

# THE IMPACT OF SOFT SKILLS IN ENHANCING COMPETITIVE PRECEDENCE WITHIN THE STANDARD COMMITMENT PATH. A FIELD STUDY FOR WORKERS IN THE NORTHERN FERTILIZER COMPANY

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## **Abstract:**

The study dealt with (the impact of soft skills employment on enhancing competitive precedence within the standard commitment path) to clarify the concept of soft skills and its sub-dimensions (communication, leadership, time management, decision-making), to measure the relationship between soft skills and competitive precedence through these standards (quality, differentiation, costs), and to know the extent of the standard commitment impact on the relationship between soft skills and competitive precedence within the investigated work environment of the Northern Fertilizers Company in Iraq. The study aimed to achieve a set of objectives such as studying the reality of soft skills employment, identifying the policy used in building and strengthening competitive precedence, and realizing the methods and paths of high commitment achievement of human resources in the Northern Fertilizer Company. The researcher has used the descriptive approach to analyze the study by collecting data and then classifying and analyzing it to reach conclusions that help understand the field study environment. A questionnaire has also been designed including employees at the upper and middle levels of the company that form 70 samples, whose answers have been approved.

The study reached a set of results, the most important of which were:

1. There is a strong correlation between soft skills and competitive precedence in the company.
2. There is a strong correlation between the standard commitment and the competitive precedence in the company.
3. There is a strong correlation between the standard commitment and soft skills in the company.
4. There is a good impact of the standard commitment on the relationship between soft skills and competitive precedence in the company.

By analyzing the relationships, the researcher reached a set of recommendations, the most important of which are:

1. Increasing interest in the company employees' soft skills and involving them in plans and strategies of developing technical and administrative performance.
2. Coordination between administrative formation units by improving communication methods, teamwork, time management and development to ensure smooth performance.
3. Product improvement commitment such as packaging, instructions printing, weights and timing control by equipping and selling facilities for pieces. They are global standards of customer satisfaction and competitive precedence achievement in the market.
4. Maintaining work values and providing the appropriate climate and the technical and administrative performance requirements ensure the employees' satisfaction and achieve a positive transformation towards their standard commitment in the company.

**Keywords:** soft skills, competitive advantage, standard (normative) commitment.

## INTRODUCTION:

Through the various developments of administrative sciences, the expansion of applied concepts, the increasing global interest in developing workers' skills and self-abilities in various fields and professions, and the needed economic, social and political confrontations to achieve goals, the administrations of international organizations began to focus on various scientific concepts that increase their work and products quality. However, the concepts and components of soft skills are considered one of the most important modern concepts related to individuals' talents and skills, which informed administrations are concerned with and seek to employ and develop the capabilities and skills of workers to build an organizational structure that has a priority of performance and product over other competitors.

As a result of the importance of competitive precedence in today's world, the focus of most business organizations is on raising their capacity and competitive advantage, to improve their market position, and this includes industrial companies, including the Northern Fertilizers Company, which tries, as much as possible, to exploit all available means to improve the reality of work and raise its competitiveness in the local market. In fact, competitiveness has two parts, the first is the ability to be different and distinctive from competitors through a successful management that has an impact on workers who are the core of any operation. The second one is the ability to influence customers through the quality of service design and delivery, as well as creating a harmonious work environment and forming creative work teams that keep pace with business developments.

Normative (standard) commitment focuses on ethical concepts and values in businesses. It depends on the human element and inserting them in an appropriate

Working atmosphere to develop them, raise their morale, ease control and spread an atmosphere of trust and mutual understanding to ensure their belonging. On the other hand, many studies confirm the existence of an important relationship between normative (standard) commitment and soft skills. Here comes the importance of the study by focusing on three significant variables of businesses' work and their continuity in today's world.

### Previous Studies:

**A study by (Fayrouz, 2015) entitled: The role of skills in achieving a competitive advantage for an economic establishment.**

The study aimed at the following: Clarifying the concepts and importance of managerial skills and its acquisition methods, and measuring the role of skills in achieving the competitive advantage of economic establishments. The descriptive approach was used in the study. The study also reached a set of results, the most important of which are the following: There is a deficient focus on the skills collective structure because of its importance in developing work. Moreover, the lack of focus of many economic establishments on workers' training that is important to develop skills and build capabilities.

