



RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Digital Competency-Based Recruitment and Human Resource Performance in Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises

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## Abstract

The dynamic development of the global and national economy in recent decades has had a significant impact on the existence and sustainability of micro, small, and medium enterprises. On the one hand, fluctuating economic growth often requires small business owners to continuously adapt to uncertain changes in consumer purchasing power. The purpose of this study is to theoretically analyze digital competency-based recruitment and human resource performance in micro, small, and medium enterprises. To answer or achieve the objectives of this study, a qualitative research approach based on theoretical concepts with the assistance of secondary data sources was used. The research results show that digital competency-based recruitment in micro, small, and medium enterprises is no longer about finding candidates with impressive academic degrees, but rather about finding talent with practical, adaptive skills and the ability to directly impact the business's digital ecosystem. Human resource performance analysis in micro, small, and medium enterprises has unique characteristics compared to large corporations. In the micro, small, and medium enterprise sector, human resources are often required to be multidimensional, with one employee handling several functions, while limited financial resources often lead to the neglect of formal performance appraisal systems.

## Keywords

Digital Competency-Based Recruitment; Human Resource Performance; Micro; Small; and Medium Enterprises.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

The dynamic development of the global and national economy in recent decades has had a significant impact on the existence and sustainability of micro, small, and medium enterprises. On the one hand, fluctuating economic growth often requires small business owners to continuously adapt to uncertain changes in consumer purchasing power. When the economy is trending positively, rising per capita income automatically boosts sales of local products due to a surge in market demand. This prosperous situation provides space for the informal sector and home-based businesses to expand their market reach and increase production volumes to meet increasingly diverse consumer needs (Mariani *et al.*, 2023; Tambunan *et al.*, 2025). However, on the other hand, economic uncertainty, such as soaring inflation or currency depreciation, often hits this sector particularly hard. Surging raw material prices triggered by instability in the global supply chain force small business owners into a complex dilemma: whether to raise product prices, risking eroding customer loyalty, or maintain existing prices, resulting in eroded profit margins. Limited working capital and a lack of emergency funds make micro-businesses the most vulnerable to bankruptcy when facing prolonged macroeconomic shocks. Structural transformation towards the digital economy is also a major catalyst drastically changing the competitive landscape for this business sector. The advent of e-commerce and digital payment systems has, on the one hand, opened a golden opportunity for home industries in remote areas to market their superior products directly to national consumers and even penetrate international markets without being hampered by geographic barriers. This digitalization has shortened the lengthy distribution chain and minimized previously prohibitive marketing operational costs. However, this phenomenon is also a double-edged sword, as technologically challenged businesses in remote areas or those with limited internet access are increasingly marginalized by increasingly fierce competition. They must face mass imports at significantly lower prices and modern marketing strategies from large corporations with unlimited capital. Monetary and fiscal policies adopted by the government in response to economic dynamics also determine the fate of this small business sector. Tightening liquidity through increases in the central bank's benchmark interest rate to curb inflation often makes it increasingly difficult for small businesses lacking a solid financial track record to access financing and bank credit. Without intervention in the form of interest subsidy programs, direct capital assistance, or streamlined licensing regulations from relevant authorities, the acceleration of recovery and strengthening of small business production capacity will be very slow. Therefore, the dynamics of economic development are not merely a backdrop but a primary driver, demanding flexible, relentless innovation and the support of an inclusive ecosystem so that this key pillar of the country's economy can continue to survive and advance.

