

Competency Tool for Delivery Agents

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ABSTRACT

This review study explores the need and requirement of a competency tool for the demographic of delivery agents. A new measure for forecasting and assessing the quality of skills, abilities and knowledge of people who are employed as delivery agents or porters. It can be designed to identify and distinguish the various competencies a delivery person possesses. This can further aid the various processes in an organization like recruitment, selection, training, appraisals, feedbacks, promotions, etc. Since the Covid 19 pandemic, the surge in demand for the employment of people in the delivery sector has been incredible. Consumers, now, make a decision about a particular brand or company based on their delivery services excessively. Hence, it is imperative for organizations to be wise while employing delivery persons. This study aims to examine existing literature to gain insights into the various competencies that can be measured using a competency tool and are considered necessary for a delivery porter. The review begins by discussing the concept of competencies, skills and abilities and their significance in the industry. It highlights the demanding nature of the blue-collar jobs and the increasing dependency of various businesses on delivery agents. The literature review analyses various reasons and need of identifying competencies and having psychometric tools to measure them. The findings suggest that such competency tools can help the organizations to hire skilled employees, provide effective training, promote on the basis of competencies and achieve better performance. Such tools would also help the individuals achieve self-awareness, wherein they can work on themselves to become skillful.

Keywords: *Competency, Competency Mapping, Delivery Agent, Psychometric Properties, Skills, Blue-Collar Jobs*

The concept of competency was first introduced in the USA by White (1959) to describe the attributes that contribute to employees' high performance and motivation. In today's competitive business world, human resources are key priorities to ensure the productivity of an organization, and their competencies are also given equal importance. There are multiple definitions of competency in the literature and research, but they all essentially refer to an individual's knowledge, skills, and abilities. From an organization's perspective, competency may be defined as one's ability to do a job effectively.

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Today, organizations are focusing on hiring competent professionals and striving to build their existing workforce's competencies. In this contemporary world environment, with digital transformations and technological developments, organizations are looking for employees who are dynamic and flexible to adjust to this working environment. The current business world has been renamed the 'VUCA' world, that is, volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. The present scenario of the VUCA world demands that firms put forward sustainable resources to survive and compete. Hence, organizations are looking for capable and competent employees that result in higher performance at lower costs. Competencies lead to self-awareness; the more self-aware an employee is, the less incongruity in performance is expected.

Competencies can be classified as either basic or professional. They can be further classified as generic, managerial, functional, technical, and behavioral. The skill and knowledge aspects of the definition of competency are often associated with a job or work. They are often acquired through training, education, or skill-building exercises. Behavioral competence is often associated with soft competencies pertaining to personal behaviors or attitudes. These might be acquired after considerable time and effort, such as through experiences, coaching, mentoring, and counseling.

Competency Mapping and its Need

Competency mapping has emerged as an essential component of various HR processes, including talent management, induction, appraisals, training, and development. This trend reflects a new era in the field of HR, offering not only efficient resource utilization but also individual growth and development. Competency mapping involves recruiting the most suitable candidates for specific jobs and enhancing the skills of already competent individuals through training and performance evaluations (Sugumari & Andal, 2014). Over time, the term "competency mapping" has gained prominence in the business language and is applied in diverse ways (Das & Mukherjee, 2012).

Organizations employ competency mapping as a process to identify the key competencies required for a job or an individual. This involves collecting information about the behavioral attributes, knowledge, and skills necessary to achieve high-quality work outcomes. By assessing strengths and weaknesses, competency mapping promotes self-awareness and personal development. It outlines the skills, traits, experience, and knowledge needed to perform a job effectively. Moreover, organizations often utilize this process to differentiate high performers for various purposes, such as succession planning. Competency mapping also informs critical HR practices like rewards, appraisals, and promotions, complementing the organization's mission, vision, and goals by addressing the "how" aspect (Das & Mukherjee, 2012).

