

The Level of Enhancing the Competitive Advantage of Training Institutions in Palestine

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Abstract: The study aimed to identify the level of enhancing the competitive advantage of training institutions in Palestine. The study used the descriptive analytical approach. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data that contribute to achieving the objectives of the study. The study population consists of workers in training institutions operating in the southern Palestinian governorates. The random sample for data collection, where (90) applicable questionnaires were retrieved. The results of the study showed that the general estimate for the competitive advantage axis came with a high degree and a relative weight (90.67%). The results also showed that there were no statistically significant differences in enhancing the competitive advantage according to the variables (gender, governorate). As well as the existence of statistically significant differences in enhancing the competitive advantage according to the variables (Educational Qualification, Age Group, Number Of Years of Service). The study presented a set of recommendations, the most important of which are: the need for centers to develop their training systems in line with modern technology, in addition to the need for centers to target new areas in their service by opening other branches in different geographical locations.

Keywords: Competitive Advantage, Training Institutions, Southern Palestinian Governorates, Palestine.

Introduction

Rapid changes have led to an increase in the interest of institutions in their various forms and specializations in the desires of customers, gathering information about their characteristics and needs, and working to meet these desires in order to obtain their satisfaction. Staying in the labor market (Habib and Al-Fakiki, 2020).

Based on the foregoing, organizations have begun to reconsider the various fields that surround them, as the pressures of competition surrounding them have increased the importance of adopting work mechanisms to upgrade the organization through proper planning and selection of strategic alternatives optimally in a manner that achieves its objectives and enhances competitive advantage.

Many previous studies and research emphasized the importance of achieving a competitive advantage in business organizations, which enables them to achieve several advantages, most notably enhancing the competitiveness of business organizations and ensuring their survival and growth. (Al Shobaki et al., 2021), therefore, the purpose of the study is to identify the level of enhancing the competitive advantage of training institutions in the southern Palestinian governorates.

Problem Statement

Institutions of all kinds in Palestine are currently witnessing many restrictions imposed by globalization, the increasing technological conditions, in addition to the economic conditions, which led to the emergence of a number of challenges that faced all institutions, including training institutions, which imposed on them administrative ideas and renewed strategies in order to improve their performance in order to be able to face those challenges and enhance competitive advantage (El Talla et al., 2020).

Based on the foregoing, it can be said that training institutions face many challenges that prevent them from performing their expected and appropriate roles for the knowledge era in which we live, so they need to adopt new strategic concepts that have a prominent role in developing institutional work and enhancing competitive advantage, hence the problem of the study that emerged. It seeks to clarify the level of enhancing the competitive advantage of the training institutions operating in the southern governorates of Palestine.

Research Questions

In light of tracking the problem of the study, the study questions that will be answered by the study have been deduced, namely:

Q1-: What is the reality of competitive advantage in training institutions in the southern Palestinian governorates?

Q2-: Are there significant differences in the responses of the respondents in enhancing the competitive advantage in the training institutions in the southern Palestinian governorates, according to the personal and organizational data?

Research Objectives

Based on the established research questions, this study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Statement of the reality of competitive advantage in training institutions in the southern Palestinian governorates.
2. Showing differences in respondents' responses to achieve competitive advantage in training institutions in the southern governorates, according to personal and organizational data.
3. Provide recommendations to decision makers in training institutions about mechanisms for achieving competitive advantage.

Research Importance

The importance of the study is shown by the benefit that will be given to:

1. The research derives its importance from the role played by modern administrative trends in developing work in training institutions, with the aim of achieving competitive advantage.
2. There is a scarcity of research on competitive advantage in training institutions in Palestine, according to the knowledge of the researchers, and based on the above, it is expected that the research will contribute to enriching the Arab library on the concept of achieving competitive advantage.

Limitations and Directions for Research

The scope of the study shall be as follows:

1. **Objective Limits:** The study focused on examining the level of enhancing competitive advantage in training institutions in the southern Palestinian governorates.
2. **Human Limits:** The study was conducted on workers in the training institutions under study, who responded by filling out the questionnaire electronically.
3. **Institutional Limits:** The study was conducted on training institutions.
4. **Spatial boundaries:** The study was conducted in the State of Palestine, specifically in the southern governorates.
5. **Time Limits:** The study was conducted in the year (2023).

