EQUALITY IN COMPETENCY AMONG K-WORKERS: GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The government of Indonesia recognizes the importance of knowledge workers (k-workers) in driving economic growth and development. In today's rapidly changing and competitive global landscape, having a skilled and competent workforce is essential for the country to maintain its competitiveness and achieve its goals. The objective of this study is to determine gender equality in mastery of k-workers competence. Is there a difference in mastery of k-workers' competence in gender. There are some problems to be discussed in this study, namely (1) How does Technical Competence affect K-Workers Competence? (2) How does Human and Social Competence affect K-Workers' Competence? (3) How do Learning Competencies and Methodologies affect K-Workers Competencies? (4) Is Technical Competency different from K-Workers Competency between men and women? (5) Are Human and Social Competencies different from K-Workers Competencies between men and women? (6) Are the Learning Competencies and Methodologies different from the K-Workers Competencies between men and women? This study is a quantitative, supported by data from questionnaire distributed to students in faculty economic and business of Telkom University in the amount of 1401. The analyses were conducted through demographic analysis, descriptive analysis, using SEM and MGA analysis. The study shows that students' competency is not difference betwen gender. The findings have significance in terms of theory, practice, and policy formation and can contribute to practices in education and training institutions, industry, and employment empowerment agencies as well as testing and certification bodies.

Keywords: Gender, Competencies, K-Workers Competencies, SEM-PLS, MGA

Introduction

Gender diversity, inclusion, and empowerment in the workplace are frequently shaped by ingrained biases, which can be either deliberate or unintentional. inside the Korean context, these prejudices might materialize as discrimination, either overt or subtle, inside governmental and commercial entities (Ahn et al., 2020). The pursuit of gender equality in Korea necessitates a deep comprehension of variety, inclusion, and empowerment, specifically in using the capabilities of women.

The workplace in South Korea continues to face a chronic problem of gender inequality. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that cultural and societal prejudices are not the exclusive determinants of gender inequality in the workplace. While it is of utmost importance to tackle

these prejudices, it is equally vital to take into account the influence of personal decisions and society norms. The influence on women's family roles and job aspirations is often a result of a complicated interaction between personal decisions and established gender conventions (Lee et al., 2021).

When analyzing gender disparities in academic performance, it is crucial to acknowledge that boys and girls frequently demonstrate exceptional abilities in distinct academic domains, influenced by a range of factors including cultural, social, and educational circumstances. According to Cobb-Clark and Moschion (2017), boys typically demonstrate superior performance in arithmetic, whilst girls tend to excel in literacy. Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that these disparities in educational attainment across genders are not inherent or predestined. Their behavior is shaped by various elements, such as socio-economic position, preparedness for school in early life, and educational methodologies. Despite the rising levels of education and women's participation in traditionally male-dominated professions, women in South Korea continue to experience disparities, stereotypes, and bias in the workplace. Women frequently minimize their gender identity, such as motherhood, due to gender stereotyping, and instead adopt masculine characteristics in order to get recognition as professionals in the predominantly masculine workplace culture (Jung, 2023).

In addition, the Gender Development Index of South Korea reveals that women still encounter socio-economic disparities in comparison to men (Ford & Leist, 2021). The gender difference in South Korea further exacerbates the burden of ill-health and chronic disease among women. Gender disparities in mathematical abilities are commonly found, with males frequently exhibiting superior performance compared to girls. The disparities in mathematical abilities across genders can be ascribed to a confluence of biological, social, and cultural influences. Notwithstanding these disparities between genders, it is crucial to question and counteract conventional beliefs, and establish an all-encompassing atmosphere that fosters and sustains the advancement of mathematical abilities in both male and female pupils. Gender discrepancies and biases in the workforce impede the success of women and restrict their chances for career growth (Sampaio et al., 2017). To rectify these discrepancies and prejudices, it is imperative to enact measures and initiatives that foster gender parity, establish inclusive professional settings, and ensure women have equal chances to demonstrate their abilities and make meaningful contributions to the labor market.

