

The Interplay of Cognitive Competence, Work Behavior, And Job Performance: A Framework for Academic Support Personnel Development

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ABSTRACT: *This study explores the influence of cognitive competence and work behavior on the job performance of academic support personnel in a private educational institution. Grounded in Human Capital Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, and Organizational Behavior Theory, the research highlights how cognitive attributes – specifically job knowledge, judgment, and creativity – serve as strong predictors of performance outcomes. Using a descriptive–correlational design and data from 111 performance evaluations, findings reveal that while both cognitive competence and work behavior were rated “very good,” only cognitive competence significantly predicted job performance. Work behavior, encompassing dependability, organization, initiative, and industry, contributed to a positive organizational climate but lacked statistical impact on performance metrics. The study underscores the need for institutions to prioritize cognitive skill development while continuing to foster behavioral traits that support collaboration and morale. Recommendations include targeted training programs, revised evaluation tools, and expanded research to deepen understanding of performance drivers in academic settings.*

Keywords: Cognitive Competence, Work Behavior, Job Performance, Academic Support Personnel

I. INTRODUCTION

Every organization is guided by a vision and mission that define its purpose and direction. To achieve these goals, employees must perform effectively in their respective roles. In educational institutions, both teachers and academic support personnel work collaboratively to realize the school’s objectives. While teachers are often at the forefront of delivering instruction, academic support personnel play a vital role in sustaining the operations that enable quality education. Their contribution directly influences the attainment of institutional objectives, making it essential to understand the factors that affect their job performance (Silva & Taveira, 2025).

The evaluation of job performance remains a cornerstone of human resource management and organizational behavior. Job performance is assessed through three dimensions: the quality of work, the quantity of work and attaining objectives. Performance assessment in educational institutions typically reflects the quality and quantity of work accomplished by employees. Quality of work can be observed through the accuracy, thoroughness, and overall effectiveness of tasks, while quantity pertains to the volume of work completed within a specified timeframe, aligning with institutional goals (Majeed, 2021). These reflect not only the outcomes achieved but also the efficiency and effectiveness with which employees fulfill their responsibilities. Several factors may influence these dimensions, ranging from personal attributes to organizational conditions (Pratama & Iskandar, 2024). This study focuses specifically on two critical aspects that shape performance: cognitive competence and work behavior.

Cognitive competence comprises job knowledge, judgment, and creativity, which collectively empower individuals to perform optimally in various occupational settings. The literature underscores the multidimensional nature of cognitive competence and its direct link to enhanced workplace performance.

Job knowledge serves as a foundational element of cognitive competence. It encompasses the understanding of tasks, processes, and technical skills required for effective job performance. For instance, Mapanga highlights that organizations often have higher standards for cognitive abilities, especially in leadership positions, reflecting the critical role of job knowledge in making informed decisions within complex fields like supply chain management (SCM) (Mapanga, 2024). This notion is echoed by Cao et al., who assert that work competencies, including job knowledge, constitute the essential behavioral aspects necessary for effective job performance (Cao et al., 2024).

Judgment, as a component of cognitive competence, entails the ability to critically evaluate situations and make sound decisions based on available information. The implications of judgment have been studied in various contexts, revealing its significance in enhancing work engagement and performance. For instance, Alkhayyal and Bajaba demonstrate that effective leadership competencies are associated with improved job performance and workplace well-being, indicating that good judgment is essential for achieving positive organizational outcomes (Alkhayyal & Bajaba, 2023). Additionally, the importance of judgment is particularly pronounced in environments characterized by increased job complexity, where individuals must navigate intricate decision-making situations (Kalakoski et al., 2020).

Creativity represents another vital component of cognitive competence, enabling individuals to devise innovative solutions and adapt to changing work environments. Lyons and Bandura emphasize that metacognition and creativity play crucial roles in enhancing employee performance, as individuals engage in self-regulation of their cognitive processes, fostering creativity (Lyons & Bandura, 2019). This is particularly relevant in industries that rely heavily on knowledge work, where creativity underpins effective problem-solving and innovation (Kalakoski et al., 2020). Furthermore, Jain et al. indicate that modern jobs increasingly demand cognitive competencies that include creativity, underscoring its vital role in workplace performance across various settings (Jain et al., 2023).