Literature Reviews

- Study of (Inshasi et al., 2023) entitled "The Impact of Intellectual Capital on Enhancing Competitive Advantage: An Empirical Study on Food Industries Companies in the Gaza Strip, which aimed to identify the impact of the various elements of intellectual capital (human, structural, and relational) in enhancing Competitiveness of food industry companies. The descriptive analytical approach was used to achieve the objectives of the study, targeting the study population consisting of companies operating in the field of food industries in the Gaza Strip, numbering (50) companies, while the employees in supervisory positions in those companies were (274 employees, according to the statistics of the General Federation of Industries, where 78 questionnaires were distributed to the targeted sample, and 71 questionnaires were retrieved from the total distributed questionnaires. The study revealed that the interest in intellectual capital was great, with a relative weight of (81.6%). higher ranking, all dimensions of intellectual capital were positively associated with competitive advantage.
- Study of (Jaballah, 2021) entitled "The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Improving Competitiveness in the Economic Enterprise - A Field Study on the Condor Foundation in Algeria, which aimed to identify the role of artificial intelligence in its various systems (expert systems, neural networks, genetic algorithms, fuzzy logic , the smart agent) in improving the competitiveness in the

economic enterprise, and the researcher used the descriptive analytical approach to achieve the objectives of the study. A positive effect between artificial intelligence and competitiveness. The study also showed that the institution under study applies artificial intelligence to improve competitiveness by adopting modern systems.

- Study of (Habib and Al-Fakiki, 2020) entitled "The Role of Total Quality Management in Enhancing Competitive Advantage", which aimed to identify the role of total quality management in its variables (commitment of senior management and employees to the philosophy of quality management - strategic planning - focus on the customer - partnership decision-making workers - training and encouragement of workers) in enhancing the competitive advantage, and to achieve the objectives of the study, the researchers used the descriptive library approach, where the researchers analyzed many studies in the university library in order to achieve the objectives of the study, and the study showed that total quality management has an important role in promoting Competitive advantage, and there is an intertwined relationship between total quality management and competitive advantage.
- Study of (Zafar, 2019) entitled "The Mediating Role of Innovation in the Relationship between Strategic Orientation and Competitive Advantage", which aimed to demonstrate the role of innovation between strategic orientation and competitive advantage in the software industry in Pakistan. Data from the study sample, which is (61) directors of Pakistani companies active in the field of software industry, and the study showed that there is a positive effect in enhancing the competitive advantage, and there is more orientation in innovation among organizations.
- Study of (Daru, 2017) entitled "Total Quality Management: A Strategy for Enhancing Competitive Advantage", which aimed to identify the role of total quality strategies as a basis for enhancing competitive advantage. The study was conducted in India, and the researcher used the analytical descriptive approach to achieve the objectives of the study. The questionnaire collected data from workers in Indian companies, and the study showed that comprehensive quality strategies play an important and fundamental role in achieving competitive advantage, improving performance and managing the organizational structure of enterprises, and they also contribute to maximizing profitability and improving the brand.

Comment on Previous Studies

By reviewing previous studies, we note that the studies emphasized the importance of achieving competitive advantage, and the following is a review of the similarities and differences between the current study and previous studies to clarify the research gap that the research seeks to cover.

The benefits of the current study from previous studies

The current study benefited from previous studies in the following:

1. Learn about the latest studies that dealt with the issue of competitive advantage.
2. Enriching the study with the theoretical aspect due to the large amount of information contained in each study.
3. Determine the variables of the study and formulate its hypotheses.
4. Choosing the appropriate method for the study, which is the descriptive analytical method.
5. Determine the study tool, which is the questionnaire, as an appropriate tool for the subject of the study.
6. Building conclusions and final recommendations, and comparing results.

