

OPTIMISING EMPLOYEE RETENTION THROUGH ABILITY AND SKILL COMPETENCY MAPPINGS IN CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION IN EDO AND DELTA STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated ability and skill mappings as determinants of employee retention in civil service commission in Bayelsa and Cross-Rivers States, Nigeria. Cross-sectional survey design was employed and structured questionnaire was the major data collection instrument. The study population comprised 389 employees of civil service commission and a sample of 197 was obtained via probabilistic sample size determination formulae. Questionnaire was administered on 197 respondents who are employees of civil service commission, out of which 187 were fully retrieved. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive, diagnostic and inferential statistical methods. The multiple regression results showed that ability mapping (t -value = 7.17; Prob. = 0.000 < 0.05) and skill mapping (t -value = 6.44; Prob. = 0.000 < 0.05) significantly positively influence employee retention. On this note, it was recommended that management should see skill and ability mappings as imperative strategic human resource management mechanisms of enhancing retention of employees. Hence, during employee recruitment, selection and placement, ability and skill of employees should be sternly emphasized. Also, Nigerian civil service commission should formulate policies targeted at enhancing skill and ability mappings of employees via training and development programmes. This study contributes to knowledge by using competency Ice-Berg model in describing the ability and skill mappings and employee retention nexus and established that ability and skill mappings significantly influence the retention rate of employees in Nigerian civil service commission.

Keywords: *Employee Retention, Ability and Skill Competency, Optimising, Civil Service Commission.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Strategic human resource management (SHRM) is a process that brings organizations and employees together with the aim of fulfilling the goals of the organization and employees. Hence, for organizations to fulfill long and short-term goals, cordial relations between the organization and employees are required jointly with a workforce that is knowledgeable, skilled and capable (Kaur, Geetika, Sayeeduzzafar & Pretty, 2023). In recent times, jobs demanding highly skilled knowledge-employees are on the increase while the low-skilled jobs are decreasing (Szafranski, Selma, Magdalena & Gerhard-Wilhelm, 2022); this calls for competency mapping via apposite SHRM function and initiatives.

Competency mapping (COMP) is a process of identifying specific competencies for an organization and it is a very imperative SI-IRM activity (Anusha, 2018). The discuss on competencies mapping has gained more prominence because well managed organizations ought to have well-defined job roles and competencies needed to perform each job roles in the most efficient way. Ashokkumar and Vanitha (2023) asserted that COMP process identifies the strengths and weaknesses of employees so as to enable employees better understand themselves, integrate adequately in the workplace and be able to identify need for career development where necessary.

Competency is one vital process describing how a job role can be done in an excellent way (Ruchi, 2019; and Helen, Cherie, Shalom & Benrimoj, 2019). Competency has been broadly distinguished from capability; for instance, capability describes what employees have to do only and not how employees can perform job roles (Himani & Ritu, 2017; Waghmare, Shriniket, Siddhant, Abhinandan & Anuj, 2021; and Udaya, Bhaskara & Mallika, 2022). A core-competency is one that competency cannot be imitated and it is a pillar upon which employees take (Sanjeev & Luxmi, 2022).

According to Erica and Emilio (2022), COMP is one of the most priceless functions of human resource managers because it seeks to identify job-related and behavioural-based competencies of employees in organizations. To this end, Garima, Richa and Swati (2022) see COMP as an anthology of knowledge, skills, motives, ability, attitude, and behaviour required to perform a job role efficiently. Given that COMP is an anthology or collection of factors enhancing work-related outcomes like employee satisfactions, commitments, retention, performance, productivity, among others, several dimensions of COMP has emerged in the literature.

In recent times, employee retention is one of the most vital dynamics of stem competition that organizations are facing. In such scenario, it becomes important to understand that employees can be retained if their competencies are mapped, developed and used in the right direction (Ashokkumar & Vanitha, 2023). Employee retention entails management of talents which to ensure that organizations attract, retain, motivate and develop talented employees now and in the future (Gatakaa & Lumwangi, 2023). The goal of retention is to avert loss of talented or competent employees which could adversely affect quality service delivery, productivity and performance (Monari, 2021).