This article focuses on the analysis and comparison of the skills of K-Workers, specifically in relation to gender differences. The goal of doing a comprehensive analysis is to assess the efficacy of the university's educational programs in equipping students with the requisite skills for achieving success, as well as to gain an understanding of the degree of proficiency among K-Workers, with a focus on gender differences. The paper analyzes the fundamental talents and abilities that define K-Workers, encompassing technical expertise, soft skills, and the capacity to adapt in the swiftly changing digital environment. The aim of this study is to analyze variances in class-wide competency levels in order to find patterns, strengths, and areas for development within University's educational framework.

Understanding the elements that affect the acquisition of K-Worker competences is crucial for educators, policymakers, and prospective students. Teachers can improve their teaching methods by integrating innovative ways that optimize the development of competencies (Santoso and Danang, 2023; Santoso and Fachrudin, 2023). Policymakers have the ability to synchronize educational policies with the specific needs and demands of various industries, thereby enabling a smooth and uninterrupted progression from the realm of academia to the realm of professional work. Prospective students can make informed judgments about their educational pursuits by selecting courses that offer the most favorable conditions for improving their skills and abilities (Santoso and Hasan, 2018).

This study aims to determine the tactics that lead to the effective development of K-Workers by conducting a comparative examination of their competence levels. These discoveries will lay the foundation for a cohort of experts who are equipped to thrive in the digital age.

Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis

The study done by Santoso and Hasan (2018), as well as the studies conducted by Santoso and Fachrudin (2023) and Santoso and Danang (2023), utilized different samples and produced different outcomes.

This study presents six hypotheses:

1. The study found that Technical Competence has a strong and favorable impact on the Competence of K-Workers among students in the Faculty of Economics at Telkom University.
2. The presence of Human and Social Competence has a notable and constructive impact on the level of K-Worker Competence among students enrolled in the Faculty of Economics at Telkom University.
3. The presence of Learning Competencies and Methodologies has a favorable and substantial influence on the development of K-Worker Competencies among students enrolled in the Faculty of Economics at Telkom University.
4. There was no disparity in technical proficiency between male and female students from the Faculty of Economics at Telkom University.
5. There was no significant difference in Human and Social Competence between male and female students from the Faculty of Economics at Telkom University.
6. There are no disparities in learning competence and methodology between male and female students from the Faculty of Economics at Telkom University.

Methodology

This study utilized Partial Least Squares (PLS) path modeling to examine and evaluate research ideas. The reason for selecting PLS path modeling is based on the investigative nature of our research. PLS-SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) is a favored approach for doing exploratory research due to its ability to promote the formulation of novel theories. The evaluation method had two unique steps, as outlined by Hair et al. (2011): firstly, the evaluation of the measurement model (outer model), and secondly, the analysis of the structural model (inner model).

During the analysis of the measurement model, we carefully examined various crucial factors. This involved checking the internal consistency of the measure by evaluating its composite reliability, examining the reliability of each individual indicator, evaluating convergent validity using metrics such as Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and factor loadings, and assuring discriminant validity. According to Hair et al. (2014), the evaluation of reflective measurement models primarily focuses on determining their convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was assessed by measuring the average variance extracted (AVE) and the reliability of the indicators (also known as outer loadings). Discriminant validity was examined using three methods: the Fornell-Larcker criterion, cross-loadings, and the innovative Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) technique.

We next proceeded to analyze the structural model of the PLS path model. This aspect of our study enabled us to ascertain the extent to which empirical evidence corroborated our theoretical concepts. Essentially, it functioned as a way to empirically validate the underlying idea or concept, as explained by Hair et al. in 2014. We conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the structural model, which involved analyzing collinearity using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), determining the significance and relevance of correlations by bootstrapping, and calculating $R2$ values. In addition, we employed the $f2$ effect size to quantify the influence of particular predictor constructs on endogenous constructs. The effect size indicates the magnitude of an effect, categorizing it as small, medium, or big, with corresponding values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, respectively, following the principles established by Cohen (1988).

To conduct a quantitative analysis on the capacities of K-Workers from different cohorts at the University, a sample size of 1,401 respondents will be used. The study will employ two statistical techniques, specifically Multiple Group Analysis (MGA) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), to comprehensively examine the associations and differences in the proficiency of K-Worker skills among various cohorts.