Research indicates that cognitive competence encompasses an individual's ability to process information, reason, and adapt to various work conditions, which in turn affects the quality of work produced. Higher cognitive abilities are generally correlated with better job performance, as they enhance problem-solving and decision-making capacities, facilitating accurate and complete task execution (Sungu et al., 2019; , (Krishnan et al., 2018). In the study of *Silva & Taveira, 2025*, cognitive competence refers to an employee's technical capacity and intellectual skills, including their understanding of duties and subject matter, their judgment or ability to make sound decisions, and their creativity manifested in innovation and original thinking. Prior research shows that job knowledge significantly predicts the quality of work and the ability to meet organizational goals (*Dassisti, Madani, & Panetto, 2025*). Similarly, sound judgment is linked to improved decision-making that supports productivity and workplace efficiency, while creativity fosters innovation that enhances both work quality and adaptability (*Silva & Taveira, 2025*). Employees demonstrating high competencies often exhibit greater job satisfaction, which further enhances their performance and contributes to the overall success of the organization (Wassermann et al., 2017). This relationship underscores the importance of fostering a culture that supports skill development and encourages proactive behaviors among academic support personnel, ultimately driving higher performance levels (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2010). These findings reinforce the notion that cognitive competence directly contributes to employees' capacity to achieve targets and organizational objectives.

Equally important, work behavior encompasses behavioral qualities that influence job outcomes, such as dependability (consistency and accountability), organization (planning and time management), initiative (proactiveness and motivation), and industry (diligence and perseverance). Dependability, often manifested through consistency and accountability, is critical to employee performance. Studies show that dependable employees are more consistent in delivering high-quality work and meeting deadlines (*Samik-Ibrahim, 2019*). Employees who exhibit high levels of dependability are typically more trusted in their roles, leading to improved team dynamics and job effectiveness. Research demonstrates that employee political skill, which includes social awareness and the ability to navigate workplace dynamics effectively, positively influences job performance ratings from supervisors. Such skills correlate with dependability as employees who manage relationships adeptly foster trust and reliability in their performance outcomes (Treadway et al., 2012; Basit, 2020). High motivation also fuels dependability, as motivated employees are inclined to meet their commitments diligently, illustrating the interplay between motivation and performance (Fatmasari & Badaruddin, 2022; Erlina et al., 2023).

Organization, partly rooted in effective planning and time management, is another critical behavioral quality. Effective organizational skills such as planning and prioritization are also strongly correlated with both the quantity and accuracy of task completion (*Karim, 2025*). Employees who possess organizational skills are better equipped to prioritize tasks and allocate their time efficiently, which consequently enhances productivity levels. Empirical studies indicate that structured work environments positively affect employees' ability to manage their responsibilities, leading to higher job satisfaction and engagement (Saks, 2019) Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019). Moreover, organizational support directly impacts how employees perceive their roles, ultimately driving their willingness to engage more deeply with their tasks (Saks, 2019).

Furthermore, initiative and proactiveness drive innovation, improve responsiveness, and contribute to achieving long-term institutional goals (*Duma, 2019*). Initiative refers to an individual's proactiveness and motivation to go above and beyond their assigned duties. Employees who demonstrate high initiative often contribute more creatively to problem-solving within their teams, taking on leadership roles when necessary. This proactive work behavior has been shown to significantly affect organizational commitment and job satisfaction, as proactive employees feel a stronger connection to their organizations (Salim & Swasti, 2024; Wibowo et al., 2024). When employees take the initiative, they are more likely to pursue new opportunities for learning and development, which further enhances their performance (Munyon et al., 2014; Febrian et al., 2023).

Finally, industry, characterized by diligence and perseverance, serves as a hallmark of exceptional work behavior. The persistence with which employees approach their tasks is crucial for long-term achievement and

effectiveness. Studies have highlighted that increased employee engagement—fueled by supportive organizational cultures—enhances diligence among staff, leading to more significant performance outcomes (Zamiri et al., 2020; (Harter et al., 2002; . The capacity for employees to remain industrious amidst challenges is closely linked to their job satisfaction and overall morale, suggesting that fostering an encouraging environment can amplify this trait (Harter et al., 2002; Asghar et al., 2024). Diligence and perseverance have been linked to sustained performance over time, ensuring that employees remain productive even under pressure (Silva & Taveira, 2025). Collectively, these behavioral traits serve as enablers of achieving organizational goals by strengthening both the quality and quantity of employees' work output.