Worlikar and Artee (2017); David, Holmes, Melanie and John (2018); Toopalli and Nalla (2019); Jam and Bhavya (2020; and Monari (2021) identified several dimensions of COMP to include knowledge, skills, ability, behaviour, motives, commitments, and traits. The study employed two (2) competency mapping measures - ability and skill; hence, this study investigated how competencies mapping (ability and skill) play a major role in promoting the retention of employees in civil service commission in two Nigerian States - Bayelsa and Cross-Rivers.

Problem Statement

Employees are the most vital resource and backbone of organizations. Most enterprise, civil service commission inclusive, finds it difficult to retain valuable staff due to decline in government revenue and economic downturn. Yet when HRM tactics are put in place to enhance employees' retention rates, employee turnover still increases; thus, employees' retention is an essential issue facing organizations. For instance, civil service commission requires skilled, knowledgeable, learned, trained, motivated and devoted employees to carry out tasks.

Furthermore, because organizations' management find it challenging to map employees' competencies, employees tend to abandon their jobs and hunt for other jobs elsewhere, particularly in this era of 'jakpa' syndrome in Nigeria, resulting in significant employees' turnover. The high occurrence of employees' turnover can be linked to varied executives who see competency mapping as a non-issue and failed to implement policies to retain talent. Supporting the above view, Udaya, *et al.* (2022) noted that companies that engage in competency mapping will experience increased success and employees' retention.

Regardless of the vital role of competency mapping in enhancing employees' retention, there is still lack of studies on competency mapping and employees' retention in Nigeria, particularly as it concerns civil service commission in Bayelsa and Cross-Rivers States, Nigeria. Arising from this, the study bridged the lacuna in the SHRM literature by examining whether skill and ability competencies mapping influence employee retention rates in civil service commission in both Edo and Delta States of Nigeria.

Research Questions

- i. To what extent does ability competency mapping affect employee retention in civil service commission in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria?
- ii. To what extent does skill competency mapping affect employee retention in civil service commission in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria?

Objectives

- i. Examine the effect of ability competency mapping on employee retention in civil service commission in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria.
- ii. Examine the effect of skill competency mapping on employee retention in civil service commission in in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

Arising from the specific objectives, the following research hypotheses were formulated and validated at 0.05% significance level:

H₀₁: There is no significant effect between ability competency mapping and the retention of employee in civil service commission.

H₀₂: There is no significant effect between skill competency mapping and the retention of employee in civil service commission.

2. LITERATURE UNDERPINNINGS

Conceptual Review

Ability and Skill Competencies Mapping

In the recent times, employee retention is one of the main problems in public and private organizations (Anusha, 2018; Szafranski, Selma, Magdalena & Gerhard-Wilhelm, 2022). Thus, there is growing concern on how organizations can effectively attract and retain qualified employees to maintain a competitive advantage. The main goal of competency mapping is to avert the loss of talented employees, which may result to increase in hiring, training and development costs for new employee (Udaya, *et al*, 2022). Competency mapping is one of the most vital efforts HRM use in having an inspired workforce (Waghmare, *et al*, 2021)

Given that HRM are the main source of value creation, competency mapping via ability and skill are particularly crucial for the success and increased employees' retention rates (Sanjeev & Luxmi, 2022). The actual effects of competencies mapping on employees' retention, performance, productivity and ultimately other human resource(HR) initiatives, must be understood by management, particularly for HR managers that seek to retain a talented workforce (Garima, Richa & Swati, 2022; Erica & Emilio, 2022).