### **Ibrahim's & Zayed's Study (2018): The Impact of the Soft Skills on the Competitive Advantage in Multinational Corporations**

This study aimed to determine the impact of soft skills on improving the business competitive advantage in multinational food and beverage companies in Cairo, Egypt. The descriptive analytical method was used, and this study was based on a questionnaire distributed to 219 employees and managers in multinational food and beverage companies located in Greater Cairo.

The study reached the following results: There is an important positive relationship between talent-management strategy integration with soft skills and business culture and improving business competitive advantage. The more soft skills are used in business, strategy and culture, the more effectively talented employees can be managed and competitive advantage improved. There is an important and positive relationship between soft skills and improving competitive advantage in multinational organizations in Cairo. There are statistically significant differences between managers and employees in their perception of soft skills integration, and there is no significant difference between them in their perception of competitive advantage.

### **Zian's Study (2018): The importance of measuring organizational commitment to predict loyalty in the economic institution.**

The study aimed to highlight the importance of measuring job commitment in organizations and its significance in predicting employee loyalty, and to illustrate the importance and concepts of normative commitment as part of organizational commitment and its impact on workers. The descriptive analytical approach was used, and 125 questionnaires were distributed at Bashar Mills Corporation. However, the study reached the following results: The establishment has a good organizational commitment. Age affects job commitment inside the organization. The normative commitment is not focused on in the organization as required.

### **Kuldeep's study, (2019): The Relationship between e-Soft skills and the competitive advantage of Indian Hotels.**

The study aimed at the following: Clarifying the concept and dimensions of electronic soft skills in hotels, defining the concept and dimensions of the competitive advantage measurement offered in hotels, and studying the impact of electronic soft skills on the hotel competitive advantage. The descriptive analytical method was used in the study, and a questionnaire was designed and distributed to a sample of postgraduates at the National Institute of Tourism and Hospitality. Data was entered into the SPSS program and analyzed. So, the study had the following results: First, there is a positive effect of electronic leadership on the competitive advantage provided in hotels. Second, communication skills have an impact on the competitive advantage provided in hotels. Third, there is an average impact of the time management skill on the competitive advantage. Finally, there is a high impact of electronic decision-making skill on Competitive advantage.

**Saleh's Study (2021): The modified role of soft skills in the relationship between information technology and performance improvement.**

The study aimed at the following: Knowing the impact of information technology on improving performance and the soft skills role as a modified variable in the special quantities in Kirkuk. The descriptive analytical method was used in the study. The study also reached a set of results, the most important of which are the following: There is a high impact of information technology on improving workers' performance in the city of Kirkuk, and there is a modified and positively influential role of soft skills in improving the relationship between information technology and workers' performance improvement in Kirkuk.

**The difference between the current study and previous studies:**

Previous studies focused on soft skills and the competitive advantage, or the normative commitment and competitive advantage in various sectors. They are similar to the current study in many aspects, but they are different according to the study community. The researcher has this interpretation, the previous studies have variant goals because of the researchers' different views and interpretations. Also, this study is different according to the research environment aspects and the sub- variables characteristics that were adopted for the independent variable of soft skills, which are communication, leadership, time management, and decision- making) as well as the variables of the dependent variable of competitive precedence (quality, differentiation, costs). In addition, an intermediary variable was adopted that has an impact on achieving competitive precedence jointly with soft skills, which is employees' standard commitment in the Northern Fertilizer Company in Iraq, as the researcher sees.

**Study Problem:**

The researcher conducted a preliminary survey on a group of individuals from the upper and middle management of the Northern Fertilizer Company in order to clarify their knowledge of soft skills concepts, competitive advantage and normative commitment. A set of questions were directed as follows:

- Is the company management interested in adopting workers' soft skills in performing activities and implementing duties?
- Does the management focus on achieving a high degree of competitiveness in the market?
- Does the management recognize the employees' normative commitment concepts and seek to achieve them?

The results were as follows:

- There is no efficient application of soft skills principles and concepts in the company.
- There is an average focus on competitiveness.
- There is insufficient knowledge of the normative commitment concepts and contents.

Based on the exploratory study, previous studies and related references, the study problem can be formulated by the following question: Is there an impact of soft

Skills on competitive precedence in the Northern Fertilizer Company within the normative commitment path?