Digital competency-based recruitment has now transformed into a key pillar of modern human resource management strategies in an era of massive technological transformation. This method is no longer just a trend but an absolute necessity for organizations seeking to maintain their competitiveness in the global market. Fundamentally, digital competency-based recruitment focuses on identifying, assessing, and selecting candidates who possess not only conventional technical skills but also digital literacy, adaptability to cutting-edge software, and the ability to solve complex problems using technology ecosystems (Fachrunisa *et al.*, 2025). In practice, companies utilize various smart instruments such as artificial intelligence, automated applicant tracking systems, and big data analytics to screen thousands of applications with a much higher level of accuracy than manual methods. This process enables recruitment teams to objectively map talent based on concrete data regarding candidates' digital skills, from basic data management skills to advanced skills such as programming or cybersecurity analysis. Implementing this recruitment strategy has a significant impact on the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the organization. By integrating online assessment platforms based on simulations or interactive games, companies can directly test how a candidate responds to real-world work situations requiring digital agility. Its primary advantage lies in its ability to minimize the human biases often present in traditional interviews, ensuring that hiring decisions are based purely on real competencies aligned with the company's digital vision. Furthermore, this recruitment model creates a more modern and engaging experience for a new generation of job applicants who have grown up in a technology-rich environment. Ultimately, digital competency-based recruitment serves as a crucial bridge to building a resilient, innovative workforce that is ready to face the uncertainties of the future business landscape, which continues to shift toward full automation.

Digital competency-based recruitment is now a crucial pillar for the sustainability of micro, small, and medium enterprises amidst an increasingly dynamic market ecosystem. For this business sector, the selection process is no longer simply seeking workers capable of performing conventional tasks, but rather focuses on individuals with cognitive flexibility and technical skills in operating various modern devices. Businesses must be able to identify prospective employees who are not only proficient in using social media for marketing but also possess a deep understanding of simple data analysis, app-based inventory management, and digital financial transaction management. Through this approach, businesses can minimize the risk of misplacement and ensure that each human resource recruited directly contributes to increased operational efficiency. This recruitment strategy prioritizes high technological adaptability to enable local businesses to compete with larger corporations. The main challenges faced by small businesses in implementing this recruitment process are limited assessment tools and limited budgets for expensive third-party platforms. Therefore, business owners are required to be more creative by utilizing free or affordable digital platforms

to screen talent. The evaluation process can be conducted through practical case studies or live simulations, such as asking applicants to develop a digital content strategy in a short time or demonstrating how to troubleshoot a messaging-based customer service system. This allows employers to clearly see the extent of a candidate's digital readiness in everyday work situations.

Human resource performance in micro, small, and medium enterprises is a key pillar determining the survival and competitiveness of a business amidst dynamic market fluctuations. Unlike large corporations with established management systems, employee capability management in this sector often relies on flexibility, personal closeness, and strong interpersonal commitment (Febrianti and Abdulah, 2021). Employees are required not to master a single area of expertise but to simultaneously perform multiple roles to maintain the company's daily operational efficiency. Their productivity is strongly influenced by the leadership style of the business owner, who is typically directly involved in every work process, creating a family-like atmosphere that serves as an effective intrinsic motivator. However, limited capital and access to structured formal training often limit the full potential of these workers. Real challenges often arise when businesses begin to expand and require stricter quality standards, where reliance on informal work habits begins to clash with the demands of professionalism. The absence of objective assessment indicators and a competitive reward system sometimes triggers fluctuations in work motivation, resulting in inconsistent product or service output. Therefore, improving employee efficiency in this sector depends heavily on the business owner's ability to adopt transparent communication practices and provide space for independent, hands-on learning based on hands-on practice. When the aspects of basic competence, emotional satisfaction, and alignment of vision between workers and owners can be well maintained, the internal capacity of the business will increase rapidly, allowing this small-scale industry to continue to adapt, innovate, and survive in an increasingly competitive economy. The purpose of this study is to theoretically analyze digital competency-based recruitment and human resource performance in micro, small, and medium enterprises.