What distinguishes the current study from previous studies:

What distinguishes this study from previous studies is that it:

1. According to the researchers, this study is considered one of the relatively rare studies that dealt with the competitive advantage in training institutions in Palestine.
2. The study was applied to training institutions in the southern Palestinian governorates.

Conceptual Frameworks

Developments in the business environment continued due to the rapid and massive scientific and technological growth, and interest in competitiveness has increased, especially in business organizations of all kinds, in order to face the speed of change and keep pace with it. (Al-Hila et al., 2017), and competitive advantage is defined as the ability of the organization to increase its market share, reduce costs, and produce added services compared to competitors (Daft, 2010).

The researchers define it as the ability of the organization to confront competitors by providing distinguished services that contributed to achieving continuity in light of the changing factors.

Sources of Competitive Advantage

The competitive advantage has a number of sources, as (Al-Ghazzawi, 2011) mentioned that the most prominent of them are: organizational reputation, innovation, time, and knowledge, and the researchers believe that some other sources can be added, including:

1. **Strategic Thinking**, as it is necessary for the organization to base itself on an appropriate strategy in order to enhance its competitive capabilities, with the aim of achieving a head start and distinguishing itself from other competitors by having what distinguishes it from them.
2. **Tangible Resources**: These include financial resources, production materials, and production equipment. In order for the organization to achieve a competitive advantage, it must choose and utilize those resources well.
3. **Competencies**: They are considered an asset of the organization, as they are of a cumulative nature and are difficult to imitate by competitors.

Dimensions of Competitive Advantage

There are a number of dimensions of competitive advantage, as represented by (Porter, 2008) in the following points:

1. **Cost Leadership**: The cost leadership strategy targets a specific segment of customers who mainly care about the price of the product. To convince these customers, products are offered at low prices compared to competing companies in the market, and this leads to an increase in market share and profit growth. The cost leadership strategy depends on enhancing the competitive advantage by adopting low costs compared to competitors, in order to achieve excellence for the organization.
2. **Excellence**: Organizations seek to be unique in a distinct way and create added value for their customers by satisfying their desires and meeting their needs by following many necessary strategies, including reducing costs, focusing on specific segments of customers, giving them sufficient information about products, and using modern technology in production, development and marketing processes. .
3. **Focus**: As this strategy is to stand out by targeting a specific group of customers, or a specific geographical market.

Factors Affecting Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage arises as a result of a group of factors that are divided into:

1. **External Factors**: They appear when the organization provides a product or service of outstanding quality, which creates buyer value either by reducing usage costs, or by improving usage performance, and this is what gives the organization greater power in the market.
2. **Internal Factors**: emerge when the organization has a preference in resources or capabilities, and by controlling production costs, managing and managing the product, good productivity gives the organization a good return, and increases its energies to face the reduction in prices imposed by the market or competitors.

Methodology and Procedures

The study methodology and procedures are considered a main axis through which the applied side of the study is accomplished. Accordingly, the researchers touched on the procedures that were followed in preparing the study by clarifying the study method and its community, and then identifying the sample on which the study was applied, as well as preparing the main study tool (questionnaire) and the mechanism of its construction and development and the extent of its validity and stability, and ends with the statistical treatments that were used in analyzing the data and drawing conclusions.

First- Study Methodology: The researchers used the analytical descriptive approach in order to achieve the objectives of the study, through which it attempts to describe the phenomenon under study, the opinions raised about it and the processes involved.

Second- Study Population: The target study population consists of all accredited training institutions in the southern Palestinian governorates.

Third- The Study Sample: The simple random sample method was used to collect the study data, where an electronic questionnaire was distributed to the study population, and (90) applicable questionnaires were retrieved.

Fourth- Study Tool: The questionnaire is the most widely used and widespread tool among researchers, and in order to conduct the applied study, the study tool (questionnaire) was prepared to measure "the level of enhancing the competitive advantage of training institutions in Palestine.