Multiple Group Analysis (MGA) is a statistical technique used to investigate and compare the structural links among several groups. The goal of this study is to assess and identify any substantial disparities in the proficiency level of K-Worker skills among multiple groups (Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, and Gudergan, 2018; Henseler, Ringle, and Sinkovics, 2009; Sarstedt, Henseler, and Ringle, 2011). The MGA framework, as described by Byrne (2016), provides a thorough framework for conducting significant group comparisons.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is a statistical technique used to examine complex relationships between variables and evaluate the suitability of a suggested model (Boslaugh, McNutt, 2008). The utilization of structural equation modeling (SEM) will be employed to construct and assess a theoretical framework that incorporates the connections between K-Worker abilities and various features within each cohort. Structural equation modeling (SEM) is a reliable and efficient approach for investigating and confirming hypothesized relationships, as explained by Kline (2015).

A purposive sampling method will be employed to select a sample of 1401 individuals, with the objective of ensuring representation from different cohorts within the University. The survey questionnaire will be given to participants to assess their self-perceived level of expertise in K-Worker abilities. Likert scale questions will be used to assess proficiency in technical skills, critical thinking, creativity, adaptability, and communication abilities.

The collected data will be analyzed using Multigroup Analysis (MGA) to investigate the structural connections between various cohorts and identify any significant differences in the proficiency of K-Worker abilities (Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, and Gudergan, 2018; Henseler, Ringle, and Sinkovics, 2009; Sarstedt, Henseler, and Ringle, 2011). The study will employ structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine the relationships between the skills of K-Workers and various aspects within each cohort, such as educational experiences and program-specific traits (Boslaugh, McNutt, 2008). The objective of this comprehensive analysis is to provide significant observations regarding the distinct patterns of competency growth identified among several cohorts at Telkom University. This study aims to comprehensively examine the proficiency of K-Worker competencies across different groups at the University by employing Multiple Group Analysis (MGA) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

The findings of this study will provide substantial insights into the disparities in levels of proficiency and the determinants that impact the growth of proficiency within gender.

Result

The study model will undergo evaluation utilizing the Partial Least Squares (PLS) technique and the SmartPLS 3.0 software. The study conducted by Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle (2019) suggests that Partial Least Squares (PLS) can be a suitable substitute for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) when dealing with limited sample sizes (ranging from 30 to 100 samples) and non-parametric assumptions, indicating that the data does not follow a specific distribution.
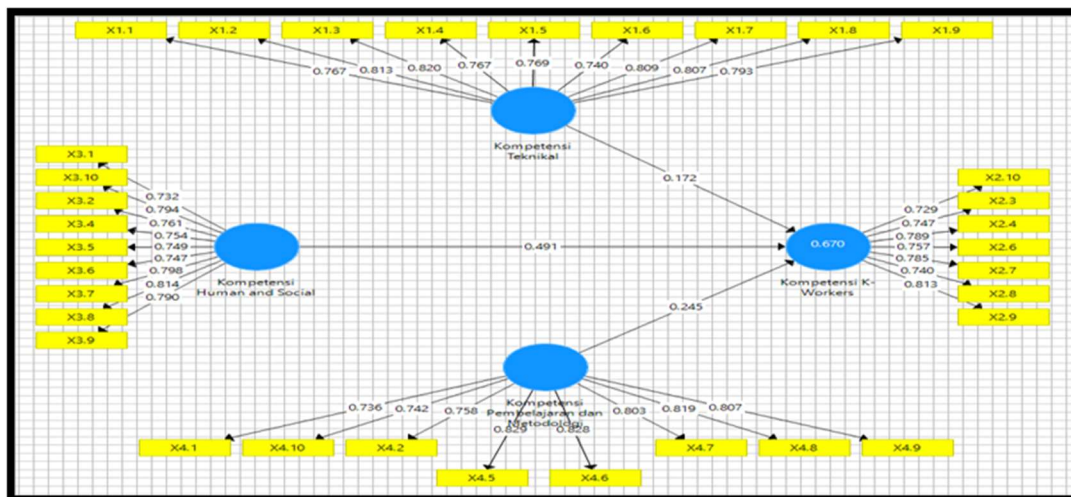

Figure 1 displays the process of doing validity and reliability testing, with the software tool SmartPLS 3 being the source of information.

