variance. All these variables are related to Performance based competencies displayed by defence officers. Hence the cluster of eight competencies is named as Performance. The eigen value of factor 2 is 2.387 with 8.525 % variance. All these variables are related to Individual personal competencies displayed by defence officers. Hence the cluster of four competencies is

named as Personal. The eigen value of factor 3 is 1.678 with 5.992 % variance. All these variables are related to team or people related competencies displayed by defence officers. Hence the cluster of four competencies is named as People. The eigen value of factor 4 is 1.421 with 5.077 % variance. All these variables are related to perseverance related competencies displayed by defence officers. Hence the cluster of two competencies is named as Perseverance. The eigen value of factor 5 is 1.297 with 4.631 % variance. All these variables are related to awareness related competencies displayed by defence officers. Hence the cluster of three competencies is named as Presence. The eigen value of factor 6 is 1.130 with 4.036 % variance. All these variables are related to vision related competencies displayed by defence officers. Hence the cluster of three competencies is named as Perspective.

Of the 28 competencies the last four competencies doesn't have a significant relation with others, after the iteration. This confirms that these competencies or factors are not related to the above six clusters and thus can be omitted from the analysis. These include stamina, command, courage and bravery. Thus the results prove that these four competencies does not have the same level of effect in corporate sector as does the other 24 competencies under the six cluster.