### **Study Objectives:**

The study proceeds from the following objectives:

- Clarifying the soft skills concept and their application degree in the Northern Fertilizers Company.
- Measuring the relationship between soft skills and competitive advantage in the Northern Fertilizer Company.
- Determining the normative commitment impact on the relationship between soft skills and competitive precedence in the Northern Fertilizer Company.
- Reaching a set of results and recommendations that could help in developing the soft skills concept of managements, and showing their impact on competitive precedence in light of the normative commitment.

### **Study Importance:**

**Theoretical Importance:** The topic importance that the study presents, discusses and measures, which is one of the modern and important topics that focus on three significant modern variables in administrative sciences (soft skills, normative commitment, competitive precedence).

**Practical Importance:** It centers on the importance of measurement methods and the results that can be reached, which can help in the Northern Fertilizer Company, and measuring the soft skills concept and their impact on a variety of areas, including competitive precedence.

### **Study Hypothesis:**

The study proceeds from the following hypotheses:

**First Hypothesis:** There is no statistically significant relationship between soft skills and competitive precedence in the Northern Fertilizer Company.

**Second Hypothesis:** There is no statistically significant relationship between standard commitment and competitive precedence in the Northern Fertilizer Company.

**Third Hypothesis:** There is no statistically significant relationship between standard commitment and soft skills in the Northern Fertilizer Company.

**Fourth Hypothesis:** There is no statistically significant impact of normative commitment in the relationship between soft skills and competitive precedence in the Northern Fertilizer Company

### **Study Methodology:**

The descriptive analytical approach was used in the study, which is one of the appropriate approaches to give a clear picture of the study problem, in addition to helping it understand the study by clarifying and explaining the relationship between its variables.

### **Study Tool:**

The study tool was divided into four parts. The first part included the demographic information of the study sample members. The second part included the dimensions of the soft skills variables (leadership, communication, time management, decision making). The third part included the dimensions of the competitive precedence variable (quality, differentiation, cost). The fourth part included the standard commitment variable, which is (work climate, loyalty, continuity). The questions were grouped within the three variables with no details about their dimensions for non-prolongation. Furthermore, the questionnaire paragraphs were designed based on the five-point Likert model.

### **Statistical Methods:**

The appropriate analysis method is based on the type of data to be analyzed. The statistical package (SPSS) was used. The following test methods were used:

- Validity and reliability test of the study tool.
- Pearson correlation coefficient and partial test.
- Choosing the regression line equation.

### **Study Limits:**

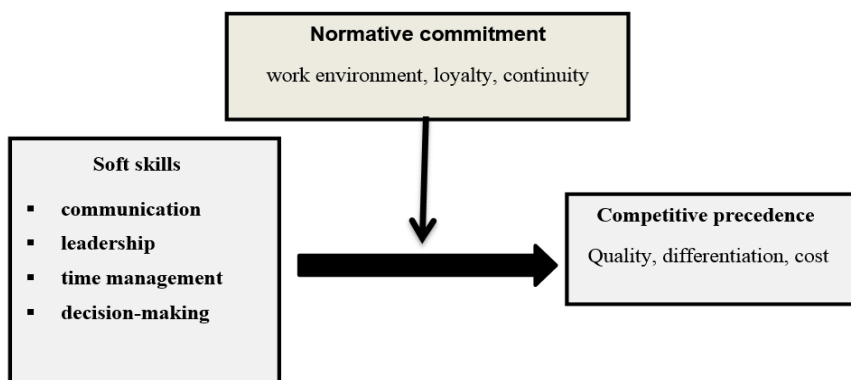
The study spatial limits are represented by the upper and middle managements of the Northern Fertilizer Company. The time limits are represented by the year 2022, which is the year of the questionnaire design and distribution to the study sample.

### **Study Community and Sample:**

**Study Community:** Administrative workers at the upper and middle levels in the Northern Fertilizer Company.

**Sample:** The comprehensive inventory method was adopted, and the questionnaire was distributed to all administrative employees by 70 forms and fully recovered.

**Study Sample:**



**Figure 1: Study Model**

Source: prepared by the researcher

**Theoretical Framework:**

**First: Soft Skills Concept and Importance:**

Skill is the sum of what an individual acquires of accumulated knowledge and experience over years. These knowledge and experiences help the ordinary person and the administrative one, in particular, to be unique and distinctive from others in his work field. It is an integrated mixture of the features, characteristics and capabilities that a person has over time, starting with his home, then his education, and after that his work. (Taylor, 2016)

Because of the importance of the industrial sector, there is a need for these people to possess various capabilities and skills that distinguish them from others. The most important soft skills, in general, are electronic soft skills at present, which are in line with the requirements of work reality changes imposed by the Corona pandemic.