## 2 | BACKGROUND THEORY

### 2.1 Digital Competency-Based Recruitment

Digital competency-based recruitment has now transformed into a key pillar of human resource management strategies in this exciting and fast-paced modern era (Fachrunisa *et al.*, 2025). This approach no longer relies solely on conventional educational backgrounds or static work experience files, but rather emphasizes candidates' tangible abilities to operate, adapt, and innovate using various modern technological tools. In practice, companies are leveraging artificial intelligence software and advanced data analytics to objectively screen and assess talent, ranging from purely technical abilities such as programming and macro data analysis, to essential soft skills such as digital literacy, virtual collaboration, and resilience in the face of constant technological change. This digitized selection process allows organizations to predict a candidate's future performance with a much higher degree of accuracy while minimizing the human bias often present in traditional interview methods. Furthermore, implementing this system not only creates significant time and cost efficiencies for recruiters but also provides a seamless and interactive experience for job applicants, ultimately helping companies build an adaptive brand image and prepare for the challenges of an increasingly competitive global marketplace.

### 2.2 Human Resource Performance

Human resource performance is one of the most crucial pillars in determining the success, sustainability, and competitiveness of an organization in this dynamic modern era (Febrianti and Abdulah, 2021). Fundamentally, this concept reflects the accumulation of work results, effectiveness, and real contributions made by each individual or employee in carrying out their assigned duties and responsibilities. Optimal performance does not emerge instantly, but rather arises from the harmonious synergy between personal competencies, high levels of motivation, and the provision of a conducive work environment. When a company is able to manage and align its employees' potential with the institution's strategic vision, overall productivity will increase significantly. Therefore, companies are required to continuously monitor, conduct regular evaluations, and develop capacity on an ongoing basis to ensure established performance standards are met and even surpass existing expectations. In practice, measuring the work performance of employees involves various complex, interrelated dimensions. Work quality, which emphasizes accuracy and perfection of results, along with work quantity, which measures output volume, are the most frequently observed tangible indicators. However, behavioral aspects such as punctuality, independence in tactical decision-making, and the ability to work in a team also play an equally important role in creating a healthy work environment. The main challenge for management today is how to create a fair, objective, and transparent appraisal system so that employees feel valued and motivated to continuously improve their performance. Through effective communication, constructive feedback, and clear career paths, organizations are not only successful in increasing productivity figures on paper but also able to build loyalty and strong emotional attachments from their human resources.

### 3 | METHOD

To answer or achieve the objectives of this study, a qualitative research approach based on theoretical concepts with the assistance of secondary data sources was used. To comprehensively answer and achieve this research objective, the entire series of analyses will be conducted using a qualitative research approach firmly grounded in relevant theoretical concepts. Through this qualitative approach, the phenomena under study are not merely viewed superficially but are explored in depth to understand the meaning, context, and dynamics of the relationships between the variables within them (Kurdhi *et al.*, 2023). A solid theoretical foundation serves as both an analytical tool and a compass guiding interpretation, allowing field findings to be placed within a valid and accountable scientific framework. To support and enrich this analysis, the data collection process in this study relied entirely on secondary data sources obtained through documentation studies, scientific literature, official reports, and credible archives directly related to the topic (Kurdhi *et al.*, 2023). The integration of a mature conceptual framework and the use of this rich secondary data is expected to produce sharp, comprehensive conclusions that address all of the initial research questions with high objectivity.

### 4 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Results

##### 4.1.1 Analysis of Digital Competency-Based Recruitment in Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises

Digital competency-based recruitment in micro, small, and medium enterprises is no longer about finding candidates with impressive academic degrees, but rather about finding talent with practical, adaptive skills and the ability to directly impact the business's digital ecosystem. Micro, small, and medium enterprises must compete fiercely with large corporations and technology startups to attract the same digital talent, including.