The table below displays the metrics for validity and dependability.

Table 1: Measurement Consistency and Accuracy

	Cronbach's Alpha	Rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Human and Social Competency	**0.915**	**0.916**	**0.930**	**0.595**
K-Workers Competency	**0.882**	**0.884**	**0.909**	**0.587**
Learning and Methodology Competency	**0.914**	**0.915**	**0.930**	**0.626**
Technical Competency	**0.923**	**0.926**	**0.936**	**0.620**

References: SmartPLS 3.

The significance of the K-Workers Model is explained below.

Table 2: Relevance for Knowledge Workers

	Original Sample	Sample Means	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Value
Human and Social Competency -> K-Workers Competency	0.491	0.489	0.033	14.961	**0.000**
Learning and Methodology Competency-> K-Workers Competency	0.245	0.246	0.029	8.308	**0.000**
Technical Competency-> K-Workers Competency	0.172	0.173	0.030	5.763	**0.000**

References: SmartPLS 3.

The hypothesis being suggested is as follows:

1. The favorable and considerable impact of Human and Social Competence on the Competence of K-Workers has been proven.
2. There is no evidence to support the claim that Learning Competence and Methodology have a positive and significant effect on the Competence of K-Workers.
3. Technical competence has been proved to have a favorable and considerable impact on the competence of K-Workers.
4. The disparity in K-Workers Competency between men and women does not indicate a correlation between technical competence and K-Workers Competence.
5. The competency of K-Workers differs between men and women. However, the demonstration of learning competence and methodology to enhance K-Workers competency has been lacking.

6. The association between learning competency and K-Worker competency has not been proven, hence it is unclear if there are any disparities in K-Worker competency between men and women.

Presented below is a table elucidating the 4th, 5th, and 6th hypotheses regarding disparities between males and females.

Table 3 presents the hypotheses numbered 4, 5, and 6.

	Path Coefficient	p-value origin	p-value new (Men vs Women)
Human and Social Competency -> K-Workers Competency	0.000	0.505	**0.990**
Learning and Methodology Competency-> K-Workers Competency	-0.081	0.907	**0.186**
Technical Competency-> K-Workers Competency	0.112	0.031	**0.062**

References: SmartPLS3.

Discussion

According to the information presented regarding the hypothesis, the results are as follows:

Human and social competence:

In a study conducted by Deming, D. J. (2017), it is emphasized that jobs that include extensive social interaction have experienced substantial growth, underscoring the increasing significance of social skills in the labor market. In a separate study, Han and Kemple (2006) examine the several elements that contribute to social competence, including self-regulation, interpersonal knowledge and abilities, positive self-identity, and cultural competence.

These studies emphasize the significance of human and social competence in the competency of K-Workers. They stress the necessity of good social interaction, socio-emotional abilities, and teamwork in knowledge work.

Acquiring Proficiency and Approach:

In their 2008 publication, Ellström and Kock explore the process of competence development in the workplace. They highlight the significance of both formal and informal elements of learning, as well as the individual and social dimensions of learning. The authors propose an analytical framework for categorizing strategies of workplace learning.

Ultimately, proficiency in learning and the application of effective methods are crucial factors in fostering competence growth within a professional setting. Organizations can cultivate a culture of ongoing learning and advancement by comprehending and applying efficient ways for workplace learning, thereby boosting the proficiency of their staff. Additional investigation in

this field can yield significant perspectives on the most efficient learning tactics and methodologies for diverse situations and sectors.

Proficiency in technical skills:

A knowledge worker article elucidates that these professionals are remunerated with generous compensation commensurate with the intricate nature of their tasks and their considerable autonomy in the work process. Their emphasis lies on prioritizing quality over quantity, and it is expected that their supervisors allocate work to them in accordance with their own interests and objectives.