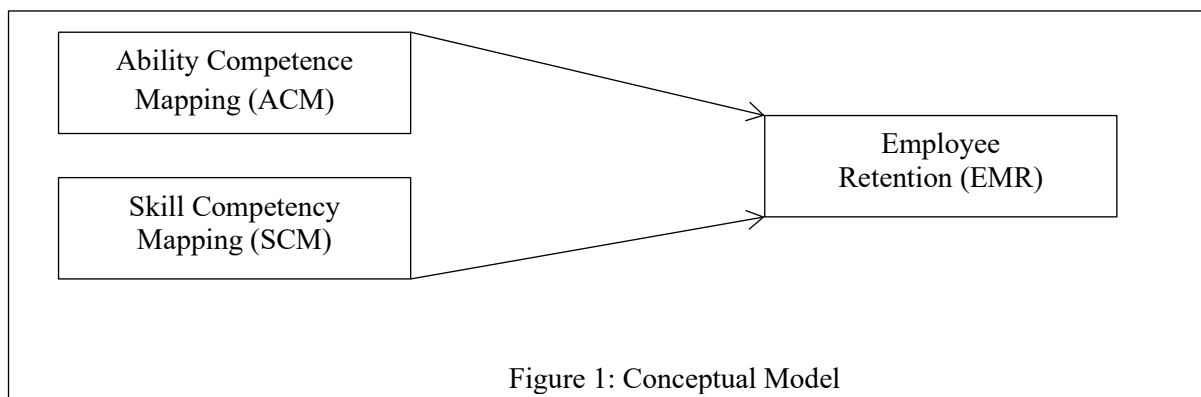
According to Jaskiran, *et al* (2023), skills and ability competencies mapping are strategic HR approach for monitoring effectiveness and growth of organisation's human resources as well as employees' retention; this calls for competency mapping via the use of creative abilities and skills to drive employees' retention. Jayasri and Srilalitha (2022) believed that ability and skills competencies mapping will not only make organizations to gain a more competitive advantage but it would help enhance the capability of organizations to retain a talented workforce. Accordingly, Kaur, *et al* (2023) noted that organizations that encourage skill and ability competency mapping will have increased employees' retention where talented workforce that can produce superior goods, incessant in-flow of cash to join the market and use of cutting-edge technologies become possible.

Employee Retention (EMR)

The concept of employee retention has been extensively defined in the strategic human resource management (SHRM) literature. According to Jaskiran, Geetika, Sayeeduzzafar and

Pretty (2023), employee retention (EMR) refers to the ability of companies to retain, attract, motivate and growth talented workforce. As noted by Toopalli and Nalla (2019). EMR is designed to avoid loss of skill and talented workforce which when they leave the company may negatively affect organizational performance and productivity.

Anusha (2018) opined that the goal of EMR is to avoid increased recruitment and training costs for newly employed workforce when they leave the company. In SHRM literature, there are numerous ways to encourage EMR which according to David, Holmes, Melanie and John (2018); and Helen, Cherie, Shalom and Benrimoj (2019) include empowering employees, career growth, fair treatment, openness, regular communication and feedback, recognition and more recently, competency mapping. Consequently, ERM can be influenced by competency mapping. The SHRM literature suggests numerous measures of competency mapping which include but not limited to skill, ability, motive, knowledge, self-image, integration, trait, among others (Ruchi, 2019; Erica & Emilio, 2022). Himani and Ritu (2018) showed that EMR is vital in assessing companies' ability to decrease recruitment and training costs. Hence, employees can be retained on a basis of creativity and/or novelty (Worlikar & Artee, 2017). In view of the review of concepts, a conceptual model was designed to guide the estimation of empirical model of the study as shown in figure 1:



Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Competency Ice-Berg Model (CTBM) and Ability–Motivation–Opportunity (AMO) Theory

This study is anchored on two complementary theories: the **Competency Ice-Berg Model (CTBM)** and the **Ability–Motivation–Opportunity (AMO) Theory**. Together, these frameworks provide a holistic understanding of how competencies influence employee performance and retention in the civil service.

The **Competency Ice-Berg Model (CTBM)**, developed by McClelland (1973) and refined by Spencer and Spencer (1993), distinguishes between visible and hidden competencies. Visible competencies such as **skills and knowledge** are easily observed, while hidden competencies such as **self-concept, traits, and motives** lie beneath the surface but strongly influence long-term performance, commitment, and retention (Gatakaa & Lumwangi, 2022; Ashokkumar & Vanitha, 2023). The model underscores the need for organizations to look beyond technical skills and recognize deeper psychological and behavioral factors when assessing employee fit and potential.