##### 1) Budgetary Constraints

Micro, small, and medium enterprises often cannot afford to offer salaries or benefits as high as larger companies. The challenge of budget constraints is one of the most crucial obstacles for micro, small, and medium enterprises in optimally implementing digital competency based recruitment. When micro, small, and medium enterprises are required to adapt to the era of digital transformation, they often encounter a tight financial reality, where working capital is prioritized for the continuity of daily operations or the purchase of raw materials rather than investment in the employee selection process. Digital competency-based recruitment requires specific assessment tools, such as online testing platforms, digital simulations, or sophisticated applicant tracking software, all of which require expensive licensing fees (Putra *et al.*, 2025). As a result, business owners tend to revert to conventional methods that rely on subjective interviews and physical document evaluations, which often fail to identify candidates with truly valid and ready-to-use digital skills. Beyond constraints on software and technological infrastructure, these funding constraints significantly impact the ability of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises to compete in a competitive labor market. Candidates with high digital competencies, such as digital marketers, web developers, or data analysts, typically have very high salary and benefit expectations that exceed the financial capacity of small businesses. Micro, small, and medium enterprises not only struggle to afford job postings on premium professional platforms to reach top digital talent, but they also lack the financial incentive to retain such talent once they are successfully recruited. This situation creates a vicious cycle where micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises need digital talent to grow and increase revenue, but they lack sufficient initial budgets to fund the search and hiring of these professionals.

##### 2) Employer Branding

The lesser-known profile of micro, small, and medium enterprises leads talented job applicants to prefer companies with established reputations. Implementing strong employer branding is now a crucial pillar for micro, small, and medium enterprises in winning the competition for top talent in an era of massive technological transformation. When integrated into a digital competency-based recruitment system, the recruitment process is no longer simply about filling vacant positions but rather becomes an active strategy to attract individuals with data literacy skills, analytical thinking, and proficiency in modern software. For small businesses, the budget constraints of offering financial compensation on par with multinational corporations can be effectively bridged through authentic reputational branding in the digital space (Apriliya *et al.*, 2024). Through a consistent narrative across professional social media platforms and the organization's official website, these businesses can highlight a flexible work culture, rapid development opportunities, and an inclusive work environment, often key attractions for today's younger generation of workers. Thus, prospective applicants view job openings not only as daily tasks but also as spaces for self-actualization where their digital skills can develop optimally alongside business growth. Furthermore, the alignment between a company's publicized reputation and digital capability-based selection methods creates a transparent and efficient recruitment ecosystem. When micro, small, and medium enterprises are able to effectively

communicate their internal values, the candidate screening process can shift from conventional, subjective methods to objective performance assessments through digital simulations of online skills tests and digital portfolio analysis. Prospective employees with high digital skills tend to be more attracted to organizations that demonstrate technological professionalism in their communications from the outset. When digital platforms are used interactively to reflect a company's authentic identity, the candidate experience during the recruitment process is significantly enhanced, which in turn strengthens the company's positive image in the labor market, even if the candidate does not successfully pass the selection process (Gultom *et al.*, 2024; Hamzah *et al.*, 2025). Ultimately, this harmonious combination of cultivating an adaptive corporate image and utilizing digital evaluation tools not only reduces recruitment operational costs but also ensures that the talent recruited is truly prepared to face the dynamics of the modern market and capable of taking small and medium-sized businesses to a higher level of competition.