In the 21st-century volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world, organizations strive to attract, manage, and retain top talent. As a result, their reliance on competencies and competency mapping has increased, given the broader range of applications. Competency mapping enables organizations to leverage and integrate their existing human resources based on their competencies, encompassing knowledge, skills, and abilities aligned with the organization's goals, vision, and mission (Das & Mukherjee, 2012). By utilizing competency mapping effectively, organizations can align their human capital with strategic objectives, optimizing their workforce's potential and driving success in a dynamic business environment.

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Delivery Agents and Porters

Millions of individuals globally have been adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a heightened level of uncertainty. Blue-collar workers, in particular, faced numerous challenges due to the economic slowdown caused by lockdown measures. However, there is a glimmer of hope for this group in the Indian labor market, as there has been a steady increase in blue-collar jobs with the gradual reopening of businesses. Notably, there has been significant growth in traditional sectors such as infrastructure, manufacturing, and construction, as well as emerging sectors like telecom, logistics, and e-commerce. This rise in employment opportunities, particularly in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, has led to a reverse migration trend, halting the wave of job-seeking induced migration. In the coming months, there is an expected surge in demand for delivery and driver positions, making the delivery crew group a focal point of this study.

Delivery agents, also known as porters, play a crucial role in the logistics and distribution sectors of the economy. Given the increasing number of businesses and start-ups offering delivery services, it becomes imperative to recruit individuals who prioritize behavioral competencies over formal education. In today's rapidly evolving society, marketers need to be aware of the advent of the delivery economy. The methods and choices for delivering products and services are constantly changing, and companies must align their customer experience and marketing strategies with the operational teams responsible for enhancing the delivery experience. Meeting customer expectations in terms of quick and reliable delivery is essential, as failure to do so can significantly impact the perception of a business. Therefore, brands now bear the responsibility of ensuring timely delivery and maintaining the quality of their products. Simplifying the delivery process is a key factor in improving customer service and ultimately boosting sales.

To excel in delivery roles, such as delivery porters or agents, sales associates, and sales assistants, certain competencies are crucial. These include responsibility, psychological attributes like success, risk-taking, and self-esteem, as well as behavioral competencies like creativity, innovation, self-motivation, ethics, and a committed effort. Additionally, effective communication skills such as persuasion, negotiation, social and emotional intelligence, and proficient speech and listening play a vital role in this position. The literature supports a positive correlation between competencies and job performance, and it also suggests a significant relationship between marketing and sales skills and export performance. By aligning marketing and customer experience strategies with operational teams, and by providing training and support to skilled laborers, India can leverage the expansion of blue-collar jobs to further develop into a competitive and high-growth economy. The Indian government has already taken steps in this direction by establishing organizations and departments to address the growing need for skilled labor, emphasizing the importance of the blue-collar workforce in uncertain economic times.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In their article, Gooptu, Bros, and Chowdhury (2023) shed light on the significant issue of skill mismatch in the Indian labor market. The article emphasizes the importance and urgency of expanding vocational training programs to bridge the gap between industry requirements and the skills possessed by the workforce. It brings attention to the current situation where vocational training provided by the government is available but inadequate, failing to meet the demands of the industry. Consequently, there is a pressing need for proper certification and recognition of skills to ensure successful employment outcomes.

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Agarwal and Roy (2022) conducted a qualitative study examining the psychological aspects of food delivery personnel during challenging times. The researchers focused on understanding the impact of changing working conditions and occupational stress experienced by food delivery agents. The study revealed three major themes: perceived threat, self-protective behavior, and perceived benefits. The aim was to mitigate or eliminate negative emotions arising from adverse events. Interestingly, the findings indicated that food delivery personnel experienced both negative and positive emotions in their work.

Rao et al. (2022) conducted a study on the future employment trends regarding White-Collar and Blue-Collar jobs. The authors addressed the stigma attached to blue-collar jobs and the challenges associated with them. This stigma is often a result of lower pay and the perceived unpleasantness associated with physical labor. Despite this stigma, various industries such as manufacturing, e-commerce, logistics, and construction are currently experiencing a severe shortage of blue-collar workers, leading to an increased demand for such employees. However, blue-collar workers face several challenges, including underemployment, lack of job security, inadequate compensation, and the threat of automation.