Skill is defined as: "The set of skills and abilities an individual possesses that help him do his work properly, through a set of experiences, abilities and knowledge acquired in different fields". (Laker, 2011)

Soft skills are also defined as: "The art of dealing with others decently. They are personal traits and capabilities through which the individual is able to tactfully improve his abilities with others". (Syed et al, 2010)

Another definition of soft skills is: The personal qualities that enhance interpersonal interactions, job performance, and job prospects (Qunswa, 2016).

They are also defined as: "Those basic skills that are related to human communication capacities, relationship management, dealing with others, and the skills of presenting ideas, persuasion, teamwork, initiative and leadership that ensure individuals' success in managing the situation and influencing others." (Badran, 2015).

### Second: Soft Skills Characteristics:

The most important features of electronic soft skills that administrative workers should have can be identified as follows: (Vijayalakshmi, 2016) (Matters et al, 2008)

- Soft skills help support managements' leadership ability, which affects the quality of services and goods provided, and leads to customer satisfaction.
- Soft skills have a positive impact on the communication ways of different administrative levels, which facilitates the decision-making process, and the provision of service or commodity for the customer at the appropriate time and speed.
- Soft skills play a role in activating the ability of negotiation and persuasion between employees and clients.
- Soft skills stimulate creative thinking among employees because of the easy and simple procedures and granting powers, which facilitates the decision-making process.

### Third: Soft Skills Dimensions:

The most important dimensions of soft skills that have been agreed upon in many studies can be identified as follows:

- ❖ **Leadership Skill:** Leadership means carrying out administrative work within different levels. The most important qualities of leadership are the ability of dealing with others, the availability of technical competence in dealing, as well as the availability of teamwork and planning skills. Leadership skill is defined as a set of skills that include the ability to supervise, organize operations, direct and motivate people towards achieving goals, whether individual or collective. (Curtis,2004)
- ❖ **Communication Skills:** It means the communication methods among different administrative levels. Therefore, their employees must possess different traditional and electronic skills and abilities. These skills and abilities provide them with a method of regular and electronic communication with customers. However, the communication skill has become an urgent and essential need in the current time. So, the communication skill is defined as: "The skills that are used in practical life, through which a person conveys ideas, meanings, or written or oral messages via various means of communication." (Seetha,2013)
- ❖ **Time Management Skill:** Time is one of the most important factors of success, and it is directly related to customer satisfaction, who evaluates the quality of a service or commodity through the speed of service delivery that meet the required specifications. Time management is seen as the art of rational use of time. Soft skills greatly contribute to respecting time and ensuring that everything is done on time. Time management soft skills include: control skill, delegation skill, organization skill, induction skill...etc. Time management skill is defined as: "The planning activity of time control in various activities. It is an aggregated activity that aims to achieve the maximum general benefit



of many other activities within the limits framework for a limited period of time, (Shaheen et al, 2012). However, time is considered among the modern concepts as a cost, so if there is a delay in completion, it will cost time, effort and resources, in addition to the regression of advancement a step from the competitors.

- ❖ **Decision-making Skill:** It is a process of offering alternatives or potential solutions to solve a problem at work or that may face the customer. Here comes the importance of soft skills by solving those problems and helping appropriate decision-making on time. Decision-making skill is defined as: "the conclusion reached by the decision-maker after collecting information, analyzing it, and finding alternatives and solutions." As the decision-making process is to choose the optimal solution among a group of possible decisions (alternatives) and implement them. (Curtis, 2004)

#### **Fourth: The Concept of Competitive Advantage:**

Achieving competitiveness is based on the proper setting of competitive strategies in order to gain that advantage. As the competitive strategy focuses on the difference between organizations and not on their common tasks. It is concerned with doing jobs better than competitive organizations, so that it makes priority in dealing and access to everything. This shows the importance of competitive precedence concept, as it is not an ability or an advantage, but rather it is the

Achievement of ability and advantage more quickly and priority than competitors (Ibrahim, 2018).