In complement, the **Ability–Motivation–Opportunity (AMO) Theory** by Appelbaum et al. (2000) posits that performance results from three interconnected factors: **ability** (employees' skills and competencies), **motivation** (their willingness and drive to perform), and **opportunity** (the organizational conditions that allow employees to apply their abilities effectively). This theory emphasizes that even skilled and motivated employees require supportive systems, resources, and opportunities to perform optimally.

Together, CTBM and AMO provide a robust foundation for this study. While CTBM differentiates between surface-level and intrinsic competencies, AMO integrates these competencies with organizational context, highlighting how performance and retention are shaped by both individual attributes and institutional support. Applied to the Nigerian civil service, these models suggest that sustainable retention depends not only on employees' technical abilities but also on their intrinsic traits, motivation, and the opportunities provided by the organization. Thus, they jointly inform the study's focus on competency mapping as a strategy for strengthening workforce stability and enhancing performance in public sector institutions.

4. EMPIRICAL REVIEWS

Whilst we acknowledged the abundant studies on the relationship between competency mapping and employee retention in most countries, there are few studies that had assessed skill and ability competency mappings and employees' retention nexus in Cross-Rivers and Bayelsa States, Nigeria. Thus, this section reviewed empirical studies from 2021-2023; first, Kaur, et al (2023) assessed the relationship between competency mapping and employees quality of work in India. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-test showed that competency mapping had a strong significant positive relationship with the quality of employees' work in India.

In the same vein, Gatakaa and Lumwangi (2023) investigated the impact of competency mapping on employees' retention in Kenya. The multiple regression results revealed that competency mapping significantly positively impacts on employees' retention in Kenya. In Malaysia, a study on competency mapping and employees' performance was carried out by Ashokkumar and Vanitha (2023). The multiple regression results showed among others that competency mapping gives direction to organizations to plan developmental initiatives of the employees:

The study by Szafranski *et al* (2022) investigated the impacts of competency mapping on employees' performance in India. The multiple regression results established that competency mapping significantly positively impact on employees' performance in India. Garima, *et al.* (2022) evaluated the impact of competency mapping on the performance of employees and how employee commitment mediates on relationship. Findings established that employee commitment plays an imperative mediating role on the connection between competency mapping and employees' performance.

Jayasri and Srilalitha (2022) assessed how competency mapping results to a competent workforce via human resource information system. The multiple regression result showed that when organizations leverage on or builds competency mapping, it would make the workforce more competent. Similarly, Szafranski, *et al.* (2022) explored the relationship between competency mapping and performance of IT specialists in period of industry 4.0. Multiple regression result revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between competency mapping and IT specialists' performance.

Udaya, *et al.* (2022) examined how competency mapping of front-line employees affect organizational success. The study found via the regression analysis that when front-line

employees are mapped for competency, organizational success is enhanced. Jam and Bhavya (2021) studied how competency mapping affects employees' retention and found via regression analysis that there is significant positive impact of competency mapping on employees' retention. Waghmare, *et al.* (2021) investigated the relationship between skill competency mapping and employees' retention. The regression results revealed that skill competency mapping significantly and positively enhance employees' retention.

5. TOOLS AND METHODS

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design, which enabled the researcher to collect data on ability and skill competency mapping as well as employee retention from a cross-section of employees in the Civil Service Commissions of two Nigerian states—Delta and Edo. The study population comprised employees of the Civil Service Commissions located at the headquarters of two Nigerian states—Edo and Delta. A total of 389 employees constituted the population, with 207 from Delta State and 182 from Edo State. To determine the sample size, the Taro Yamane formula was applied, resulting in a sample of 197 respondents drawn from the two Civil Service Commissions. A structured questionnaire was used to gather respondents' views on how ability and skill competency mapping influences employee retention. The questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree, to measure the extent of agreement with each item. The measurement scales for skill and ability competency mapping, as well as employee retention, were adapted from Shivanjali and Tripti (2019), Ashokkumar and Vanitha (2023), and Gatakaa and Lumwangi (2023). The questionnaire was administered face-to-face with the respondents, with the assistance of two research assistants. The test-retest method was employed to assess the reliability of the research instrument. This procedure involved administering the questionnaire to 20 employees of the Civil Service Commission in Edo and Delta States. The data obtained were analyzed using Cronbach's alpha to determine internal consistency. The reliability results are presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Cronbach Alpha Reliability Result

