RESEARCH PAPER

Navigating Globalisation 3.0 by Identifying Key Competencies for Pharma sector Workforce Development in the New Normal

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ABSTRACT

The transition to a "new normal" has necessitated a radical shift in industrial operations, positioning workforce preparation and pandemic resilience as critical organizational priorities. Central to this transformation is the imperative for aggressive upskilling to meet evolving technological and operational demands. This study examines these shifts through the lens of Friedman's (2006) globalization framework, which categorizes global evolution into three eras: G1, G2, and the current G3. Unlike previous stages, Globalisation 3.0 (G3) prioritizes individual empowerment and the mastery of specific competencies as the primary drivers of success.

Drawing upon Jones's (2020) observations on virtual work transitions and the meta-competency frameworks established by Siddique et al. (2012), this research investigates the specific skill sets required for Pharma sector professionals to navigate the complexities of the modern landscape. By exploring the intersection of individual development and organizational strategy, the paper identifies the core competencies essential for success in the new normal and proposes strategic frameworks for organizations to foster these necessary attributes within their workforce.

Keywords: Globalisation 3.0, Pharma sector Professionals, Competency Development, New Normal, Workforce Upskilling, G3 Era.

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INTRODUCTION

The transition into the "new normal" has fundamentally redefined contemporary industrial operations, forcing organizations to confront an unprecedented set of operational hurdles. Central to these challenges is the urgent need for corporate structures to equip their human capital with the resilience and technical proficiency required to navigate a post-pandemic landscape. As the traditional workplace undergoes this radical transformation, the emphasis has shifted toward aggressive upskilling and the continuous professional development of the workforce.

The necessity of this shift is underscored by recent academic discourse. For instance, Jones (2020) highlighted a significant surge in awareness among professionals regarding the importance of self-improvement following the mandatory transition to virtual work environments. This demand for specialized skills is not a localized phenomenon but part of a larger historical trajectory of labor evolution. Siddique et al. (2012) previously identified that the 21st-century workforce—specifically within engineering and technical fields—requires a sophisticated blend of core competencies and meta-competencies to remain innovative in a rapidly changing market.

To understand the current state of professional requirements, one must view them through the lens of globalization. Friedman (2006) famously categorized the evolution of global connectivity into three distinct phases. While the first two eras (G1 and G2) focused on large-scale exploration and corporate expansion, the third era, known as Globalisation 3.0 (G3), centers on the empowerment of the individual. In this current G3 stage, the primary driver of success is no longer just institutional reach, but the specific skill sets and developmental agility of the individual professional. Consequently, identifying the precise competencies needed for Pharma sector professionals to thrive in this era is paramount for

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organizations seeking to build sustainable strategic frameworks.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An article titled what does" the new normal 'mean for business anyway by Danny Tomsett, published in Forbes, August 2020, explains the new normal as a new way of working by analyzing what is important from our past experiences and lessons and preparing ourselves to the likely occurrences of such similar situations in future. The understanding of the new normal gives the signal that going back to the old normal is not expected anymore and it is time to realize that the present situation paves way for a new style of functioning altogether. Many organizations have strategically and innovatively adapted best practices to survive and sustain themselves. Up skilling themselves is the need of the hour for employees and organizations have to work on strategies to help employees cope with the crisis. Organisations are facing the greatest challenge of adopting to the new normal due to the pandemic.

Agarwal et al., (2020) & Zou et. al. (2020) claim that telework and online education is not a new concept altogether, the concept is popularly practiced across the organization for a decade or two, but the abrupt change in the year 2020 due to pandemic has a tremendous impact on organizational cultures and how the employee works together. The new challenge faced by employees was in areas of competencies to adapt themselves to new forms of remote working.

Tramontano et al. (2021) described COVID-19 as a catalyst that transformed the way we work and has forced everyone to adopt themselves to remote working. The authors also stated that identifying and developing certain competencies employees should be able to easily overcome their remote working stress and will be able to adopt themselves to new normal in a sustainable and healthy way. The specific competencies refer to the skills needed to tackle the technological revolutions in the organizations which impact the overall style of functioning and performing the job. Tramontano et al. (2021) described 'digital skills' as individual competencies that help employees to use technology to learn and work. The authors identified soft competencies that are the non-cognitive skills are related to individual differences, and are responsible for emotional and social behaviour of individuals. Tramontano et al. (2021) use Digital Resilience Competency Framework proposed by Grant & Clarke (2020) to fill the competency gap in remote working conditions. The competencies identified for remote working in the framework are Eskills, trust-building skills, self-care skills, remote social skills, and remote emotional skills.