Competitive precedence is also defined as: the characteristic acquired by the organization by making priority over its competitors in the market. (Rabbi, 2015)

Competitive precedence is also defined as: the characteristic that the organization acquires through its ability to excel in the face of its competitors in the market. (Rabbi, 2015)

Competitive precedence is defined as: "capabilities that create for the organization a permanent competitive advantage based on experience and knowledge, represented by providing wide service, high quality, fast delivery and low cost, thus helping the organization to be the first in the market (Ashford, 2012)

Competitive precedence is also defined as: the important operational dimensions and the value chain that must be possessed by a particular process, which is able to perform to satisfy the internal and external customer. (Faris, 2015)

In fact, many studies have proven a strong correlation between soft skills and competitive precedence, where soft skills affect organization workers positively, which motivate them to do their best and thus achieve competitive precedence.

#### **Fifth: Competitive Precedence Dimensions:**

The most important dimensions of competitive precedence can be identified as follows: (Asaad, 2016, p7) & (Khurshid, 2016)

- **Quality:** Attention paid to services quality is not a new matter, but the new thing lies in the process of using scientific and modern methods for applying quality management programs, setting appropriate standards, evaluating performance levels and maintaining high levels of administrative and technical performance. The goal of achieving quality for organizations is to achieve high levels of quality, optimal use of their material and human resources, rationalization of expenditures and use, evaluating the quality of productivity, and permanent work to improve the quality of services. The dimensions of quality are defined by tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, safety, trust and empathy. Finally, quality seeks to gain customer satisfaction and loyalty in the future, which in turn leads to an increase in organizations' competitiveness. (Asaad, 2016).

- **Differentiation:** As a result of high levels of competition, many organizations that have talented managements try to be distinguished from

Others, either by introducing new products that are not available in other competing companies, or through the cost of services or goods provided to customers. In fact, product differentiation is considered as a strategy in which the product is distinctive either through abundant availability or changing and adding some features and specification, or providing facilities in processing transactions and granting some discounts focusing on informing the customers about differences more effectively. Excellence can be a source of competitive advantage. Although searching in a niche market may lead to a change in the product for improving its excellence, changes themselves are not uniqueness. On the other hand, marketing or product differentiation is the process of describing the differences between products or services, or the resulting differences list. This is done in order to show the unique aspects of the hospital product and add value to it. (Asaad, 2020).

- **Costs:** Talented managements try to reduce their offered products costs, whether goods or services, and if the cost reduces, the prices will decrease. Here, the organization has precedence over its competitors by offering similar products at lower prices. The concept of production cost reduction is not a new issue, but what is new is that costs are reduced while maintaining the quality of services provided to customers. The price factor is an important and influential factor for customers, especially if the decrease in price is associated with the same quality of other services provided by competitors. Here, the cost factor will be a strong and important factor, and it constitutes a competitive advantage over other competitors in the market. (Thalnoun, 2012).

**Sixth: Standard Commitment:** A professional commitment that indicates to the loyalty horizon of the individual's values towards the organization to implement all work requirements resulting from the practical disclosure coming from the performance development and leaving a trace in the future. It is expressed as how the individual feeling of commitment to remain in the organization. Such a feeling enhances the organization's good support for its employees, allowing them to set goals, plan and formulate general policies of the organization, which results from participation and positive interaction between senior management and workers. Those in charge of this orientation are workers with strong work ethics who act according to

public interest and conscience requirements. (Ishak, 2019). The most important components of normative commitment are (values, survival, continuity, loyalty, participation, interest). (Kumar, 2009) (McMurray, 2014)

**Study Practical Framework:**

**First: The validity and reliability of the study tool:**

After designing the questionnaire in order to measure the study variables and dimensions and the effect between the independent-dependent variable and the modified variable, and to ensure the validity of the questionnaire, the questionnaire was judged by a number of specialists. Some questions were merged and others were deleted before distributing the questionnaire to the study sample. The questionnaire was distributed in a comprehensive inventory way of the administrators at the upper and middle levels in the fertilizer company by 70 valid questionnaires that were retrieved. These data were entered into the SPSS program in order to be analyzed. Cronbach's alpha test was conducted in order to find out the degree of internal consistency and stability between the questions as follows:

**Reliability Statistics**

**Table 1: Measuring the internal consistency and stability of the questionnaire questions**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.945	31

Source: prepared by the researcher depending on SPSS program

This means that if the questionnaire with its different indicators is distributed to the same sample of the company employees at different times, there is a probability of 94% to obtain the same results that have been reached.

The five-point Likert scale was adopted in answering the questions directed to the study sample as follows:

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

The arithmetic mean of the Likert scale is  $1+2+3+4+5=15/5=3$ , which is the value by which the arithmetic mean is compared for each question.

