

COMPETENCIES FRAMEWORK FOR TECHNICAL EXECUTOR HEATING,
VENTILATING AND AIR CONDITIONING (HVAC) MAINTENANCE OF OIL
AND GAS INDUSTRY IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) is one of the critical mechanical systems which needs careful maintenance in the oil and gas (O&G) industry. However, there are no guidelines to define and measure the competencies of the personnel who execute the HVAC maintenance in O&G industry, specifically in Malaysia. The objective of this research is to develop a competency instrument and framework for the HVAC maintenance technical executor in the O&G industry in Malaysia. A total of 18 constructs with 127 sub-constructs in technical skills, 3 constructs with 36 sub-constructs in non-technical skills and 4 constructs with 15 sub-constructs in core personality have been identified through literature review. Delphi method has been used for instrument competency development. It consisted of three rounds of data collection to obtain the consensus from 17 expert panels. The developed instrument was distributed to 158 respondents using cluster sampling based on 4 regions. The Winsteps Software V.3.69.1.11 was used for analysis and the results identified 19 constructs with 115 sub-constructs in technical skills, 3 constructs with 30 sub-constructs in non-technical skills and 4 constructs with 18 sub-constructs in core personality. Next, the competency framework was developed using principal component (PCA), which showed the raw variance explained by measures (empirical) as 55%, 58.8% and 61.3% (>40%), unexplained variance in 1st contrast as 5.9%, 5.2% and 3.3% (<10%) and eigenvalue of 2.7, 2.4 and 2.3 (<3) for technical skills, non-technical skills and core personality respectively. The results of this study have the potential to contribute significantly to the existing body of knowledge as well as offer valuable insights and guidance to employees seeking career advancement in the role of HVAC maintenance executors in the Malaysian O&G industry. Moreover, O&G HVAC maintenance organisations can leverage these findings to identify competency gaps among their employees and implement targeted training programs.

ABSTRAK

Pemanasan, ventilasi dan penyamanan udara (HVAC) adalah salah satu sistem mekanikal yang kritikal dan perlu diselenggara di dalam industri minyak dan gas (O&G). Walaubagaimanapun, tiada garis panduan bagi menentukan dan mengukur kecekapan pelaksana penyelenggaraan HVAC di dalam industri O&G khususnya di Malaysia. Objektif kajian adalah untuk membangunkan instrumen dan kerangka kompetensi untuk pelaksana teknikal penyelenggaraan HVAC dalam industri O&G Malaysia. Sebanyak 18 konstruk dengan 127 sub-konstruk bagi kemahiran teknikal, 3 konstruk dengan 36 sub-konstruk dalam kemahiran bukan teknikal dan 4 konstruk dengan 15 sub-konstruk dalam personaliti teras melalui kajian literatur. Kaedah Delphi digunakan untuk pembangunan kompetensi instrumen melalui tiga pusingan untuk mendapatkan konsensus daripada 17 panel pakar. Instrumen yang dibangunkan telah diedarkan kepada 158 responden menggunakan pensampelan kelompok berdasarkan 4 wilayah. Hasil analisis melalui Perisian Winsteps V.3.69.1.11 telah mengenalpasti 19 konstruk dengan 115 sub-konstruk dalam kemahiran teknikal, 3 konstruk dengan 30 sub-konstruk dalam kemahiran bukan teknikal dan 4 konstruk dengan 18 sub-konstruk dalam personaliti teras. Seterusnya, kerangka kompetensi telah dibangunkan menggunakan analisis komponen utama (PCA), yang menunjukkan bahawa varians mentah dijelaskan dengan ukuran (empirikal) 55%, 58.8% dan 61.3% ($>40\%$), Varian tidak dapat dijelaskan dalam kontras pertama 5.9 %, 5.2% dan 3.3% ($<10\%$) dan nilai eigen 2.7, 2.4 dan 2.3 (<3) masing-masing untuk kemahiran teknikal, kemahiran bukan teknikal dan personaliti teras. Hasil kajian ini berpotensi memberi sumbangan besar kepada badan pengetahuan sedia ada serta menawarkan pandangan dan panduan yang berharga kepada pekerja yang mencari kemajuan kerjaya dalam peranan pelaksana penyelenggaraan HVAC dalam industri O&G Malaysia. Selain itu, organisasi penyelenggaraan O&G HVAC boleh memanfaatkan penemuan ini untuk mengenal pasti jurang kompetensi di kalangan pekerja mereka dan melaksanakan program latihan yang disasarkan.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