Table 1: Scores of the scale used in the questionnaire

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Degree	1	2	3	4	5

The Standard Used In the Study

To determine the criterion adopted in the study, the length of the cells was determined in the five-point Likert scale by

calculating the range between the degrees of the scale (5-1 = 4) and then dividing it by the largest value in the scale to obtain the length of the cell as shown in the following table:

Table 2: The criterion adopted in the study

Mean	Relative Weight	Degree of Agreement
From 1.8 - 1	From 35.9% - 20%	Very Weak
From 2.59- 1.8	From 51.9% - 36%	Weak
From 3.39–2.6	From 67.9 -% 52 %	Medium
From 4.19–3.4	From 83.9% - 68%	Great
Greater Than 4.2	Greater Than 84%	Very Large

In order to interpret the results of the study and judge the level of response, the researchers relied on arranging the arithmetic averages at the level of the domains of the questionnaire, and the level of the paragraphs in each domain, and the researchers determined the degree of approval according to the test approved for the study.

Validity of The Study Tool: The validity of the questionnaire reflects the measurement of the paragraphs of the questionnaire, what it was intended to measure. The validity of the questionnaire was verified through the following:

The Validity of The Internal Consistency: It means "the extent to which each paragraph of the questionnaire is

consistent with the axis to which this paragraph belongs. It was calculated on the sample of the exploratory study of (30) questionnaires, by calculating the correlation coefficients between each paragraph and the total score of the axis to which it belongs.

The results of the internal consistency of the competitive advantage axis

Table No. (3) shows the correlation coefficient between each paragraph of the "competitive advantage" axis and the total score of the axis, which shows that the correlation coefficients shown are a function at a significant level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$), and thus the field is considered valid for what was set to measure it.

Table 3: The results of the validity of the internal consistency of the competitive advantage axis

#	Item	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	Probability Value (Sig.)
1.	The information technology used in the institution helps to improve the quality of services in line with the wishes of the beneficiaries.	.641	*0.000
2.	The Foundation seeks to continuously reduce the percentage of complaints.	.804	*0.000
3.	The Foundation strives diligently towards providing innovative and creative services in its essence and in the way it is provided	.850	*0.000
4.	The Foundation works to continuously improve the quality awareness of its employees.	.768	*0.000
5.	The institution adheres to the deadlines set for providing service to customers continuously.	.912	*0.000
6.	The Foundation is keen to meet beneficiaries' requests faster than competitors.	.909	*0.000
7.	The Foundation has branches in different regions through which it meets the needs of the beneficiaries.	.430	*0.009
8.	The Corporation works to improve the efficiency of its marketing operations	.814	*0.000
9.	The Foundation is keen to cooperate with external expertise in order to develop work.	.841	*0.000
10.	The company aims to attract new customers through its distinguished services	.769	*0.000

11.	The employees of the organization have multiple skills that make them able to perform more than one job or work.	.704	*0.000
12.	Adopting quality enhances the competitive position of the organization	.357	*0.053

* The correlation is statistically significant at the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

Reliability: The stability of the questionnaire means that the questionnaire gives the same results if it is reapplied several times in succession, and it also means to what degree the scale gives close readings each time it is used, or what is the degree

of its consistency, consistency and continuity when it is used repeatedly at different times different.

The researchers verified the stability of the study questionnaire through Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient, and the results were as shown in Table.(4)

Table 4: Cronbach's alpha coefficient to measure the stability of the resolution

The Field	Frequency	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
The overall degree of competitive advantage	12	0.844

It is clear from the results shown in Table No. (4) That the value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient is high for each domain, reaching (0.844), and this means that the stability is high and statistically significant. Thus, the questionnaire in its final form is applicable, and the researchers have confirmed the validity and stability of the questionnaire, which makes them fully confident in the validity of the questionnaire and its validity for analyzing the results, answering the questions of the study, and testing its hypotheses.