The relationship between cognitive competence, work behavior, and job performance can be explained by Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993), which asserts that employees' knowledge, skills, and creativity enhance productivity. Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) also emphasizes how judgment, self-efficacy, and decision-making shape performance outcomes, while Organizational Behavior Theory (Robbins & Judge, 2019) highlights the role of behavioral consistency, initiative, and interpersonal effectiveness. Together, these frameworks and empirical studies demonstrate why both cognitive competence and work behavior are critical determinants of academic support personnel's contribution to institutional success.

This study examines how cognitive competence and work behavior influence the job performance of academic support personnel, offering both theoretical and practical contributions to human resource development and organizational performance. For schools and administrators, the findings provide evidence-based insights into key determinants of productivity, including job knowledge, judgment, creativity, dependability, organization, initiative, and diligence, which can inform targeted interventions aligned with institutional goals (Karim, 2025; Robbins & Judge, 2019). For support personnel, the study emphasizes their critical role by identifying cognitive and behavioral competencies as predictors of performance and by highlighting training opportunities in technical knowledge, decision-making, time management, and perseverance to enhance professional growth (Silva & Taveira, 2025). For policymakers and educational leaders, it offers recommendations for integrating cognitive and behavioral dimensions into performance management systems to foster accountability, innovation, and long-term institutional success (Samik-Ibrahim, 2019). Finally, for the academic community, it extends scholarship by linking human capital and organizational behavior theories with empirical evidence, demonstrating how competencies translate into measurable outcomes and providing a foundation for future research on related variables such as motivation, organizational culture, and leadership style (Bandura, 1986; Becker, 1993).

Despite the recognized importance of academic support personnel in education, limited studies have examined how their cognitive competencies and work behaviors influence their overall job performance. Addressing this gap, the present study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of cognitive competence, work behavior, and job performance of academic support personnel?
2. Do cognitive competence and work behavior significantly influence the job performance of employees?

By exploring these questions, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how these factors contribute to the achievement of institutional vision and mission, while offering practical insights for enhancing employee performance in the education sector.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative, descriptive–correlational research design. The descriptive aspect was utilized to determine the levels of cognitive competence, work behavior, and job performance of academic support personnel, while the correlational aspect examined the predictive influence of cognitive competence and work behavior on employees' job performance. This design was considered appropriate as it allowed both the assessment of existing conditions and the exploration of relationships among variables without manipulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Secondary data were obtained from the Human Resource Office of a private educational institution with more than 100 academic support personnel. Specifically, job performance evaluations of 111 employees, completed by their immediate supervisors, served as the primary data source. Permission was sought from the administration to access the records, ensuring confidentiality and adherence to ethical considerations. To protect participant privacy, identifying details were removed prior to analysis.

The study utilized the institution's standardized Job Performance Evaluation Tool, which measures three domains: (1) Cognitive Competence, (2) Work Behavior, and (3) Job Performance. To assess internal consistency, Cronbach's Alpha was computed for each scale, with all values exceeding the 0.70 threshold recommended by Nunnally (1978): Cognitive Competence ($\alpha = .810$), Work Behavior ($\alpha = .910$), and Job Performance ($\alpha = .873$). These results confirmed strong reliability of the instrument.

Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The mean and standard deviation were computed to describe the level of cognitive competence, work behavior, and job performance. To determine the predictive relationship between the independent variables (cognitive competence and work behavior) and the dependent variable (job performance), multiple regression analysis was conducted.

III. RESULTS and DISCUSSION

The present study sought to determine the level of cognitive competence, work behavior, and job performance of academic support personnel, as well as to examine the influence of cognitive competence and work behavior on job performance. Descriptive statistics were first computed to provide an overview of participants' scores across the three constructs.

Table 1 presents the mean scores and standard deviations of the three major variables. Results indicate that cognitive competence ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.60$), work behavior ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.50$), and job performance ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.70$) were all rated at a "very good" level, falling above the midpoint of the scale.

Table 1. Level of Cognitive Competencies, Work Behavior, and Job Performance

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description
Cognitive Competencies	4.00	.60	Very Good
Work Behavior	3.96	.50	Very Good
Job Performance	4.06	.70	Very Good

Cognitive competence emerges as a vital variable, with a mean score indicating a high level of perceived ability among respondents. This attribute relates closely to job performance, as employees who possess strong cognitive skills are often better equipped to tackle job-related challenges and capitalize on opportunities for improvement. Empirical evidence has indicated that cognitive abilities significantly correlate with job performance, facilitating effective problem-solving skills and adaptability in changing work conditions (Wingerden & Poell (2017)Park & Lim, 2021). Additionally, when employees feel competent in their cognitive abilities, it enhances their self-efficacy, which is fundamental to promoting organizational citizenship behavior as well as other positive work behaviors (Kim, 2019).