The criteria of judging average responses according to Likert scale:

Category length = (highest response degree – lowest response degree)/number of response categories

Category length =  $(5-1) / 5 = 0.8$

Accordingly, the closed tabulation was approved, and the following domains were identified:

**Table 2: Likert's five-point answer scale**

Domain	Agreement Degree	Relative Importance %
1.8-1	Very weak	36-20
2.60-1.81	Weak	52-36.1
3.40-2.61	Average	68-52.1
4.20-3.41	Strong	84-68.1
5-4.21	Very strong	84.1-100

Source: assembled by the researcher depending on (Asaad, 2018)

If the arithmetic mean value of the question or expression is within the domain (1- 1.8), it corresponds to the answer intensity “very weak”, and if it falls within the domain (1.81-2.60), it corresponds to the answer intensity “weak”. On the other hand, if it falls within the domain (2.61-2.61) 3.40) it corresponds to the answer intensity "average", if it falls within the domain (3.41-4.20), it corresponds to the answer intensity "strong", and if it falls within the domain (4.21-5), it corresponds to the answer intensity "very strong".

**Second: Description of Study Variables:**

The study relied on the average means method in collecting data, where the arithmetic mean was calculated for each question, then for each independent sub- variable, and after that for the independent variable, the dependent variable, and the modified variable. The results of the arithmetic means and standard deviation of all variables were as in the following table:

**Table 2: descriptive data of all study variables**

Variable	Arithmetic mean (Mean)	Standard deviation (Std)
Soft skills	3.11	0.570
Competitive precedence	3.05	0.875
Standard (normative) commitme	2.75	0.749

Source: prepared by the researcher depending on SPSS

The previous table (2) shows the following:

The arithmetic mean of the independent variable (soft skills) is within the range (2.61-3.40), corresponding to the average answer intensity on the domains of the five-point Likert scale, with a significant difference. The relative importance of this independent indicates that the sample members see that the company’s management focuses on the average use of soft skills. Therefore, there are many shortcomings and notes that must be avoided in order to activate the ways of using soft skills.

Also, the arithmetic mean of the dependent variable (competitive precedence) is within the domain (2.61-3.40), corresponding to the average answer intensity on the five-point Likert scale domains, with a significant difference. The relative importance of this independent indicates that the sample members see that the company’s management has a moderate interest

in competitiveness. Therefore, there are many shortcomings and notes that must be avoided in order to activate the ways of achieving competitive precedence.

The arithmetic mean of the modified variable (normative commitment) is within the domain (2.61-3.40), corresponding to the average answer intensity on the five- point Likert scale domains, with a significant difference. The relative importance of this independent indicates that the sample members see that the company's management has an average focus on the normative commitment. In addition, there are some members who have this criterion towards the company.

### Third: Hypothesis Testing:

To confirm the validity of the hypotheses, the correlational relationship between the variables was studied in order to study the correlation and the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable. This is done by using the simple Pearson correlation coefficient to study the strength or durability of the relationship between two variables. Its value ranges in the domain (-1, +1) and is symbolized by

R. Its value is studied in two ways:

1. **Algebraic sign:** If the correlation coefficient sign is positive, then this refers to a direct relationship between the two studied variables, but if its sign is negative, the relationship is inverse.
2. **Absolute value:** The absolute value of the correlation coefficient expresses the relationship strength between the two variables and can be classified as follows:

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**Table No: 3 Correlation coefficient values**

Correlation coefficient	Relationship
$R < 0.90$	<b>Very strong</b>
$0.90 < R < 0.80$	<b>Strong</b>
$0.80 < R < 0.70$	<b>Good</b>
$0.70 < R < 0.60$	<b>Not bad</b>
$0.60 < R < 0.50$	<b>Weak</b>
$0.50 < R$	<b>Very week</b>

Source: assembled by the researcher depending on (Asaad, 2016)

**First Hypothesis:** There is no statistically significant relationship between soft skills and competitive precedence in the North Fertilizer Company.