Variable of Study	Alpha Coefficients
Employee Retention	0.73
Ability Competency Mapping (ACM)	0.79
Skill Competency Mapping (SCM)	0.80

Source: Computation by the Researcher, 2025

Model Specification and Method of Data Analysis

The independent variables consists ability and skill competency mappings and dependent variable is employee retention. In line with the above, model estimation was based on the multiple regressions as follows:

$$EMR = f(ACM, SCM) \quad - \quad \text{Equation 1}$$

$$EMR = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ACM + \beta_2 SCM_{it} + \epsilon_{it} \quad - \quad \text{Equation 2}$$

Where: EMR connotes employee retention; SCM represents skill competency mapping; ACM represents ability competency mapping; SCM; β_0 - β_2 represents coefficients of the regression; ϵ is error term; i individual respondents; and t time frame. Data obtained in the study were analyzed as follows: Descriptive Statistics (Percentages, Frequency Count, Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness, Kurtosis and Pearson Correlation); Diagnostic Statistics (Variance Inflation Factor); and Inferential Statistics (Multiple Regressions).

6. DATA PRESENTATION, RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Data Presentation

In this study, questionnaire was administered to 197 respondents; however, only 187 were fully retrieved, hence the analysis was based on the 187 fully retrieved questionnaire.

Table 2: Respondents' Demographic Variables

Parameters	Bio-Data	No. = 187	Percent
Sex	Male	124	66.3
	Female	63	33.7
	Total	187	100%
Marital Status	Single	71	37.9

	Married	104	55.6
	Others	12	6.5
	Total	187	100%
Educational Qualification	Secondary school certificate	46	24.6
	First Degree (B.Sc./BA/B.Ed./HND)	100	53.5
	Postgraduate Degree (M.Sc./MBA/PhD)	41	21.8
	Total	187	100%

Source: Researcher's Computation (2025)

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 187 respondents. In terms of sex, 124 respondents (66.3%) were male, while 63 (33.7%) were female, indicating a male-dominated sample. Regarding marital status, 71 respondents (37.9%) were single, 104 (55.6%) were married, and 12 (6.5%) were either divorced or separated, showing that the majority were married.

For educational qualification, 100 respondents (53.5%) held a first degree, 46 (24.6%) had a secondary school certificate, and 41 (21.8%) possessed postgraduate degrees. This suggests that the respondents were sufficiently educated to understand and respond appropriately to the questionnaire items.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Employee Retention	2.8411	0.7791	0.3389	2.9489
Ability Competency Mapping	2.7305	0.9016	0.3553	3.0916
Skill Competency Mapping	2.6559	0.9479	0.3725	3.2412

Source: Researcher's Computation (2025)

Table 3 revealed that ability and skill competency mappings had mean scores of 2.7305 and 2.6559 respectively while employee retention had mean score of 2.8441; this implies that respondents perceived that skill and ability competency mappings are practiced and a way of employee retention. The result further showed that employee retention (2.9489) had smallest kurtosis which is smallest value of kurtosis and skill competency mapping (3.2412) the highest. Skewness values showed that ability and skill competency mapping skewed towards one direction (positive) with employee retention. More importantly, the kurtosis values were not far from 3; indicating that the variables are normally distributed.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation

Variables	Employee Retention	Ability Competency Mapping	Skill Competency Mapping
Employee Retention	1.0000		
Ability Competency Mapping	0.0171	1.0000	
Skill Competency Mapping	0.0473	0.0233	1.0000

Source: Researcher's Computation (2025)

Table 4 showed that the coefficients of Pearson are carrying positive signs; an indication of positive relationship between ability and skill competency mappings and the retention of employees.