Statistical Description of the Study Sample

The following table shows the statistical description of the members of the study community according to personal data. The number of respondents filling out the study questionnaire was (90) workers in training institutions in the southern governorates (gender, age group, educational qualification, number of years of service, governorate), and the results are shown in the following table:

Table 5: Statistical description of the study sample according to personal and organizational data (n = 90)

Variable	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	78	86.7
	Female	12	13.3
The Academic Qualification	Diploma	10	11.1
	Bachelor	46	51.1
	Master Degree	26	28.9
	Ph. D	8	8.9
Age Group	less than 30 years	24	26.7
	30- less than 40	48	53.3
	40- less than 50	16	17.8
	50 and more	2	2.2
Governorate	North Governorate	20	22.2
	Gaza Governorate	34	37.8
	Central Governorate	14	15.6
	Khan Yunis Governorate	8	8.9
	Rafah Governorate	14	15.6
Years of Experience	less than 5 years	22	24.4
	5-less than 10 years	46	51.1
	10- less than 15 years	14	15.6
	15 and more	8	8.9

Answering the study questions and testing hypotheses:

To answer the questions of the study, the arithmetic and relative mean, standard deviation, and the arithmetic mean were used.

Q1-: What is the reality of competitive advantage in training institutions in the southern Palestinian governorates?

To answer this question, the arithmetic mean, relative weight, standard deviation, and arrangement were used. The results are shown in the following table:

Table 6: The arithmetic and relative mean and standard deviation for each paragraph of the competitive advantage axis

#	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Weight	Rank
1.	The information technology used in the institution helps to improve the quality of services in line with the wishes of the beneficiaries.	4.76	0.432	%95.20	5

2.	The Foundation seeks to continuously reduce the percentage of complaints.	4.56	0.721	%91.20	11
3.	The Foundation strives diligently towards providing innovative and creative services in its essence and in the way it is provided	4.78	0.556	%95.60	3
4.	The Foundation works to continuously improve the quality awareness of its employees.	4.76	0.605	%95.20	6
5.	The institution adheres to the deadlines set for providing service to customers continuously.	4.71	0.658	%94.20	7
6.	The Foundation is keen to meet beneficiaries' requests faster than competitors.	4.64	0.739	%92.80	10
7.	The Foundation has branches in different regions through which it meets the needs of the beneficiaries.	2.33	1.484	%46.60	12
8.	The Corporation works to improve the efficiency of its marketing operations	4.78	0.469	%95.60	3
9.	The Foundation is keen to cooperate with external expertise in order to develop work.	4.69	0.554	%93.80	9
10.	The company aims to attract new customers through its distinguished services	4.82	0.439	%96.40	2
11.	The employees of the organization have multiple skills that make them able to perform more than one job or work.	4.71	0.546	%94.20	8
12.	Adopting quality enhances the competitive position of the organization	4.87	0.342	%97.40	1
All paragraphs of the field together		4.5333	0.39242	%90.67	

*The arithmetic mean is statistically significant at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

From the previous table, it can be concluded that Paragraph No. (12) "Adopting quality leads to strengthening the competitive position of the institution" came in first place with a relative weight of (97.40%), that is, to a very large degree. Followed by Paragraph No. (10) in "The establishment aims to attract new clients to it through its distinctive services" in second place with a relative weight of (96.40%) and a very high degree of approval.

Paragraph No. (7) "The institution has branches in different regions through which it meets the needs of beneficiaries" came in the last place with a relative weight of (46.20%), i.e. a weak approval rating.

The total score for the "competitive advantage" axis came with a relative weight equal to (90.67), and this means that

there is a very high degree of agreement by the respondents on the paragraphs of this axis.

Q2- Are there significant differences in the responses of the respondents in enhancing the competitive advantage in the training institutions in the southern Palestinian governorates, according to the personal and organizational data?

To answer this question, the independent sample T-Test was used to test the differences due to the variable (gender), and the one-way analysis of variance test (One Way ANOVA) was used to test the differences due to the variables (age group, academic qualification, governorate, number of years of service).) which consists of more than two groups, and the following are the results of the differences according to the variables of personal data, and the following table shows that.