Work behavior, rated just slightly lower than cognitive competence, suggests that employees are generally engaging in conscientious work practices. This aligns with findings that indicate strong organizational citizenship behavior positively impacts job performance and satisfaction (Sverke et al., 2019; Staufenbiel & König, 2010). The construct of work behavior broadly encompasses dependability, organization, and initiative, each contributing to positive outcomes within the workplace. Supportive leadership and a positive work environment have been well-documented as factors that enhance work behavior by fostering a culture of trust and engagement (Bregenzner et al., 2020).

Job performance, exhibiting the highest mean score, is influenced by numerous factors, including job engagement and satisfaction—a theme echoed in the literature. High job performance levels correlate with employees' perceptions of organizational support, engagement opportunities, and their perceived ability to craft their own job roles (Wang et al., 2015)Wingerden et al., 2018). Employees who feel they have the autonomy to adapt their work in response to organizational demands often report heightened job satisfaction and performance. Further studies confirm that perceived organizational justice enhances employee performance, particularly when job insecurity is present (Wang et al., 2015).

Moreover, while the results demonstrate robust performances across these measures, they also warrant consideration of potential stressors in the workplace that can negatively affect outcomes. Job insecurity, for instance, is associated with diminished job performance, yet some research suggests that it can sometimes motivate employees to enhance their performance in a bid to secure their positions (Hsieh & Kao, 2021). As such, fostering a resilient work climate may be crucial in mitigating the adverse effects linked to job insecurity (Murphy et al., 2013).

The findings of cognitive competence, work behavior, and job performance all rated highly among respondents indicate a generally positive workplace environment. However, it is essential to recognize the multifaceted nature of these constructs and their dependencies on management practices, job security, and organizational culture. These results align well with existing literature, suggesting that organizations should foster environments that nurture cognitive skills, promote positive work behavior, and support job performance through structured engagement and leadership practices.

The results from the multiple regression analysis conducted to determine the effects of cognitive competence and work behavior on job performance provide critical insights into how these variables interact in a workplace setting. With a robust model represented by ($F(2, 56) = 51.29$, $p < .001$) and an adjusted (R^2) value of .634, it is clear that cognitive competence explains a substantial portion of the variance in job performance, with a notable effect size. These findings underline the importance of cognitive abilities in enhancing job performance—this relationship is well-supported in existing literature, which posits that cognitive competence serves as a foundational enhancer of job-related capabilities and performance metrics (Oden et al. (2011)(Krisnawati & Bagia, 2021; Liu et al., 2019).

Table 2. MRA on the influence of Cognitive Competencies, Work Behavior on Job Performance

Independent Variables	B	t-value	p
Cognitive Competencies	0.97	10.11	.001
Work Behavior	0.03	0.50	.622
Dependent Variable	Job Performance		
Constant		0.04	
Adjusted R ²		.634	
F-value		51.29	
p		0.001	

Cognitive competence emerged as a significantly strong predictor of job performance ($B = 0.97$, $\beta = .803$, $t = 10.114$, $p < .001$). This outcome supports the view that higher cognitive competencies enable employees to navigate complex job demands more effectively, facilitating better problem-solving, decision-making, and overall job execution (Krisnawati & Bagia, 2021; Liu et al., 2019). For instance, Oden et al. (2011) emphasized that cognitive competencies are closely tied to specific job-related challenges rather than general cognitive abilities, suggesting that the application of these competencies in job contexts is essential for achieving superior performance. Furthermore, the connection between cognitive competence and job performance is echoed in the work of Aritonang and Tung (2023), who found that self-regulation, a component of cognitive competencies, significantly influenced teacher performance.

This suggests that the job performance of academic support personnel is primarily driven by their competence – specifically their knowledge of duties, judgment, and creativity – rather than by behavioral traits such as dependability or perseverance. These findings echo the work of Hunter and Schmidt (1998), who argued that cognitive ability is the most consistent predictor of job performance across occupations. Similarly, Silva and Taveira (2025) found that employee competence is more strongly tied to measurable outcomes such as work quality and goal attainment compared to softer behavioral attributes.