Technical competence encompasses the mastery and experience in specific technical skills and information that are pertinent to a particular sector or industry (Walsh and Linton, 2002). Technical proficiency is essential for knowledge workers to effectively carry out intricate tasks and retain a certain level of autonomy in their work procedures. Knowledge workers are frequently compensated with generous salaries that correspond to the intricate nature of their tasks and their capacity to prioritize quality above quantity (Bauer, Richardson, and Marion, 2014; Rosso & García-Salirrosas, 2023; Alexander & Vasantha, 2023).

The research on human and social competencies, specifically comparing the competencies of K-workers between men and women, has not been substantiated.

Studies indicate that there are no notable disparities between males and females in terms of human and social proficiency, encompassing k-worker proficiency as well (Lê & Noël, 2020; Çetin & İŞÇİ, 2022; Pulubuhu et al., 2017).

These findings indicate that both males and females possess the capacity to effectively interact, cooperate, and establish connections in the professional setting (Caous & Huarng, 2020; Donner et al., 2017; J.A.A.Agbonika et al., 2023). This notion is substantiated by the concept that competencies are not limited to a certain gender and may be cultivated through suitable training and practical knowledge (Caous & Huarng, 2020; Haile et al., 2020; Sarpy et al., 2022). Hence, by advocating for equal chances and implementing training initiatives that specifically target the enhancement of human and social skills, the total proficiency of male and female workers can be fostered.

Summary, Ramifications, and Recommendations

In summary, this study emphasizes the crucial significance of technical expertise, interpersonal abilities, and efficient learning methods in cultivating the K-Workers Competencies in students who are enrolled in the Faculty of Economics at Telkom University. Moreover, the study highlights the consistency of these skills across several groups, demonstrating the efficacy and consistency of the university's instructional methods. These findings can inform the development of educational plans, instructional courses, and student support initiatives to improve the employment chances and professional accomplishments of graduates. Additional longitudinal research may be required to validate the long-lasting impact of these skills on the career trajectories and overall professional accomplishments of former students.

The findings of this study have substantial implications for the Faculty of Economics at Telkom University and its students. The existence of a positive and statistically significant link between technical competence and K-Workers Competence highlights the significance of incorporating technical knowledge and skills into the curriculum to improve graduates' job performance. Moreover, recognizing the significant influence of human and social competence on K-Worker Competence highlights the importance of developing interpersonal skills and collaborative capacities in graduates to enhance their overall professional effectiveness. Moreover, the positive influence of acquiring skills and techniques on the capabilities of K-Workers underscores the need for innovative pedagogical approaches and hands-on learning experiences to better prepare graduates for real-world challenges. The absence of gaps in competences between men and women serves as evidence that the university's instructional methodologies have consistently fostered the development of essential skills among diverse groups of students. Ultimately, these outcomes necessitate ongoing efforts to align the curriculum with workforce demands and assist students in acquiring a diverse set of essential skills for their future career success.

The proposal aims to conduct a longitudinal study to investigate the enduring impact of technical proficiency on the competency of K-Workers among graduates. Analyze the possible elements that may enhance or alter the positive influence of human and social competence on K-Worker Competence, such as emotional intelligence or team dynamics. In order to improve the relationship between learning skills, techniques, and K-Worker skills, it is recommended to incorporate a control group. Utilize qualitative approaches, such as interviews, to gain insights into the manifestation of human and social abilities in authentic work situations. Additionally, conduct a faculty poll to obtain insight into how the curriculum integrates various learning abilities and approaches.

Limitations

It is crucial to acknowledge that this study is subject to numerous limitations. At first, the research only focused on students who were studying in the Faculty of Economics at Telkom University. This means that the findings cannot be applied to other academic subjects or institutions. Moreover, the study's reliance on self-reported data to evaluate skills may bring response biases or subjective interpretations. Moreover, because of the cross-sectional character of the research design, it is not possible to establish causal relationships between variables. Hence, it is crucial to use prudence when drawing conclusive inferences on the trajectory of impacts. In addition, the study did not take into account external factors, such as changes in the industry or economic conditions, that could have influenced the proficiency of K-Worker's students. Despite its limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the correlations between talents and the proficiency of K-Workers. This study establishes a fundamental basis for future research and offers valuable insights for educational programs designed to improve the readiness of graduates for the labor market.

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