### 3) Subjective Selection Process

Many micro, small, and medium enterprises lack professional human resources departments, so recruitment is often based on intuition or personal familiarity, rather than objective competency assessments. The subjective selection process within the digital competency based recruitment framework in the micro, small, and medium enterprise sector often creates a paradox that challenges operational efficiency. On the one hand, digital competency demands objective, measurable, and evidence-based assessment indicators such as skills certifications, digital portfolios, or concrete technical test results. However, limited managerial infrastructure, the absence of specialized human resources departments, and the dominance of business owners' intuition within the small business ecosystem often override this objectivity and personal bias. Owners and managers often fall into the trap of judging candidates based on personal familiarity, similar backgrounds, or simply ease of communication during interviews, which then obscures the true digital skills needed by the organization (Pandiangan *et al.*, 2025; Tambunan *et al.*, 2024). This phenomenon is further complicated by the fact that digital literacy at the top management level of small businesses is often uneven or has not yet reached a standard capable of accurately assessing advanced digital competencies. When an interviewer is not fully familiar with the technical intricacies of the digital tools a candidate will operate, they tend to shift the focus of their assessment to superficial personality traits or rely on highly biased first impressions. As a result, assessments that should focus on a candidate's ability to optimize digital marketing strategies, manage databases, or operate business management software shift to subjective assessments of how well the candidate presents themselves verbally. This creates a significant gap where candidates with strong persuasive communication skills but little tangible digital expertise can easily slip through the cracks, while competent but less expressive digital talent is left behind (Fachrunisa *et al.*, 2025). The impact of this subjective selection process has significant consequences for the long-term sustainability of small businesses. A mismatch between the actual digital competencies of new hires and the company's actual needs can lead to decreased productivity, wasted budget on unplanned retraining, and even the failure of ongoing digital transformation efforts. When hiring decisions are based on emotional instincts rather than valid digital performance metrics, companies not only miss opportunities to innovate rapidly in a competitive market but also risk operational stagnation due to misplacement of human resources in crucial technology-based positions.

#### 4.1.2 Analysis of Human Resource Performance in Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises

Human resource performance analysis in micro, small, and medium enterprises has unique characteristics compared to large corporations. In the micro, small, and medium enterprise sector, human resources are often required to be multidimensional, with one employee handling several functions, while limited financial resources often lead to the neglect of formal performance appraisal systems. Human resource performance in micro, small, and medium enterprises has unique characteristics that are heavily influenced by the limitations of organizational structures and the closeness of relationships between employees. Unlike large-scale companies that have objective and standardized management systems, small businesses typically rely on role flexibility, where employees are often required to master multiple skills simultaneously to ensure daily operations. This situation means that work performance is not solely measured by achieving rigid numerical targets, but also by adaptability, loyalty, and direct contribution to work efficiency (Arini *et al.*, 2023). The close emotional relationship between business owners and employees is also a double-edged sword, as it can, on the one hand, create a family-like work culture that increases motivation, but on the other hand, it has the potential to obscure professionalism in evaluating actual work results. The main challenges that often hinder this performance optimization are limited funding for formal training programs and the lack of clear career paths for workers. As a result, many small businesses experience high employee turnover, which in turn disrupts the consistent quality of their products or services. Business owners are required to be highly creative in designing non-financial compensation systems, such as providing flexible working hours or personal recognition, to maintain employee emotional engagement. When this internal commitment is successfully built, infrastructure limitations are no longer a major barrier, allowing workforce productivity to remain a key driver in boosting competitiveness and sustainable business growth in a competitive market. Human resource performance in the micro, small, and medium enterprises sector plays a crucial role because it is often the only major competitive advantage a company possesses amidst limited financial and technological capital. In this

business ecosystem, work effectiveness is driven not by rigid operational procedures but by social capital in the form of trust, direct communication, and speed in decision-making (Febrianti and Abdulah, 2021). This flexibility allows workers to respond very quickly to market changes, something rarely found in large, bureaucratic corporations. However, this heavy reliance on human resources also carries significant vulnerabilities, as the absence of a single key employee due to illness or resignation can immediately paralyze the entire production chain or customer service for the same day. In-depth efforts to boost workforce productivity in small businesses often run into the phenomenon of dual roles, which is not ideal from a modern management perspective. An employee may be responsible for financial records, customer service, and inventory management simultaneously. This dual workload, if not managed through transparent communication, can quickly lead to burnout and reduce the accuracy of work results.