To test the relationship between the dependent and independent variable and test the main hypothesis, the Pearson correlation coefficient was applied and the results were as in the following tables:

**Table 4: the Study of the Correlation between Soft Skills and Competitive Precedence**

Correlations			
Control Variables		Soft skills	Competitive precedence
	Pearson Correlation	1	.845
soft skills	Sig. (2-tailed)		.041
	N	70	70
	Pearson Correlation	.845*	1
Competitive precedence	Sig. (2-tailed)	.041	
	N	70	70

Source: prepared by the researcher depending on SPSS

It is clear from the previous table: The value of  $R = 0.845$ , which indicates the existence of a strong and direct correlation between the two variables, and the probability value  $P$  (Sig) =  $0.000 < \alpha = 0.05$ . Therefore, the correlation is significant. Since the value of  $P$  is less than the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ , we reject the first hypothesis and accept the alternative one which states: There is a statistically significant relationship between soft skills and competitive precedence in the North Fertilizer Company.

**Second Hypothesis:** There is no statistically significant relationship between the standard (normative) commitment and competitive precedence in the North Fertilizer Company.

For testing the relationship between the dependent variable and the modifier one and testing the main hypothesis, the Pearson correlation coefficient was applied and the results were as in the following tables:

**Table 5: the study of the correlation between normative commitment and competitive precedence**

Correlations			
Control Variables		Competitive precedence	Standard commitment
	Pearson Correlation	1	.827
competitive precedence	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	70	70
	Pearson Correlation	.827	1
Standard commitment	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	70	70

Source: prepared by the researcher depending on SPSS

It is clear from the previous table: The value of  $R = 0.827$ , which indicates the existence of a strong and direct correlation between the two variables, and the value of the probability  $P$  (Sig) =  $0.000 < \alpha = 0.05$ . Therefore, the correlation is significant. Since the value of  $P$  is less than the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ , we reject the second hypothesis and accept the alternative one which states: There is a

Statistically significant relationship between the standard commitment and competitive precedence in the North Fertilizer Company.

**Third Hypothesis:** There is no statistically significant relationship between the standard commitment and soft skills in the North Fertilizer Company.

To test the relationship between the independent variable and the modifier one and test the main hypothesis, the Pearson correlation coefficient was applied and the results were as in the following tables:

**Table 6: the study of the correlation between normative commitment and soft skills**

Correlations			
Control Variables		Normative commitment	Soft skills
Normative commitment	Pearson Correlation	1	.822
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	70	70
Soft skills	Pearson Correlation	.822	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	70	70

Source: prepared by the researcher depending on SPSS

It is clear from the previous table: The value of  $R = 0.822$ , which indicates the existence of a strong and direct correlation between the two variables, and the value of the probability  $P$  (Sig) =  $0.000 < \alpha = 0.05$ . Therefore, the correlation is significant. Since the value of  $P$  is less than the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ , we reject the third hypothesis and accept the alternative one which states: There is a statistically significant relationship between the standard commitment and soft skills in the North Fertilizer Company.

**Fourth Hypothesis:** There is no statistically significant impact of normative commitment on the relationship between soft skills and competitive precedence in the North Fertilizer Company.

**Modified Variable:** It is the variable that may change the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable, since the researcher considers it as a secondary independent variable in addition to the main variable of the study. It is sometimes seen as another secondary independent variable that the researcher deals with and measures to check the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. However, it usually changes the strength or direction of the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent one.

The most important ways to measure the modified variable are:

- **Partial correlation analysis (Pearson)**, which extracts the effect of the modified variable on the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent one. It compares with the value of the (Pearson) coefficient, and then it becomes clear the difference between the two correlation coefficients values before and after, and it also shows the effect of the modified variable on the relationship between the two variables.

- **Regression analysis:** In this case, the modified variable is treated as a second independent variable. Two regression models appear in the analysis, which are compared and illustrate the impact degree of the modified variable on the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. (Jamal, 2015, pp. 2-5)

The partial correlation coefficient between two variables calculate the relationship strength between the dependent variable and the independent variable with the fixation of other variables values (adjusted), isolate them. That is, the impact of the standard commitment variable has been isolated in order to find out whether there is a significant effect of the modified variable on the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

To study the effect of the standard commitment variable (modified) on the relationship between the soft skills and competitive precedence variables, the partial correlation coefficient was tested, as shown in the following tables:

**Table 7: the partial correlation coefficient between the three variables**

Correlations			
Control Variables		Soft skills	Competitive precedence
	Correlation	1.000	.780
Soft skills	Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000
Standard commitment	Df	0	70
	Correlation	.780	1.000
Competitive precedence	Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.
	Df	70	0