Table 5: Variance Inflation Factor

Variable (s)	VIF	1/VIF
Ability Competency Mapping	1.02	0.98039
Skill Competency Mapping	1.01	0.9900
VIF (Mean)	1.02	

Source: Researcher's Computation (2025)

Table 5 revealed that VIF mean (1.02) is less than accepted VIF mean (10.0); this implies an absence of multicollinearity in the model of ability and skill competency mappings and employees' retention.

Hypotheses Testing

Table 6: Multiple Regressions

F –Value	= 9.47	Prob-F	= 0.000
R –Squared	= 0.831	R-Squared Adjusted	= 0.727
Parameters	Coefficients	t-value (Prob. Value)	
ACM	0.3623	7.17	(0.000)
SCM	0.2474	6.44	(0.000)
_Constant	0.3617	22.01	(0.000)

Source: Researcher's Computation (2025)

Table 6 showed results of multiple regression for ability and skill competency mappings and employee retention. R^2 is 0.831, indicating that ability and skill competency mappings jointly explained about 83% of the systematic variations in employees' retention while 17% accounts for other variables not included the regression model; however, the model of ability and skill competency mappings provides good fit to the data since unexplained variation is just 17%. Furthermore, F-value is 9.47 and Prob.-F is 0.000 and is less than 5% significance level; this showed that ability and skill competency mappings significantly influence employee retention.

Test of Hypothesis I

H₀₁: There is no significant effect between ability competency mapping and the retention of employee in civil service commission.

Decision: t-value is 7.17 and Prob. is 0.000 which is less than 5% significance level; this showed that there is significant relationship between ability competency mapping and the retention of employee in civil service commission; hence the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Test of Hypothesis II

H₀₂: There is no significant effect between skill competency mapping and the retention of employee in civil service commission

Decision: The t-value is 6.44 and Prob. is 0000 which is less than 5% significance level; this showed that there is significant relationship between ability competency mapping and the retention of employee in civil service commission; thus null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Discussions

Corporate organizations seek to retain a talented workforce because they contribute to the success, growth and performance of organizations. For organizations to retain a talented workforce, Gatakaa and Lumwangi (2023) asserted that organizations must therefore engage in the use of skill and ability competency mappings. This study was carried out with the view to investigating if ability and skill competency mappings affect employees' retention in civil service commission in Edo and Delta States. Cross-sectional research design was used and data obtained were analyzed via descriptive, diagnostic and inferential statistical tools.

The multiple regression results ($R^2 = 0.83$) showed that ability and skill competency mappings account for 83% variation in employees retention. Also, the study showed that there is positive significant relationship between ability and skill competency mappings and employee retention in civil service commission in selected States. These findings were supported by Gatakaa and Lumwangi (2023); Jaskiran, et al, (2023); and Jayasri and Srilalitha (2022) who found that competency mappings significantly and positively affect employees retention.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the relationship between ability and skill competency mapping and employee retention within the Civil Service Commissions of Edo and Delta States. Based on the results of the multiple regression analysis, the findings indicate that ability and skill competency mapping have a significant positive influence on employee retention.

In light of these findings, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Management should treat skill and ability mapping as a vital aspect of strategic human resource management for enhancing employee retention. Recruitment, selection, and placement processes must therefore prioritize a thorough assessment of candidates' competencies.
- ii. In addition, Civil Service Commissions should design and implement policies that strengthen skill and ability mapping, especially by investing in targeted training and development initiatives that build employee capacity and long-term commitment.

The study contributes to knowledge in two key ways. Theoretically, it extends the application of the **Competency Iceberg Model** to the public sector by showing how both visible skills and underlying abilities influence employee retention. Empirically, it provides evidence from the Civil Service Commissions of Edo and Delta States that ability and skill competency mappings significantly enhance retention, thereby filling a gap in the literature on competency-based practices in Nigeria's public service.

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