κ	- <i>Fleiss' Kappa coefficient</i>
DM	- <i>Delphi method</i>
IQR	- <i>Interquartile range</i>
O&G	- <i>Oil and Gas</i>
HVAC	- <i>Heating ventilating and air conditioning</i>
E&P	- <i>Exploration and production</i>
LQ	- <i>Living quarters</i>
H ₂ S	- <i>Hydrogen sulphide</i>
BOSIET	- <i>Basic offshore safety induction and emergency training</i>
OGSP	- <i>Oil and gas safety passport</i>
JHA	- <i>Job hazard analysis</i>
PTW	- <i>Permit to work</i>
SKM	- <i>Malaysia skills certification</i>
MOSQ	- <i>Malaysia Occupational Skills Qualification</i>
PETRONAS	- <i>Petroleum Nasional Berhad</i>
MITI	- <i>Ministry of International Trade and Industry</i>
MDTCC	- <i>Ministry of Domestic Trade, Co-Operatives and Consumerism</i>
PCA	- <i>Principal component analysis</i>
MBOT	- <i>Malaysian Board of Technologist</i>
BEM	- <i>Board of Engineer Malaysia</i>
IR 4.0	- <i>Industrial Revolution 4.0</i>
NOSS	- <i>National Occupational Skill Standard</i>
SCS	- <i>Specification of competency standard (SCS)</i>
SVQs	- <i>Scottish Vocational Qualification</i>
NOS	- <i>National Occupational Standard</i>
NZQF	- <i>New Zealand Qualification Frameworks</i>
VET	- <i>Vocational Education and Training</i>

<i>PSFs</i>	- <i>Performance shaping factors</i>
<i>RMM</i>	- <i>Rasch measurement model</i>
<i>IRT</i>	- <i>Item Response Theory</i>
<i>ASHRAE</i>	- <i>American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air conditioning Engineers</i>
<i>TVET</i>	- <i>Technical and vocational education and training</i>
<i>H</i>	- <i>Number of Person or Item Strata</i>
<i>G</i>	- <i>Separation index of item or person</i>
<i>OGST</i>	- <i>OPITO Global Training Standard</i>
<i>AHU</i>	- <i>Air handling unit</i>
<i>PT-MEA CORR</i>	- <i>Point Measure Correlation</i>
<i>MNSQ</i>	- <i>Mean Square</i>
<i>DIF</i>	- <i>Differential Item Functioning</i>



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Malaysia is the 14th largest natural gas producer and the 25th largest crude oil reserve in the world (Baradari *et al.*, 2021). Owing to the availability of domestic hydrocarbons, Malaysia will become a major petrochemical exporter in the ASEAN region, resulting in a natural boost for oil and gas development (Malaysian Investment Development Authority). As a strategic position on key shipping lanes, Malaysia has the advantage of becoming a major player in the Asian business and management industry. The oil and gas (O&G) industry is responsible for the global processes of exploration, extraction, refining, transportation and marketing (Ikwunze *et al.*, 2016) of petroleum products. According to the market division, the O&G sector consists of three major streams and a value chain in each stream (Gardas *et al.*, 2019). The upstream distribution system consists of the exploration and production (E&P) of hydrocarbons, which can be either oil or gas, or a combination of the two, and is typically referred to as offshore. The midstream distribution system consists of pipelines and tankers that transport crude oil to refinery plants, while the downstream stage includes refining, marketing, wholesaling and retailing. These three streams are a series of linked and sequential tasks designed to transform crude oil and gas into consumable, high-quality products for global marketing.