Table 7: The results of testing the differences in the average response of the respondents about the competitive advantage attributed to the personal and organizational data

Personal and Functional Variables		Competitive Advantage					
		Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Weight	Statistical Test Value	Significance Level	Result
Gender	Male	4.5256	.395750	90.51%	t = -0.484	0.635	There are no differences
	Female	4.5833	.382710	91.67%			
The Academic Qualification	Diploma	4.8000	.197200	96.00%	F = 9.655	0.000	There are differences
	Bachelor	4.6014	.235650	92.03%			
	Master Degree	4.4808	.449880	89.62%			
Age Group	Ph. D	3.9792	.578640	79.58%	F = 4.820	0.004	There are differences
	less than 30 years	4.6042	.30520	92.08%			
	30- less than 40	4.5938	.36002	91.88%			
	40- less than 50	4.2188	.48293	84.38%			
Governorate	50 and more	4.7500	.00000	95.00%	F = 1.416	0.236	
	North Governorate	4.6667	.205910	93.33%			

Personal and Functional Variables		Competitive Advantage					
		Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Weight	Statistical Test Value	Significance Level	Result
	Gaza Governorate	4.4461	.577310	88.92%			There are no differences
	Central Governorate	4.4405	.183240	88.81%			
	Khan Yunis Governorate	4.6250	.099600	92.50%			
	Rafah Governorate	4.5952	.203750	91.90%			
Years of Experience	less than 5 years	4.5152	.308220	90.30%	F = 44.249	0.000	There are differences
	5-less than 10 years	4.6775	.196110	93.55%			
	10- less than 15 years	4.6310	.239560	92.62%			
	15 and more	3.5833	.361870	71.67%			

The previous table shows the results of testing differences in the average response of respondents about innovative marketing attributed to personal and organizational data, and if the level of statistical significance is greater than 0.05, we conclude that there are no statistically significant differences in the average response of respondents about competitive advantage due to personal and organizational data, while if the level of significance The statistic is less than 0.05. We conclude that there are statistically significant differences in the average response of the respondents about innovative marketing due to personal variables, and the results of the previous table show the following:

- Regarding the gender variable: the value of the significance level was (0.635 greater than 0.05). We conclude that there are no statistically significant differences in the average response of the respondents about enhancing the competitive advantage due to the gender variable.
- Regarding the educational qualification variable: the value of the significance level was (0.000 less than 0.05). We conclude that there are statistically significant differences in the average response of the respondents about enhancing the competitive advantage due to the educational qualification variable, where the differences were in favor of the minimum educational qualification "diploma".
- For the age group variable: the value of the significance level was (0.004 less than 0.05). We conclude that there are statistically significant differences in the average response of the respondents about enhancing the competitive advantage due to the age group variable, where the differences were for the older age group "50 years and over."
- For the governorate variable: the value of the significance level was (0.236 greater than 0.05). We conclude that there are no statistically significant differences in the average response of the respondents about enhancing the competitive advantage due to the governorate variable.
- With regard to the variable of the number of years of service: the value of the significance level was (0.000 less

than 0.05). We conclude that there are statistically significant differences in the average response of the respondents about enhancing the competitive advantage due to the variable of the number of years of service, where the differences were in favor of those with the number of years of service "from 5 - less than 10 years".

Conclusions

The following Results and recommendations were reached:

- The total score for the "competitive advantage" axis with a relative weight equal to (90.67), and this means that there is a very high degree of agreement on the paragraphs of this axis.
- The paragraph "Adopting quality leads to strengthening the competitive position of the organization" came first with a relative weight of (97.40%), i.e. a very large degree. Followed by Paragraph No. (10) in "The establishment aims to attract new clients to it through its distinctive services" in second place with a relative weight of (96.40%) and a very high degree of approval.
- The paragraph "The institution has branches in different regions through which it meets the needs of the beneficiaries" came last with a relative weight of (46.20%), i.e. a weak approval rating.
- There are no statistically significant differences in enhancing the competitive advantage according to the variables (gender, governorate).
- There are statistically significant differences in enhancing the competitive advantage according to the variables (Educational Qualification, Age Group, Number of Years of Service).

Recommendations

In light of the findings, the research presents a set of recommendations as follows:

- Notifying employees through software alerts and urging them to make decisions.
- Working on updating the systems of training institutions in line with modern technology to raise the efficiency of the institutional system.

- The need to open branches of the institution in different geographical areas of the Gaza Strip in order to target new clients.

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