In contrast, work behavior did not demonstrate a significant effect on job performance ($B = 0.03$, $\beta = .039$, $t = 0.496$, $p = .622$). This raises interesting questions regarding the nature of work behavior as it pertains to job performance. Although good work behavior is generally understood to foster a positive work environment and contribute to overall job satisfaction, its direct influence on performance appears limited within the scope of this analysis. Some researchers have highlighted that while work behavior, including aspects such as dependability and initiative, correlates positively with job satisfaction and team efficacy, these qualities may not translate into measurable performance outcomes as effectively as cognitive competencies do (Candra, 2021; Nasurdin et al., 2020). It may also be possible that the specific nature of work behavior considered in this analysis lacked the robust variability needed to capture its effects or that contextual factors – such as organizational culture, job complexity, or leadership influence – may modulate its impact on performance (Candra, 2021; Nasurdin et al., 2020).

Although work behavior did not significantly predict performance in this model, it may still play an indirect role in sustaining organizational culture and team cohesion. This aligns with Robbins and Judge (2019), who noted that work-related attitudes and behaviors may enhance long-term effectiveness even if their immediate statistical impact on performance measures is weaker.

Tests of regression assumptions supported the validity of the model. The Durbin-Watson statistic (2.339) indicated no autocorrelation in residuals. The Shapiro-Wilk test ($p = .038$) suggested a slight violation of normality, but given the sample size ($n = 59$), the regression is considered robust. Multicollinearity was not an issue ($VIF = 1.000$). These diagnostics confirm that the regression results can be reliably interpreted.

Furthermore, the significant discrepancy between the predictors points to the necessity for organizations to prioritize cognitive development in training and professional development initiatives. Emphasizing cognitive competencies can lead to enhanced job performance outcomes, thus justifying the allocation of resources towards educational programs and cognitive skill development frameworks within organizations. Conversely, understanding the limited predictive power of work behavior can encourage managers to investigate environmental or organizational factors that may bolster work-related behaviors to enhance their productivity and integration into performance metrics effectively.

The findings highlight the centrality of cognitive competence in driving job performance. Employees who demonstrate strong job knowledge, sound judgment, and creativity are more likely to deliver high-quality outputs, achieve targets, and contribute effectively to institutional goals. While work behavior was not statistically significant, its consistently “very good” descriptive rating indicates that it remains an important dimension of performance evaluation valued by supervisors, even if its predictive power is limited.

The findings from the regression analysis underscore cognitive competence as a vital factor linked to job performance, exceeding the influence attributed to work behavior. This suggests that while fostering positive work behaviors is beneficial for overall workplace morale and engagement, a targeted focus on enhancing cognitive competencies may yield greater improvements in performance outcomes.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Findings revealed that employees generally demonstrated very good levels of competence, behavior, and performance, suggesting that they are capable, reliable, and aligned with institutional objectives. The regression analysis indicated that cognitive competence was the strongest and most significant predictor of job performance, while work behavior, although rated highly, did not significantly contribute to predicting performance outcomes.

These results highlight the importance of knowledge, judgment, and creativity in shaping the quality and quantity of employees' work, consistent with Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993) and empirical evidence linking competencies to productivity (Hunter & Schmidt, 1998). While work behavior such as dependability, initiative, and diligence remains essential for organizational culture (Robbins & Judge, 2019; Sani & Maharani, 2012), it appears that measurable job outcomes in this context are more strongly tied to cognitive attributes than behavioral traits.

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed:

- Schools should invest in continuous training and development programs that strengthen employees' technical knowledge, decision-making skills, and creative problem-solving abilities. Such programs can help sustain and further improve job performance levels.
- Although work behavior was not a significant predictor in the regression model, it remains critical for teamwork and organizational climate. Schools should implement mentoring, recognition programs, and behavioral workshops to reinforce reliability, initiative, and perseverance among staff.
- The evaluation tools used by the institution should be reviewed to ensure they capture both quantitative job outcomes and qualitative behavioral contributions. This may provide a more holistic picture of employee performance.
- Human resource management should prioritize recruitment and promotion criteria that emphasize cognitive competence, without neglecting behavioral factors. This balance can ensure that the workforce remains both productive and collaborative.
- Future studies should expand the sample to include multiple institutions and examine other variables – such as motivation, organizational culture, and leadership – that may interact with competence and behavior in influencing performance. Employing longitudinal designs could also provide insights into how these relationships evolve over time.

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