The Basic Constituents of Competency Framework: Tailored for Professional Social Workers

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Abstract

This study explores competency frameworks in professional social work, analysing their dimensions and implications across job-specific, organizational development-specific, and personal-social progression-specific domains. Through comprehensive analysis of characteristics and competencies, the research unveils the intricate interplay between various facets, drawing from Tables 1 to 8. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, it evaluates competency cluster effectiveness through practitioner feedback and empirical data. The findings underscore the significance of diverse skill sets, personal attributes, and ethical standards for social work readiness. Actionable recommendations for competency development in education and practice are provided, with implications extending beyond social work to other disciplines. This study paves the path for future advancements by offering insights adaptable for interdisciplinary growth,

1. Introduction

The vision of the National Education Policy 2020 of government of India is "To instil among learners a deep-rooted pride in being Indian, not only in thought but also in spirit, intellect, and deeds. It also aims to develop knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that support a responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development and living, and global well-being, thereby reflecting a truly global citizen." Competency-based education/training, teaching and learning, assessment, and selection of teachers and academic administrators are expected. Against this backdrop, understanding the basic constituents of the competency framework becomes important.

"Competence at Work: Models for Superior Performance" by Lyle M. Spencer Jr. and Signe M. Spencer (1993) is a foundational work on competency modelling, detailing methods to identify and develop key competencies for superior job performance. The book provides frameworks for aligning competencies with organizational goals, focusing on both technical skills and behavioural attributes. Through extensive research and practical examples, it offers tools for assessing and enhancing competencies, significantly impacting human resource development, performance management, and organizational effectiveness. This work remains a crucial resource for professionals and researchers in these fields [1]. According to the researcher and author of this research paper, many ingredients of a person come together to form characteristics, many characteristics come together to form behaviours, many behaviours form a competency, and many competencies come together to form a competency cluster. Finally, many competency clusters form a Competency Framework. The basic constituents of the Competency Framework include: i) Characteristics of a person, ii) Behaviours of a person, iii) Competencies of a person, and iv) Competency Clusters. The Objectives of research are such as: i) Explore the Comprehensive Competency Framework ii) Examine the Interplay Between Different Facets iii) Assess the Effectiveness of Competency Clusters in Addressing the Complex Demands of the Profession iv) Identify Strategies for Enhancing Competency Development v) Provide Recommendations for Future Research and Practice.
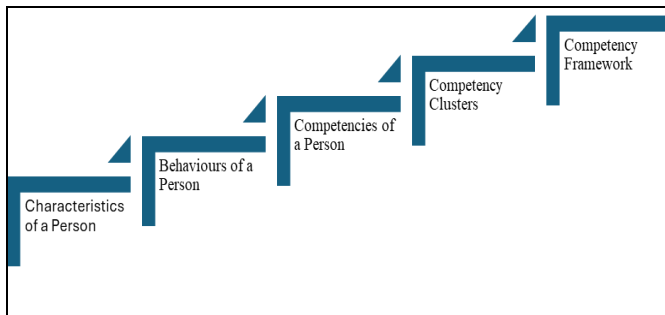
Fig. 1.1 Constituents of Competency Framework

1.1 Characteristics of a Person: The definitions of the Characteristics of a Person such as Knowledge, skills, abilities, self-image, social role, motive, and traits are as follows -

1.1.1 Knowledge: What to do and how to do it (Knowing), that led to Confidence. The examples of the Knowledge are i) Concept, ii) principles, iii) procedures, iv) facts, v) standards, vi) patterns, vii) models, viii) approaches, ix) theories, and x) methods.

1.1.2 Skills: Ability to perform tasks (Doing), that led to competence. The examples of the skill are i) acting related skills, ii) reacting related skills, iii) interacting related skills, and iv) thinking related skills.

1.1.3 Abilities: Special aptitudes that are either by birth/genetic/hormone-based or acquired after birth. Types of abilities include: i) innate abilities and ii) acquired abilities.

1.1.4 Self-image: Self-image is how a person perceives themselves or how they feel about their personality, achievements, and value to society. Examples of self-image include: i) physical self-image, ii) social self-image, iii) emotional self-image, iv) mental self-image, and v) spiritual self-image.