Source: prepared by the researcher depending on SPSS

From the previous tables (4, 5, 6, 7) we note the following:

- The value of the correlation coefficient between soft skills and competitive precedence was  $R = 0.845$ , which indicates the existence of a direct and strong relationship between the two variables according to the study sample view.
- The value of the correlation coefficient between the standard commitment and competitive precedence was  $R = 0.827$ , which indicates the existence of a direct and strong relationship between the two according to the study sample view.
- The value of the correlation coefficient between standard commitment and soft skills  $R=0.822$ , which indicates the existence of a direct and strong relationship between the two variables according to the study sample view.
- The value of the correlation coefficient between soft skills and competitive precedence changed from  $R = 0.845$  to a new value after excluding the standard commitment impact  $R = 0.780$ . This indicates the existence of a direct and good relationship between the two variables. That is, the value of the correlation coefficient decreased by 0.065, which is a good amount that has affected the relationship between the soft skills variable and the competitive advantage one, from strong to good on the five-point Likert scale, with rate dropping from strong to good between the two variables.



- There is an impact of the normative commitment on the relationship between soft skills and competitive precedence in the company where the study is located.
- The probability value  $P = 0.000 < \alpha = 0.05$  and therefore the correlation is significant. So, we reject the fourth hypothesis and accept the alternative one which states: There is a statistically significant impact of normative commitment on the relationship between soft skills and competitive precedence in the North Fertilizer Company.

### **CONCLUSION:**

North Fertilizer Company has many problems in adopting modern management concepts that the study focused on in its variables. Because of the development of administrative sciences field, focus on soft skills concepts has become one of the important issues that lead to positive results in companies' work style. Moreover, normative commitment is also another important issue that most companies seek to adopt and focus on. Many studies, including the current study, have confirmed that there is a relationship between soft skills and normative commitment that affects companies' competitive precedence and competitive advantage. So, the company Management must focus on and apply these concepts because of their importance and positive impact on improving work and competitiveness.

### **Study Conclusions:**

- The company's management focuses on the moderate use of soft skills, therefore there are many shortcomings and notes that must be avoided in order to activate the ways of soft skills use.
- The company's management is moderately concerned with competitiveness, and therefore there are many notes that must be avoided in order to activate the ways of achieving competitive precedence.
- The company's management focuses on the moderate interest in normative compliance.
- There is a strong correlation between soft skills and competitive precedence in the Northern Fertilizer Company.
- There is a strong correlation between the normative commitment and competitive precedence in the Northern Fertilizer Company.
- There is a strong correlation between the normative commitment and soft skills in the Northern Fertilizer Company.
- There is a good impact of normative commitment on the relationship between soft skills and competitive precedence in the Northern Fertilizer Company.

### **Recommendations:**

- The administration focus on increasing the interest in workers' soft skills in the Northern Fertilizer Company. This can be done according to the following:

- Improving the methods of communication among workers the at different administrative levels, and cooperating with talented workers to set future plans and strategies, in addition their participation in the decision-making process.
- Transition from administrative concepts at work to leadership concepts, and training the administrative levels on this transition process as well as forming collective work teams to exchange knowledge.
- Focusing on time management, applying its concepts, and showing its importance for both the organization structure and customers, since time is a cost. Also, activating the performance monitoring system by management and permanent coordinating with all company units to achieve work on time without delay.
  - Seeking to ensure competition in the Northern Fertilizer Company. This can be done according to the following:
    - Focusing on the quality of goods and services provided by the company, and adhering to the required international specifications such as packaging, printing instructions on the product, weight control and delivery times.
    - Measuring customers' satisfaction with goods and services provided continuously by the company through listening to the suggestions, ideas and problems they face and converting them into answers.
    - Providing marketing and selling facilities, and offering discounts and new services that are unique and distinctive.
    - Cost reduction by attracting experts to prepare studies related to reducing waste and optimizing resources use. Therefore, the process of cost reduction will lead to lower prices and thus increase company's competitiveness in the market.
  - Increasing interest in the company normative commitment. This can be done according to the following:
    - Focus on the concepts of work values that exist in the company and seek to update them in line with the employees' needs, so that they become a source of positive impact on them.
    - Providing a suitable work environment and technical and administrative performance requirements in the company, which motivate employees, meet their satisfaction, motivate their creativity for optimal performance and gain their loyalty.
    - Work team activation at all administrative levels, which leads to stronger relationships among employees and positively affects performance.

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