#### 4.2 Discussion

The implementation of digital competency-based recruitment brings significant, transformative changes to the operational dynamics and competitiveness of micro, small, and medium enterprises in the modern market ecosystem. When businesses shift from conventional selection methods that often rely solely on intuition or personal relationships to standardizing digital skills, they automatically build a more adaptive organizational foundation. Employees screened through parameters such as technological literacy, basic data analysis skills, and digital platform dexterity have been shown to reduce adaptation time upon first entering the workplace (Fachrunisa *et al.*, 2025). This efficiency is crucial for small businesses that lack the luxury of time and large budgets for intensive, long-term training. The flexibility of digitally literate personnel also allows for the automation of routine administrative tasks that previously consumed significant energy, allowing work focus to be fully shifted to product innovation and expanding market reach.

Linearly, improving the quality of input in the selection process has a direct, massive impact on the overall productivity and performance of human resources internally. Employees with strong digital capabilities demonstrate significantly higher work effectiveness because they are able to utilize project management software, optimize cloud-based inventory management, and even independently execute digital marketing strategies. This operational independence reduces the supervisory burden on business owners, creates an independent work culture, and accelerates crucial decision-making amidst market fluctuations. When every individual within an organization is able to contribute optimal output by leveraging technology, operational cost efficiency can be minimized while boosting business profit margins.

Furthermore, the strong link between the right recruitment and superior human resource performance is a key driver for accelerating comprehensive business transformation. Small businesses no longer merely survive in the local market but gain strategic capabilities to penetrate broader global markets through optimized e-commerce and responsive digital interactions with customers. Competent human resources are able to analyze consumer behavior trends through available digital data and transform them into profitable new business opportunities (Arini *et al.*, 2023). The end result is robust business resilience, where the combination of a digitally agile workforce and high operational performance serves as a key asset for the micro-business sector to advance to become a more established, competitive, and sustainable business entity in the long term.

The integration of a digital competency-based recruitment system within the micro, small, and medium enterprise environment acts as a major catalyst for completely overhauling the human capital management and business operations architecture. A workforce screening process that emphasizes technological proficiency is not just a seasonal trend, but a fundamental necessity to bridge the gap between the internal capacity of small businesses and the demands of a highly dynamic modern market. When businesses implement rigorous evaluation standards for candidates' abilities to navigate digital ecosystems, manage virtual communications, and resolve technical issues independently, they directly mitigate the risk of future technological failure. Workers selected through this mechanism have a much gentler learning curve, allowing them to immediately integrate into the work environment without requiring complex mentoring from business owners, who are often already preoccupied with other strategic matters. In the long term, this continuity between precise recruitment and high-quality human resource performance will form a solid foundation for exponential business expansion. The micro-business sector is no longer trapped in limited, conventional operational patterns, but rather has the agility to transition into digital-based business entities capable of competing nationally and globally. Digitally competent employees consistently bring new and innovative perspectives, enabling organizations to continually explore new sales channels, optimize supply chains, and implement more transparent and accountable financial management.

## 5 | CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

The research results show that digital competency-based recruitment in micro, small, and medium enterprises is no longer about finding candidates with impressive academic degrees, but rather about finding talent with practical, adaptive skills and the ability to directly impact the business's digital ecosystem. Human resource performance analysis in micro, small, and medium enterprises has unique characteristics compared to large

corporations. In the micro, small, and medium enterprise sector, human resources are often required to be multidimensional, with one employee handling several functions, while limited financial resources often lead to the neglect of formal performance appraisal systems. Implementing digital competency-based recruitment and improving human resource performance in the micro, small, and medium enterprise sector requires a strategic, adaptive, and sustainable approach to compete in this fast-paced modern era. A crucial first step for business owners is to standardize digital competency profiles that are specific and relevant to their own business operations. This standardization does not need to be as complex as that of large companies, but rather simply focuses on practical skills that have a direct, tangible impact, such as mastery of social media for marketing, digital bookkeeping, and basic skills in analyzing sales data. During the candidate screening process, business owners should look beyond conventional academic records and instead utilize practical evaluation methods or live digital work simulations. This hands-on testing is considered far more effective in assessing a potential employee's ability to utilize technology to solve everyday problems faced by the business.

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