1.1.5 Social role: A social role is a set of behaviours expected of someone who holds a particular status or a set of norms defining how an individual occupying a particular status is expected to act. Types of social roles include: i) role model, ii) leader, ii) solution provider, iii) social visionary, iv) social reformer v) creator.

1.1.6 Motive: Motive is an inner drive, impulse, or intention causing a person to act in a certain way. According to McClelland's human motives model, the types of motives are: i) Need for Achievement (N-Ach), ii) Need for Affiliation (N-Affi), and iii) Need for Power (N-Pow) are the types of motives [2].

1.1.7 Traits: Traits are tendencies or consistent responses of an individual, distinguishing characteristics, or qualities, especially regarding one's personal nature or personality. According to the Big Five personality model, the types of traits are: i) Openness to Experience, ii) Conscientiousness, iii) Extraversion, iv) Agreeableness, and v) Neuroticism are the types of traits [3].

1.2 Taxonomy-based Observable & Measurable Behaviours of a Person: The related details are as follows:

1.2.1 Competency Taxonomies developed earlier by the researcher and the author of the research paper is as follows:

Core job-specific Competency Taxonomy	Organizational development-specific Competency Taxonomy	Personal-social Life Progression-specific Competency Taxonomy
Expert	Top Management	National/Global/Universal
Advanced	Head of the Organization	Community/Institute/Society
Intermediate	Head of the Department	Family/Groups/Team
Proficient	Supervisory	Deo/Dyadic/Customer
Foundational	Implementor	Person/Individual/Oneself

Competency taxonomy can be organized based on proficiency levels to demonstrate observable and measurable behaviours. [4].

1.2.2 Observable & Measurable Behaviours of a Person: These behaviours are permutations and combinations of various characteristics of a person, such as knowledge, skills, abilities, self-image, social role, motive, and traits, which result in observable and measurable actions.

1.3 Competencies of a Person: These are permutations and combinations of acceptable behaviours related to i) the Job-specific Competencies, Organizational development-specific Competencies, and iii) Personal-social Progression-specific Competencies lead to superior performance in work and life [5], [6], [7].

1.3.1 Competency Mapping: Mapping is a matching process where the characteristics of a person are

matched with the requirements of the Job, Organization, Individual ambitions, and Societal development.

1.4 Classifying under the proper Competency Cluster: Similar requirement-specific competencies are grouped together in Competency Clusters, which include i) Job-specific or Domain-department or Horizontal Competency Cluster, ii) Organizational Development-specific or Generic-administrative or Vertical Competency Cluster, and iii) Personal-social Progression-specific or Psycho-social or Spherical Competency Cluster [8].

1.5 Developing a Competency Framework: The Combination of all the Competency Clusters finally leads to formation of a Competency Framework.

2. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design to deeply explore the characteristics, behaviours, and competencies of professionals across various sectors. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and document analysis, ensuring a comprehensive and triangulated approach. Thirty semi-structured interviews, each lasting 45 to 60 minutes, were conducted with purposively sampled participants to gather diverse insights. Additionally, three focus groups with 6 to 8 participants each facilitated collaborative reflection and theme identification. Document analysis of organizational policies, training manuals, and performance evaluation reports complemented the primary data, providing context on the formal and informal structures influencing professional competencies. Data were analysed using thematic analysis, beginning with the transcription and familiarization of interview and focus group data. The codes were grouped into broader categories, and themes were iteratively developed and refined through team discussions. Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to in place. Despite limitations related to the qualitative nature and potential self-report biases, the study's methodology offers a detailed and nuanced understanding of the factors that underpin professional development and effectiveness.

3. Result and Discussion:

Table 1: Ingredients of the Characteristics of a Person

Job-specific	Organizational Development-specific	Personal-social Progression-specific)
Professional Values	Organizational Mandate	Self-awareness
Ethical Principles	Vision and Mission	Resilience
Related Concepts	Functions	Positive Work Attitude
Level of Practice	Stakeholders	Managing Habits
Practice-wise Role	Aim & Objectives	Setting High Motive
Related Models	Organizational Inputs	Medium of Instruction, Language
Related Approaches	Organizational Processes	Effective Communication
Related Methods	Organizational Outputs	Endurance/ Adversity Facing ability
Core Skills	Organizational Assessment	Empathy
Tools & Techniques	Proving and improving	Equity
Various Surveys & Analysis	Organizational change	Social awareness
Working with others	Corrective Actions	Social visioning
Identifying the Real Problem	Data Management	Human Skills: Interacting
Identifying Opportunities	Conducting Research	Human Skills: Reacting