Waiker, Siddiqui, and Ansari (2022) conducted a review focused on employees' competency mapping and output management, recognizing the importance of employee development. It is crucial for organizations to identify and nurture specific competencies within their workforce to ensure efficient functioning. Competency mapping provides employees with a better understanding of their unique competencies and helps them adapt and compete in a multitasking environment. This approach facilitates accurate job analysis, strong job descriptions, and aids in the recruitment and selection processes. Additionally, it allows for the design and incorporation of effective training and development programs.

Aggarwal (2021) highlights the significance and relevance of upskilling blue-collar workers in the current scenario. The issue lies not in the availability of jobs or a shortage of labor supply but in the skill mismatch. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many companies faced difficulties as blue-collar workers left in large numbers. Various industries, including retailing platforms, food delivery services, startups, and both multinational corporations (MNCs) and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), heavily rely on blue-collar workers, and the demand for such workers continues to rise. With adequate skill development, blue-collar workers can become vital contributors to a company's success and serve as a conduit for societal development, contributing to the transformation from a developing nation to a developed one, both at micro and macro levels.

Hogarth (2021) explores the economic response to the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically discussing its impact on employment, immigration, and skill policy. The article highlights the increasing demand for both high-skilled and low-skilled jobs. The author emphasizes the importance of skill development among the population and the need for policy changes to support skill development and migration hiring. Policy renewal is seen as crucial to ensure that Europe has the necessary skills for a rapid and sustainable economic recovery and future growth.

Matar, Ahamat, and Ismail (2021) conducted a literature review to develop a comprehensive competency model for the manufacturing industries in the context of Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR 4.0). Their research resulted in a model consisting of 64 skills and competencies categorized into 20 subcategories and 8 higher-level classes. The findings suggest that employees in the future will need to possess behavioral competencies such as teamwork and

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decision-making, regardless of their position or job role, to succeed in the context of Industry 4.0.

Barber (2020) conducted research focused on the relevance of career development theories for blue-collar workers in the manufacturing industry. Interviews were conducted with five participants working in manufacturing, covering their first job, most recent job, and most significant job. The study explored their duties, required skills, time commitment, reasons for leaving, and opportunities for development. The results highlighted significant implications for potential employees and employers. With the labor shortage, there is an increased need for semi-skilled blue-collar workers. It is advantageous for businesses to recruit and train blue-collar workers who can learn and advance into more technologically and administratively advanced positions.

METHODOLOGY

Review of literature was conducted to write the study. Existing evidence were summarized and compiled in order to improve the general efficacy of testing. Secondary reporting involves research contained in research journals and other related papers. Sources like google scholar, Research Gate and Jstor were used and papers were found using specific key words, the papers studied are dated between 2013-2023.

The paper tries to study the necessity of constructing a competency tool consisting of psychometric properties of reliability, validity and norms for the blue-collar job demographic of delivery agents. Competency is the capacity or ability to engage successfully with one's surroundings and efficiency in achieving goals. The aim is to study the various competencies that are considered essential for delivery agents and porters. The study also explains how a competency tool is beneficial and need of the current delivery economy for individuals and organizations.

DISCUSSION

Competency mapping is a strategic HR approach that helps organizations align their HR practices with their goals and purpose. In today's dynamic and competitive business environment, organizations recognize the importance of investing in long-term resources, particularly talented and competent individuals who can enhance performance while reducing costs. Competencies play a crucial role in fostering self-awareness and minimizing performance inconsistencies among employees.

Blue-collar jobs, traditionally characterized by manual labor and hourly wages, form the foundation of the modern economy. However, there is a lack of reliable tools to map the skill sets of blue-collar workers, particularly delivery agents, who have become increasingly significant in sectors such as logistics, e-commerce, and delivery services. The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the importance of blue-collar workers and their challenges, but there has also been a rise in blue-collar job opportunities.