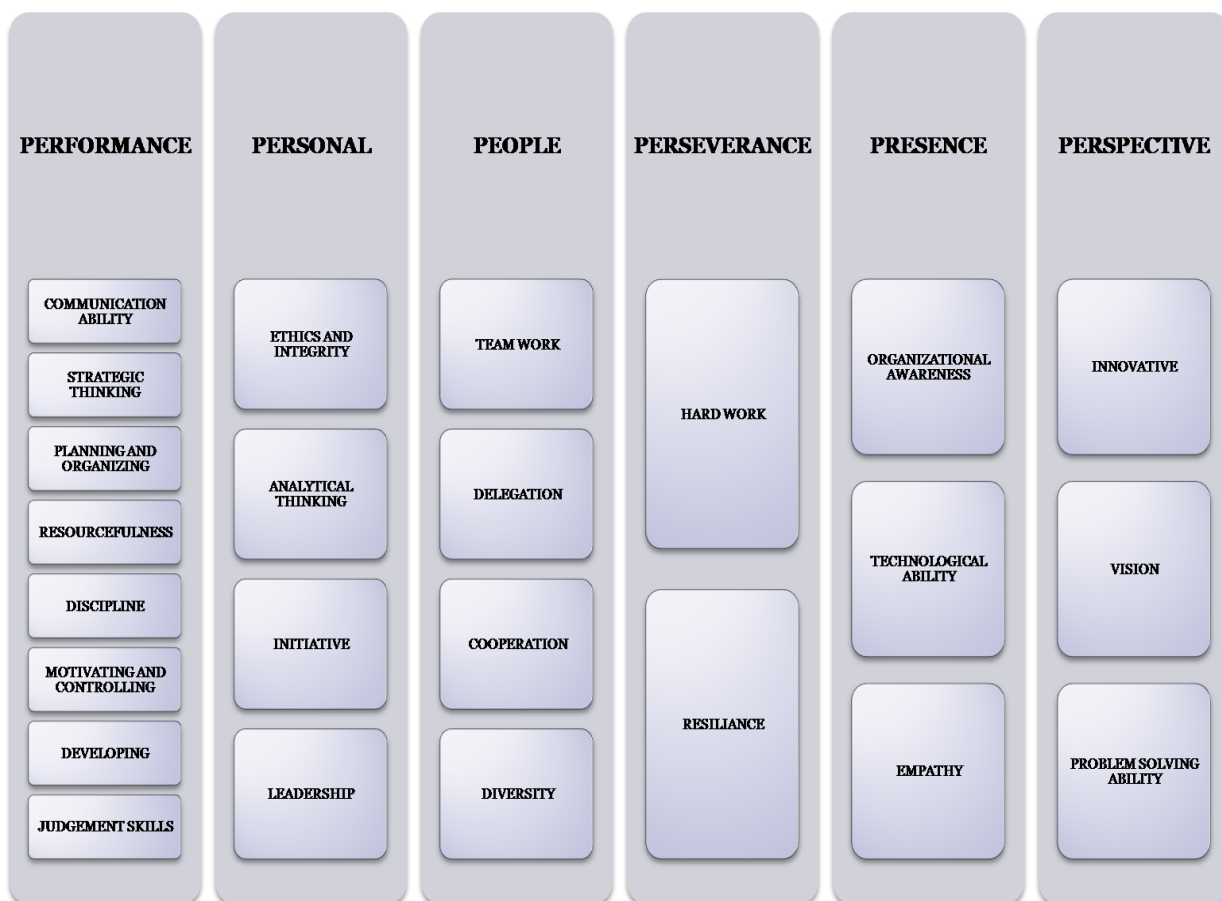


Fig. 2- Competency of Defence Officers under six clusters heads

From the matrix in Fig 2, it can be seen that Factor 1 is named as Performance based competency. It includes communication ability, strategic thinking, planning and organising, resourcefulness, discipline, motivating and controlling, developing and judgement skills. Factor 2 named as Personal

competency includes ethics and integrity, analytical thinking, initiative and leadership. Factor 3 named as People based competency includes team work, delegation, cooperation and diversity. Factor 4 named as Perseverance includes hard work and resilience. Factor 5 named as Presence includes organizational awareness, technological ability and empathy. Finally Factor 6 named as Perspective includes the competencies of Innovative, Vision and problem solving ability.

Research implications

This research paper has significant managerial implications. The result of competencies for defence officer as obtained from the study is unique in its approach. Defence officers retire young and significantly join the civil job market both in government and corporate sectors. The competencies harnessed by them over their service period have been clearly brought out in this study through the survey and literature and validated through the empirical tools. It provides a conceptual framework which can be utilized by the managers in following ways:

Recruitment and selection of the employees with defence background would definitely benefit from this study's result. These competencies are not spelt out in such details anywhere with regards to defence officers and would significantly contribute in selection strategies.

In talent management of the employees, particularly talent management of the veterans employed in the organization. The organizations could focus on the skills and competencies which they find lacking as per the job profile. Accordingly as per the requisite competency sets these veterans can be employed in job.

Competitive leverage of the organization in hiring a skilled set of experienced man power that can be beneficial to the company. An analysis of the competencies of defence officers can help organizations in gaining advantage over its competitors.

Organizational Performance of organizations is a function of human resource, which is further dependent on the competencies and skill sets of the employees. Thus a better understanding of its human resources in terms of competencies gives an organization a better chance of improving its performance.

Individuals retiring of defence services and opting to go for a second career are always perplexed in presenting their competencies to the recruiters. This study aims at consolidating the competencies of military leaders which can be put to good use in nation building.

4. Conclusion and Future scope of work

The current paper on the competencies of defence officers or military leaders aimed at consolidating the useful and applicable competencies which are sought after in civil world. Defence officers and their competencies is a less researched area and this paper tried to do the foundational research in the area. A total of twenty eight competencies were factor analysed to approach to a set of six core competencies which a retired veteran is expected to carry with them at their retirement from armed forces. These six competencies is a result of qualification and years of expertise and experience gathered by the veterans over the years in military service. Though the scope and requirement of military service is very different from the corporate world, the management fundamental remains same. This makes a retired defence officers in their mid career age, a resourceful entity. Thus, this

study with its framework would be beneficial for corporate and government alike in their human resource planning of military veterans.

The study was aimed to analyse the defence officers who after retirement at a relatively young age can go for a second career. Such study can be replicated to other such services like the paramilitary service which have a different role and expertise of manpower available with them. Further, the competencies obtained can be mapped against different organizational requirements to provide a ready reference for the recruiters. Future scope of this study could include formulating an AI model for the military veteran's resettlement which can have a dual purpose viz, resettlement of the retired personnel on one hand and also help in effective utilization of these trained manpower in nation building.

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