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Related Perspectives	Strategic Decision Making	Human Skills: Thinking
Practice Theories	Ethical Administration	Human Skills: Acting
Related Therapies	Governance Maximization	Team building
Practice Models	Stakeholder First	Team leading
Diagnosing	Techno-savviness	Observing Social values
Intervention Plan	Using Sources Properly	Handling Own Emotions
Adopting Helping Process	Using Resources Optimally	Handling Other's Emotions
Adopting Enabling Process	Human Resource Management	Continuous Individualization in Group
Adopting Empowering Process	Performance Management	Continuous Individualization in Community
Interventions & Job Monitoring	Equitable Development	Individual Need and Ambitions
Interventions & Job Evaluation	Sustainable Development	Social Norms
Interventions & Job Learning	Project Proposal formulation	Expected Social Behaviour
Interventions & Job Proving	Project Management	Balanced Local Citizenship
Interventions & Job Improving	Accounting, Record Keeping	Balanced National Citizenship
Changing the course of action	Administrative Reform	Balanced Global Citizenship
Business Acumen	Financial Reform	Balanced Universal Citizenship

above table comprehensively outlines the ingredients of a person's characteristics across three dimensions: job-specific, organizational development-specific, and personal-social progression-specific. This structured approach ensures a well-rounded development of competencies necessary for effective professional and personal performance. The detailed breakdown helps in systematically assessing and developing the required attributes.

Table 2: The Characteristics of a Person and their Ingredients (Job-specific/Domain-departmental/Horizontal Requirements)

The table indicates six areas each for knowledge, skills, and abilities, along with two areas each for self-image, social r

Sr. No.	Knowledge: What & how to do	Skills: Ability to do	Abilities: Special Aptitude	Self-image: Mental Image	Social Role: Own Obligations	Motive: Moving Cause	Traits: Distinguishing Habit
1	Related Concepts	Core Skills	Problem Identification	Practice wise Roal	Practice wise Roal	Job Satisfaction	Professional Values
2	Related Models & Approaches	PRA Tools &Techniques	Opportunity Identification	Perspectives	Working with other Professionals	Professional Gain	Observing of Professional Ethics
3	Related Methods	PESTEL Analysis	Diagnosing	-	-	-	-
4	Related Processes or Procedure	Related Therapies	Deciding Interventions Plan	-	-	-	-
5	Practice Theories	Practice Models	Practicing	-	-	-	-
6	Business Acumen	Monitoring &Evaluation	Learning Based changes	-	-	-	-

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robust knowledge, practical skills, and strong personal attributes.

Table 3: Combinations of Characteristics Leading to Behaviours and Further into the Competencies of a Person (Job-Specific Requirements)

Sr. No.	Combinations of Characteristics leads to the Behaviours of a Person	Combinations of Behaviours Lead to the Competency of a Person
1	Motive Sr. No. 1 & 2, Trait Sr. No. 1 & 2	Adhering to Professional Values & Ethical Principles
2	Knowledge Sr. No. 1	Concept Clarity on Social-service, Social-welfare & Social Work
3	Abilities Sr. No. 5, Self-image Sr. No. 1, Social Role Sr. No. 1	Selecting the Appropriate Level of Practice & Practice-wise Roles
4	Knowledge Sr. No. 2	Choosing an Appropriate Models & Approaches
5	Knowledge Sr. No. 3	Choosing the Proper Social Work Method
6	Skill Sr. No. 1	Using Core (Attending, Furthering & Counselling) Skills
7	Skill Sr. No. 2	Using 'Tools & Techniques of RRA/ PRA / PLA'/ Surveys
8	Skill Sr. No. 3	Capability to PESTEL Analysis
9	Social Role Sr. No. 2	Working with the other Professionals
10	Abilities Sr. No. 1 & 2	Identifying the Real Problems / Development Opportunities
11	Abilities Sr. No. 3 & 4	Diagnosing & Deciding the Appropriate Intervention Plan
12	Knowledge 4, Skill 4	Adopting Helping Process with the Clients /Others as an Intervention
13	Knowledge Sr. No. 4, Skill Sr. No. 4	Adopting proper Process of Enabling with the Clients /Others as an Intervention
14	Knowledge Sr. No. 4, Skill Sr. No. 4	Adopting proper Process of Empowering with the Clients /Others as an Intervention
15	Knowledge Sr. No. 6	Agency/ Business Acumen
16	Skill Sr. No. 6 & Abilities Sr. No. 6	Checking by doing Monitoring, Evaluation & Making Learning-based Changes in future actions