To improve the delivery experiences and meet the increasing demand for skilled labor, organizations recognize the need to assess and upskill their delivery personnel. The performance and attitude of delivery agents directly reflect the company's image, and enhancing their skills can lead to improved revenue and customer service. The Indian government has established various organizations and initiatives to address the need for skilled labor, promoting skill development and contributing to the country's growth.

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Competency mapping is a process that involves identifying the abilities, knowledge, behaviors, and skills required for specific job titles. It helps organizations streamline processes, enhance efficiency, and influence strategies related to learning and development, recruitment, retention, and assessment. By assessing competency strengths, weaknesses, and gaps, companies can make informed decisions about training efforts, resource allocation, and development opportunities aligned with organizational goals. Competency assessments empower employees to manage their careers, understand their potential, and seek growth opportunities within the organization.

Implementing a competency tool for delivery agents can provide clarity and accuracy regarding their skill set and help them set achievable goals. It also facilitates employee development, allowing organizations to create individualized development plans, provide rewards and mentoring, and focus training programs where they are most needed. Competency-based assessments enable individuals to gauge their performance and contribute to their organization while fostering work satisfaction and retention.

In conclusion, competency mapping is a valuable approach for organizations to assess and develop their workforce's skills and capabilities, particularly in the context of blue-collar jobs and delivery personnel. By aligning HR practices with organizational goals and investing in employee development, companies can enhance performance, improve customer experiences, and contribute to their growth and competitiveness in the global marketplace.

Recommendations

- Further research needs to be done on the selected demographic of delivery agents in the Indian context.
- The organizations need to look into building a skilled workforce for efficient and effective performance.
- Various processes of an organization, starting from selection and recruitment to appraisals, can employ the use of the discussed competency tool in taking crucial decisions and maintaining unbiased opinions.
- People looking for employment in the delivery sector can benefit greatly from becoming aware about their competencies and use them to land better jobs and earn more.
- The tool could be customized to fit the requirements of different organizations and industries.
- The tool could also be customized to fit other blue- and white-collar job roles depending on the competency being measured.
- Developing a tool in regional and local languages can provide the opportunity to obtain a larger sample size and establish the psychometric properties efficiently.

Limitations

- The sample size could be a limitation in the study.
- The data was primarily collected from employees residing and working in Delhi NCR. Other Indian states and UTs weren't given equal consideration.
- The study was conducted over a limited time period only.
- Findings from this single study may not be representative of the entire population of delivery agents and porters.

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- Since the tool would be a self-report questionnaire, there is a risk of common method variance, where responses may be influenced by the same methodological factors rather than the constructs themselves.
- Using only English language to develop the tool might limit the sample size to those who are familiar with the language and ignore those who aren't.

CONCLUSION

In today's competitive business world, human resources are crucial for organizational productivity, and their competencies are highly valued. Competency can be defined as an individual's ability to effectively perform a job from the organization's perspective. Competencies lead to self-awareness, reducing performance inconsistencies. Competency mapping has become an essential component of various HR processes, including talent management, induction, appraisals, training, and development. Competency mapping informs critical HR practices like rewards, appraisals, and promotions, aligning with the organization's mission, vision, and goals. Delivery agents, also known as porters, play a crucial role in the logistics and distribution sectors, particularly in the context of the growing delivery economy. Effective communication skills, responsibility, creativity, self-motivation, and ethical behavior are essential competencies for delivery roles. Competencies are positively correlated with job performance, and aligning marketing and customer experience strategies with operational teams can improve customer service and sales. The literature review highlights the importance of vocational training programs to bridge the skill mismatch in the Indian labor market and the need for proper certification and recognition of skills. Implementing a competency tool for delivery agents can improve their performance, contribute to the company's image, and lead to revenue growth and customer satisfaction. Overall, competency mapping is a valuable approach for organizations to assess and develop the skills of their workforce, especially in the context of blue-collar jobs.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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