As O&G industry is capital-intensive, the offshore and onshore plants should be operated with high reliability and availability, as downtime due to system failure has a major effect on the production activity and the degree of safety (Hwang *et al.*, 2018). All operations in the O&G industry need to be carried out with high reliability and availability, to sustain the upstream and downstream business of O&G industry. Various machinery and equipment including heavy machinery need to be employed

and utilized to create a good operation in the O&G business. All equipment mechanical, pneumatic, hydraulic system and electrical generation equipment must be effectively maintained in order to achieve the daily target production with the lowest possible maintenance cost (Olose, 2016). Maintenance includes inspection, maintenance and repair task to ensure the procedure and operation of equipment at minimum possible cost under good and safe conditions. These activities entail technical and administrative actions such as planned, scheduled and team mobilisation, in order to efficiently deliver the maintenance activities. Maintenance benefits can be classified as, ensuring the plant's design life, plant durability, environmental protection, cost effectiveness and effective resources (Abdelnaser *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, the effectiveness of maintenance can be assessed by looking at related equipment, costs, maintenance tasks and customer satisfaction (Syam & Ramsoobag, 2016). The maintenance strategies within the O&G industry often exhibit parallels with those found in other heavy industries. This observation holds true despite the notable levels of hazard, risk, and safety requirements entailed by the processes and operations in the O&G industry. Hazardous areas are classified based on risk explosion, and safety precaution towards electrical components become priority and important. A hazardous area is one in which an explosive gas atmosphere is present or may be expected to be present, in quantities such as to require special precautions for the construction, installation and use of equipment (BS EN IEC 60079-10-1:2021). Table 1.1 shows the hazardous area classification according to zone.

Table 1.1: Hazardous area classification (BS 60079-10-1:2021)

Hazardous area	Description
Zone 0	Area in which an explosive gas atmosphere is present continuously or for long periods or frequently
Zone 1	Area in which an explosive gas atmosphere is likely to occur periodically or occasionally in normal operation
Zone 2	Area in which an explosive gas atmosphere is not likely to occur in normal operation but, if it does occur, it will exist for a short period only

HVAC system is a combination of mechanical and electrical systems that need to be maintained in the O&G industry. Air cooled condensing unit (ACCU), air cooled chiller (ACC) and air cooled split unit (ACSU) are widely used in the O&G industry, especially in the offshore platform due to the limitation of fresh water sources. ACCU and ACC are connected with the fan coil unit (FCU) or air handling unit (AHU) to

supply cooled air into the space. An additional pressurised fan is needed to pressurise fresh air into the AHU (Figure 1.1).