The table above illustrates various combinations of characteristics for competencies in professional social work practice, highlighting a diverse array of integrated elements. Specifically, four competencies are derived solely from knowledge, three from skills, and two from abilities. Additionally, one competency is linked solely to social roles. Moreover, there are combinations where knowledge is combined with skills (three competencies), skills with abilities (one competency), and motives with traits (one competency). This analysis underscores an integrated approach to competency development, integrating various elements to ensure comprehensive readiness for the professional social worker role.

Table 4: The Characteristics of a Person and their Ingredients (Organizational Development-specific/Generic-administrative/Vertical Requirements)

Sr. No.	Knowledge: What & how to do	Skills: Ability to do	Abilities: Special Aptitude	Self-image: Mental Image	Social Role: Own Obligations	Motive: Moving Cause	Traits: Distinguishing Habit
1	Organizational Awareness	Techno savviness	Using Sources / Resources Optimally	Resource Literate	Governance Maximization	Job Satisfaction	Systematism
2	-	Project	HR	-	Equitable	Professional	Ethical

		Proposal formulation	Management		Development	Gain	Administration
3	-	Accounting	Performance Management	-	Sustainable Development	-	Stakeholder First
4	-	Record Keeping	Project Management	-	-	-	-
5	-	Conducting Research	Administrative Reform	-	-	-	-
6	-	Strategic decision Making	Financial Reform	-	-	-	-

The table offers a comprehensive view of characteristics for organizational development-specific requirements in professional social work. It emphasizes a balanced distribution: one area of knowledge, six of skills, and six of abilities, highlighting theoretical understanding and practical proficiency. Additionally, it includes one area self-image, three areas of social roles, two areas of motives, and three areas of traits, underscoring the integrated approach to competency development essential for organizational effectiveness and professional growth.

Table 5: Combinations of Characteristics Leading to Behaviours and Further into the Competencies of a Person (Organizational Development-specific Requirements)

Sr. No.	Combinations of Characteristics leads to the Behaviors of a Person	Combinations of Behaviors Lead to the Competency of a Person
1	Knowledge Sr. No. 1 & Trait Sr. No. 1	Organizational Awareness & Systematism
2	Skill Sr. No. 5 & 6	Capability to Undertake the Research
3	Trait Sr. No. 2, & 3 & Social Role Sr. No. 1	Ethical Administration & Faith / Belief in Stakeholder First
4	Skill Sr. No. 1	Techno-savviness
5	Abilities Sr. No. 1, 2 & 3	Using Sources / Resources Optimally
6	Self-image Sr. No. 1	Resource Literate
7	Social Role Sr. No. 2 & 3	Equitable & Sustainable Development
8	Skill Sr. No. 2, Abilities Sr. No. 4	Capability of Project proposal formulation & Project Management
9	Skill Sr. No. 3 & Sr. No. 4	Accounting & Record Keeping
10	Abilities Sr. No. 5 & 6	Undertaking Administrative / Financial Reforms

The combinations of competencies in professional social work for organizational development-specific roles exhibit diverse integrated elements. One competency arises from knowledge and trait, three from skills alone, and one from a blend of social role and trait. Additionally, two competencies exclusively stem from abilities, while one emerges solely from social roles. Lastly, there is a competency formed from a blend of skill and abilities, along with one derived from self-image.