Further, it is concluded in the study that the organizations have to now focus on building the e-working competencies that help the employee to become more resilient and also benefit from increased engagement, and higher productivity. At the same time 36 employees also stay healthy in long run. Dirani et al. (2020) investigated the role leaders in the organization play to support and motivate employees during the pandemic and also the most important leadership competencies essential for practices in response to a global crisis.

Buheji (2020) study explored the requirement of employability competency in the new normal. The 2-D employability competency framework is proposed which contains 5 R's-react, realize, resolve, reshape, resilient, and 5 Ps- proactiveness, preparedness, pull-together, problem-saving, and publication. The model explains the employability competencies necessary in a new normal situation. Przytuła (2020) studied the impact of COVID19 on the HR practices and functions carried on in the organization. Przytuła (2020) and Caligiuri et al. (2020) emphasized on companies' role in encouraging employees to learn, grow and demonstrate competence.

Bennett & McWhorter (2020) analyzed the role of Virtual human resource development in the digital transformation due to the Covid 19 pandemic. The study emphasizes the AI, robotics powered HRD practices to reskill and upskill employees to sustain the digital transformation. Walas et al. (2021) diagnosed the employee competencies, self-assessment of competencies by the CEO own managerial competencies, and personality traits of the team which are important to gain a competitive advantage after the pandemic crisis. Soft skills are identified as the opportunity for development and recovery from pandemic.

The COVID 19 impact on workplaces, work practices, and socio-psychological impacts are reviewed in the article in HBR, (2020). The article analyses the changes in work practices such as work from home, virtual teams, virtual leadership & Management during the pandemic. The impact of COVID 19 on economic and social-psychological impacts such as unemployment & layoffs, presentism, economic inequality, social distancing and loneliness; stress & burnout, and addiction is studied.

RESEARCH GAP

Current academic research often overlooks the specific behavioral competencies required for the Pharma sector to sustain performance within a hybrid landscape, focusing instead on broad technical infrastructure. While previous studies have addressed initial pandemic survival strategies, there is a notable scarcity of research identifying the critical meta-competencies, such as work-life balance and self-efficacy and necessary for Pharma sector professionals to evolve alongside the demands of the Globalisation 3.0 era. This study aims to bridge these significant research gaps by moving beyond generic organizational analysis to provide a data-driven, ranked hierarchy of additional skill sets, offering a targeted framework for both academic inquiry and practical organizational development in the new normal.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The Relative importance index (RII) is used to rate the most important competencies in new normal working

conditions. Relative importance index analysis helps us to identify the competencies which are rated most important by majority of the respondents and ranks the competencies accordingly.

RESEARCH QUESTION

- What competencies are required for Pharma sector employees to excel in the new normal?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To identify the essential additional competencies required for Pharma sector professionals to transition effectively into the "new normal" working environment.
- To explore the specific skills necessitated by modern working styles, including work-from-home and hybrid models, through a comprehensive literature survey.
- To evaluate the relative importance of competencies such as time management, self-efficacy, work-life balance, taking initiative, and self-direction among Pharma sector employees.
- To rank the identified new normal competencies using the Relative Importance Index (RII) to determine their priority from the employees' perspective.
- To provide strategic recommendations for organizations to help their workforce develop high-priority competencies like work-life balance and time management.

ANALYSIS OF NEW NORMAL COMPETENCIES

The additional competencies relevant to new normal working styles such as work from home and hybrid style are identified in the study. The respondents ranked 5 additional competencies that are required during the prevailing new normal working conditions. The variations in cultural beliefs might have attributed to some differences, the results in the table showed significant consistency among all the respondents surveyed. The results clearly indicated maximum rating given to work life balance and Time management as the most important competency needed during the pandemic. This could be due to simultaneous responsibility management of professional and personal life. Self-efficacy competency is rated third, Self-directed takes fourth position and taking initiative is rated fifth, and the prevailing ambiguity due to pandemic might be the reason for the above ratings.

RELATIVE IMPORTANCE INDEX

The new set of competencies is identified in the new normal along with the existing set of competencies.

Table 1.1 Relative Importance Index of New normal competencies

Competencies	Relative Importance Index	Ranks
Time Management	0.854499	2
Self-Efficacy	0.838046	3
Work Life Balance	0.867866	1
Taking Initiative	0.692031	5
Self-directed	0.770694	4

From the table above it is analysed that Work Life Balance is the top rank identified in new normal competency rating followed by Time Management and the least ranked competency is Taking Initiative.