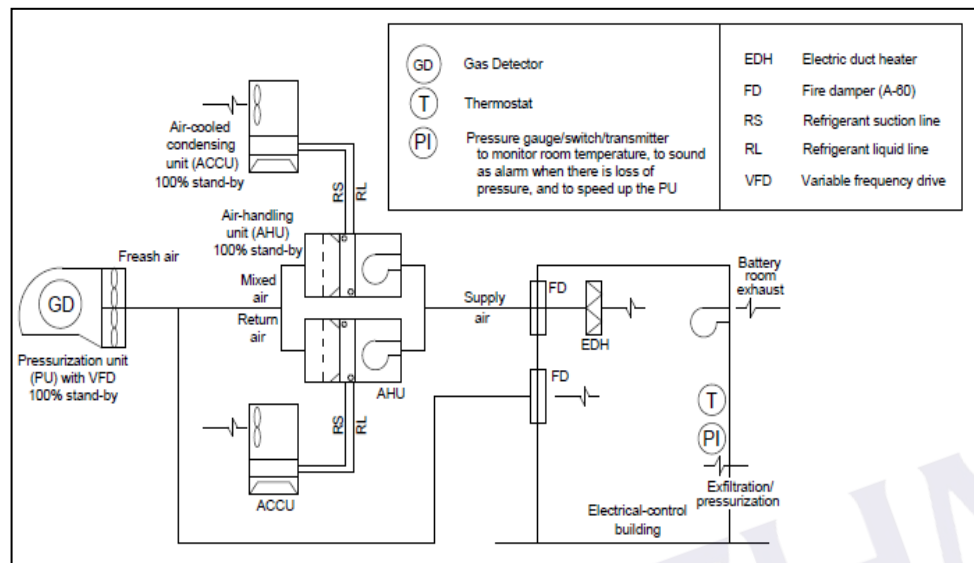


Figure 1.1: Schematic diagram of HVAC in O&G industry (Yang *et al.*, 2014)

A comfortable and healthy indoor environment is provided for occupants through the utilisation of HVAC system. Positive room pressure is required in the offshore platform's living quarters (LQ) to prevent toxic or hazardous gases such as hydrogen sulphide (H_2S) from entering the area. High concentrations can cause health hazards such as shock, convulsions, inability to breathe, extremely rapid unconsciousness, coma and death. Effects can occur within a few breaths, possibly a single breath (United States Department of Labor). HVAC systems are also necessary to supply cool air to the rooms containing sensitive electrical equipment, such as battery rooms, radio equipment rooms, switchgear rooms and central control rooms. Malfunction of the sensitivity equipment caused by a hot environment to sensitive electrical equipment can result in an electrical failure and cause the production offshore platform to shut down. The effect of unexpected shutdown will incur huge losses for the O&G industry (Yang *et al.*, 2014).

In this context, the quality of maintenance seems to be related to the competencies of the personnel who perform the maintenance tasks. Commonly, all maintenance tasks will be executed by the executor team which may have skilled as well as semi-skilled workers. Competence refers to the combination of awareness, knowledge, skill and attitude that an individual must possess to meet the performance

standard required and to be capable to perform a specified job (Garavan T. & McGuire D., 2001). The team is led by the supervisor for HVAC maintenance task, who communicates the progress of maintenance work to the platform's regular operator. It is very much required that the executor team is highly competent to carry out all the HVAC maintenance task at the offshore platform and onshore. Incompetence of executor team in performing the HVAC maintenance task may affect the organisation's performance and hence, could impact the maintenance cost due to repetitive failure, failure in detecting unwanted failure and mistake (Au-Yong *et al.*, 2014).

1.2 Background of the problem

A pro-business policy has been implemented to create a vibrant ecosystem by offering competitive rates and skilled labour to ensure sustainable and successful upstream and downstream business in the O&G industry. To date, the group responsible for the extraction of natural gas and crude oil has employed the most people (18,630), with a percentage of 50.7%. 18,146 people (49.3%) have been involved in the group that supports the extraction of natural gas and petroleum. (Department of Statistical Malaysia 2018). A significant portion of skilled labour is needed in the O&G industry's various engineering disciplines, including support activities. The need of the hour is that the workforce is required to competitively upgrade knowledge, skills, abilities and attitude.

Competencies of skilled and semi-skilled manpower become subjective due to different interpretations and have no consistency across different fields of the O&G industry (Puteh *et al.*, 2016). In terms of skilled and semi-skilled labour in the O&G industry, much of the literature focuses on exploration and production (E&P) skills such as geoscience, petroleum, reservoir engineering and corrosion engineering, regardless of the support activities. (Al-Daihani *et al.*, 2016; Lau, 2017; Morshed, 2014; Fattahi, 2003). Support activities should be highlighted because, they greatly aid in preserving optimal operation in the O&G sector, particularly in offshore platforms. HVAC maintenance activities are classified as support activities, and manpower competency is very important, as there are various approaches to task execution, particularly those involving strict safety requirements and in hazardous areas. HVAC

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