Table 6: The Characteristics of a Person and their Ingredients (Personal-social Progression-specific/Psycho-social/ Spherical Requirements)

Sr. No.	Knowledge: What & how to do	Skills: Ability to do	Abilities: Special Aptitude	Self-image: Mental Image	Social Role: Own Obligations	Motive: Moving Cause	Traits: Distinguishing Habit
1	Language	Effective Communication	Resilience	Self-awareness	Empathy	Setting High Motive	Positive Work Attitude

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2	-	Team Building	Handling Other's Emotions	Endurance/ Adversity Facing	Equity	Continuous Individualization in Group	Managing Habits
3	-	Team Leading	-	Handling Own Emotions	Social awareness	Continuous Individualization in Community	Observing Social Values
4	-	Negotiation	-	Individual Ambitions	Social visioning	-	-
5	-	Human Skills	-	-	Social Norms	-	-
6	-	-	-	-	Balanced Citizenship	-	-

The table outlines key characteristics for Personal-social Progression-specific requirements in professional social work. It emphasizes a balanced distribution: one area of knowledge, five of skills, and two of abilities, with four areas having significant focus on self-image. Additionally, it delineates six areas of social roles, three of motive, and three of traits. This highlights a holistic approach to competency development, essential for personal-social progression and effective engagement in social work practice.

Table 7: Combinations of Characteristics Leading to Behaviors and Further into the Competencies of a Person (Personal-social Progression-specific Requirements)

Sr. No.	Combinations of Characteristics leads to the Behaviours of a Person	Combinations of Behaviours Lead to the Competency of a Person
1	Self-image Sr. No. 1, Abilities Sr. No. 1	Self-awareness & Resilience
2	Trait Sr. No. 1	Positive Work Attitude
3	Trait Sr. No. 2	Managing Habits
4	Motive Sr. No. 1	Setting High Motive
5	Knowledge Sr. No. 1 & Skill 1	Choosing proper Medium of Instruction (Language) & Effective Communication
6	Self-image Sr. No. 2	Endurance / Physical Stamina/ Adversity Facing
7	Social Role Sr. No. 1 & 2	Empathy & Equity
8	Social Role Sr. No. 3 & 4	Social-awareness & Social-visioning
9	Skill Sr. No. 5	Using Human Skills properly
10	Skill Sr. No. 2, 3 & 4	Team building & courageously leading the Team
11	Trait Sr. No. 3	Observing Properly Low & High values
12	Self-image Sr. No. 1, Abilities Sr. No. 2	Handling Own & Other's Emotions
13	Motive Sr. No. 2 & 3	Continuous Individualization in Group & Community
14	Self-image Sr. No. 4, Social Role Sr. No. 5	Balancing Individual Ambitions & Social Norms
15	Social Role Sr. No. 6	Balanced Local to Universal Citizenship

The table outlines crucial characteristics for Personal-social Progression-specific requirements in professional social work. Combinations of characteristics for competencies exhibit integrated elements essential for these roles. One competency arises from knowledge and skills, while two derive solely from skills. Additionally, three result from a combination of social roles, and two stem exclusively from motives. Furthermore, three emerge solely from traits. There is a competency formed from self-image and abilities, as well as self-image and social role. This analysis underscores the integrated nature of competencies, emphasizing diverse skill sets, personal attributes, and ethical principles in social work practice.

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Table 8: Combination of Competency Cluster leads to Competency Framework

Sr. No.	Name of the Competency Cluster	Combination of Competency Cluster leads to the Competency Framework
1	Job-specific/Domain-departmental/Horizontal Competency Cluster	Competency Framework for the Social Workers
2	Organizational Development-specific/Generic-administrative/ Vertical/ Competency Cluster	
3	Personal-social Progression-specific/Psycho-social/ Spherical/ Competency Cluster	