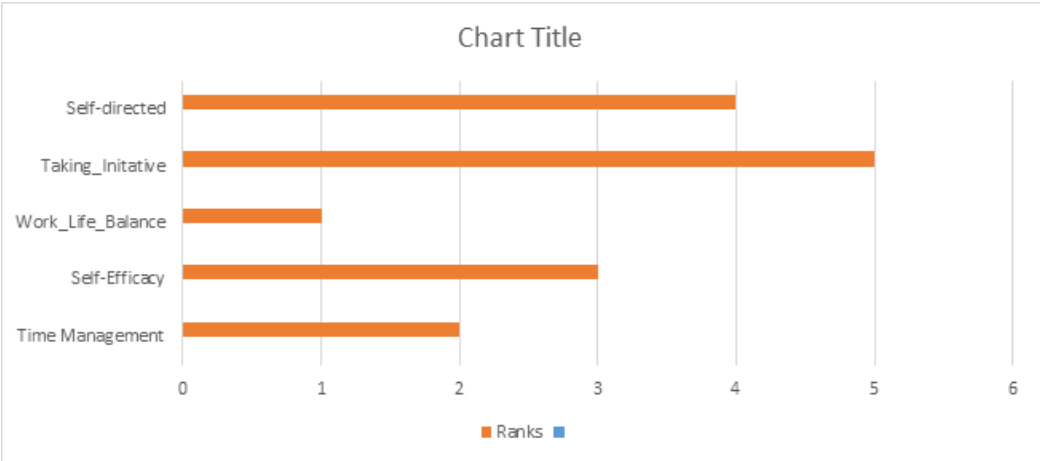


Fig 1.1: Ranking of New Normal Competencies

The Relative Importance Index (RII) analysis reveals a distinct hierarchy among the five identified competencies, with Work-Life Balance emerging as the paramount concern for Pharma sector professionals in the new normal. Boasting the highest score of 0.867866, this ranking underscores a critical shift in employee priorities, where the ability to maintain boundaries between personal and professional spheres is valued above all other traits. This is closely followed by Time Management, which secured the second rank with an RII of 0.854499, highlighting that self-discipline and the capacity to manage one's own schedule are perceived as essential

requirements for success in decentralized or hybrid work environments. Self-Efficacy holds the middle ground with a score of 0.838046, indicating that confidence in one's individual capability remains a steady pillar of professional performance during periods of technological and operational transition.

In contrast, competencies related to proactive and independent work behaviors received lower prioritization from the respondents. Self-directedness earned the fourth rank with a score of 0.770694, while Taking Initiative was placed at the bottom of the hierarchy with an RII of 0.692031. This significant statistical gap between the top-ranked personal management skills and the lower-ranked proactive traits suggests that employees are currently more focused on stabilizing their internal resources—such as their time and well-being—rather than extending their efforts toward extra-role behaviors. For organizations, these findings imply that strategic human resource interventions should prioritize support systems for work-life integration and time autonomy, as these are the areas employees identify as most critical for excelling in the current industrial landscape.

FINDINGS

1. New Normal Competencies in Addition to the Existing Competencies.
2. The additional competencies identified through literature review are Time Management, Self-efficacy, Work life balance, taking initiative and self-directed.
3. The set of additional competencies in the New normal were identified through a literature survey and the respondents were asked to rank the new normal competencies.
4. Relative Importance Index test revealed that Work Life Balance was ranked highest followed by Time Management and the least rank is given to taking Initiative competency.
5. The competencies relevant for new normal working styles such as work from home and hybrid style are identified in the study.
6. The employees have rated work-life balance as the most important followed by time management, self-efficacy, self-directed, and taking initiative.

CONCLUSION

The transition to the "new normal" has necessitated a fundamental shift in the competency profiles required for Pharma sector professionals. This study concludes that while traditional technical skills remain foundational, the emergence of hybrid and remote work models has elevated a specific set of "new normal" competencies that are essential for professional success in the G3 era. Through a comprehensive literature review and subsequent empirical analysis, five key additional competencies were identified: Work-Life Balance, Time Management, Self-efficacy, Self-directedness, and Taking Initiative.

The application of the Relative Importance Index (RII) provided a clear hierarchy of these needs from the perspective of the workforce. The most significant finding of this research is the overwhelming prioritization of Work-Life Balance, which emerged as the highest-ranked competency. This suggests that in a virtualized work environment, the ability to maintain a clear boundary between professional responsibilities and personal life is no longer just a perk, but a core survival and performance competency. This was followed closely by Time Management, highlighting the necessity for employees to exercise high levels of autonomy and discipline in the absence of traditional office supervision.

Conversely, "Taking Initiative" was ranked as the least critical among the new competencies. This result may indicate that under the psychological and operational pressures of a pandemic-influenced workplace, employees prioritize stability and personal resource management over proactive organizational behavior.

In conclusion, for organizations to thrive in the current landscape, their strategic human resource interventions must shift from traditional oversight to supportive development. Management should focus on creating frameworks that enhance an employee's ability to self-regulate and balance their professional and personal spheres. By aligning organizational strategies with these ranked priorities, industries can foster a more resilient, capable, and mentally healthy workforce equipped to handle the complexities of the modern globalized environment.

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