The table provides a structured framework of competency clusters crucial for professional social workers, synthesizing characteristics and competencies tailored to specific roles. It delineates three distinct clusters—job-specific, organizational development-specific, and personal-social progression-specific domain underscoring varied dimensions.
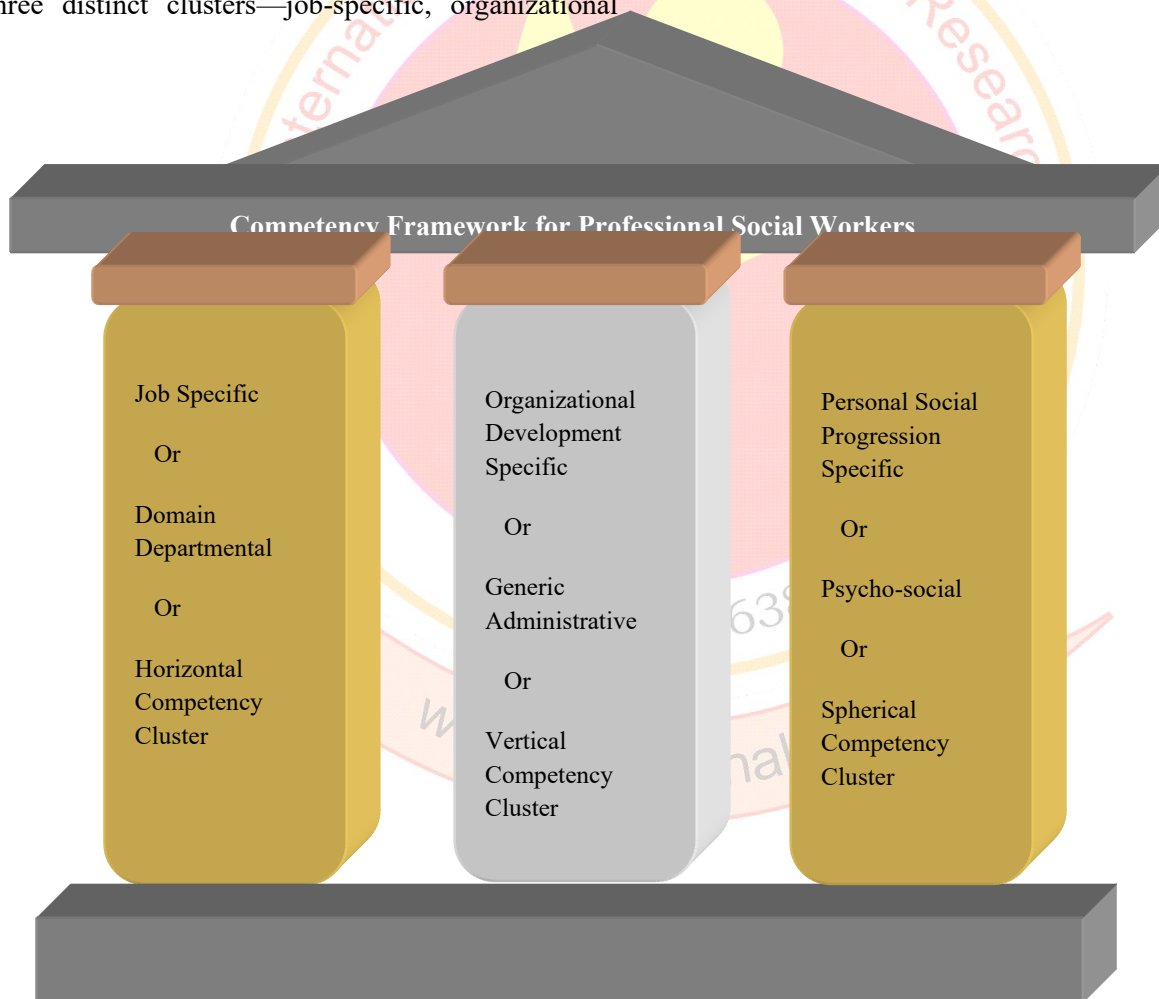

Fig. 3.1 Competency Framework

Conclusion:

The analysis of competency frameworks presented in Tables 1 to 8 offers a comprehensive understanding of essential ingredients of characteristics, various characteristics, behaviours, and competencies in professional social work across diverse domains. By examining the interplay of knowledge, skills, abilities, self-image, social role,

motive, and traits, this research provides a structured breakdown crucial for competency development. The integration of these elements into behaviours and competencies underscores the multifaceted nature of social work practice, addressing various role-specific requirements. The distribution of competencies emphasizes the importance of diverse skill sets, personal attributes, and ethical standards for effective performance. The establishment of competency clusters signifies an integrated approach to readiness among social workers, catering to the profession's complex demands. Moreover, this research extends its relevance beyond social work, suggesting the adaptability of the competency framework to enhance professional development across disciplines. However, further research with larger samples is recommended to enhance the competency framework's robustness. By identifying strategies for competency development, this study offers insights for improving training and performance across sectors. The findings and recommendations provide guidance for future research and practice, aligning with the study's objectives of exploring the competency framework, assessing interplay between facets, evaluating competency cluster effectiveness, and offering actionable recommendations.

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