

# Competency model of first-line managers in state-owned enterprises

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## Abstract

first-line managers play a cornerstone role in enterprise management. Improving the competency level of first-line managers is the objective requirement for Chinese state-owned commercial banks to achieve high-quality development. The competency of first-line managers in state-owned enterprises is a problem worthy of attention in recent years. This paper took the first-line managers of Chinese state-owned commercial banks as the research object while the middle-level managers of state-owned commercial banks as the in-depth interview object. Semi-structured interviews were adapted to collect data and the competency model of first-line managers of Chinese state-owned enterprises was constructed through the grounded theory.

The research showed that the competency model of first-line managers in Chinese state-owned enterprises consists of 21 competency traits, including motivation, personality traits, values, ability and knowledge. It discussed why achievement motivation, dedication, integrity, personnel behavior management and professional knowledge were the primary competency traits of their modules. The research conclusion had a certain reference value for the practice of human resources management of state-owned commercial banks in China.

**Keywords:** First-line managers, Competency, Grounded theory, State-owned commercial bank

## Introduction

State-owned enterprises are the "pillar" of the Chinese economy (SASAC, 2018) with three attributes of "economy", "society" and "politics" (Xiandong, 2021). They occupy a dominant position in major industries and key fields related to national security and the lifeline of the national economy and are an important pillar of the national economy (SASAC, 2018). With the deepening of China's reform and opening up, the influx of international enterprises and the rapid rise of private enterprises, the monopoly advantage of state-owned enterprises is gradually lost. Ramcharan said that "the success of enterprises comes from talents". As an important element of strategic human resources of state-owned enterprises, managers of state-owned enterprises are facing unprecedented challenges (Shicai, 2021). Managers with high quality and strong ability are very important for the sustainable development of state-owned enterprises.

It has been nearly half a century since (McClelland, 1973) proposed the concept of competency in 1973. The competency model has been widely used in the human resource management practice of the world's top 500 enterprises and achieved good results. Large Chinese enterprises such as Haier and Lenovo also focus on the research of competency characteristics (Lidan et al, 2007). As the ultimate executor of the strategy of state-owned enterprises, first-line managers are the cornerstone of the development of state-owned enterprises. Compared with the middle and senior managers, the first-line managers of state-owned enterprises are the closest to the market and are the first to perceive the changes in the market. Therefore, the transforming state-owned enterprises have a strong demand for excellent first-line management talent resources.

Using the research method of grounded theory, this study selects the first-line managers of state-owned commercial banks as the research object, encodes and constructs a theoretical model with grounded theory, and tries to reveal the constituent elements of the competency of first-line managers of state-owned enterprises, in order to deepen the theoretical research of competency and provide a reference for the practice of human resource management of Chinese state-owned enterprises. Considering the large industry differences of state-owned enterprises, this study limits the research field to state-owned commercial banks. The orderly and healthy development of state-owned commercial banks is related to China's financial security and national stability, but they are facing three challenges: firstly, there is great pressure from external peer competition. Private enterprise capital and foreign modern commercial banks with more experience and flexibility pose new challenges to state-owned commercial banks in terms of system and operation management. Secondly, cross-border competitors relying on information technology set foot in some banking businesses. Alibaba, PPDAl and Alipay have developed rapidly in the field of financial industry, bank settlement system and financial services, which have brought impact to traditional banking industry, but also put forward higher requirements for accelerating the transformation of banking industry. Finally, the global economic downturn and the impact of the new coronavirus epidemic have put forward higher requirements for the managers of state-controlled commercial banks.

The main innovations of this study are: firstly, the existing research on competency pays more attention to senior managers, middle managers or "star employees", and the competency characteristics of first-line managers have not been fully explored. Therefore, this research results enrich the theoretical research in related fields. Secondly, different from the traditional theme analysis method, this study uses grounded theory to extract the competency characteristics of first-line managers. As an important inductive research method, grounded theory is considered by mainstream scholars as a "necessary and appropriate research tool" for management research in China (Shuying & Zhongming, 2004). Therefore, using grounded theory to construct the competency characteristics of first-line managers is a useful scientific

attempt. Thirdly, the competency model of first-line managers of state-owned commercial banks will provide a comprehensive and systematic thinking framework for the leadership development of first-line managers of other types of state-owned enterprises.

The rest of this study is organized as follows: the second part is a review of the theoretical background of competency; the third part is the research design and research findings, extract the in-depth interview information of experts, capture the competency characteristics in the interview records with the help of grounded theory, summarize the dimensions of competency, and establish the competency model of first-line managers of state-owned enterprises; the fourth part is the discussion, which compares and analyzes with the existing research, finds and explains the differences, and then refines the theoretical and practical significance of this research; the fifth part puts forward the conclusion of this study according to the above research results.

## **Literature review**

### **1) First-line managers**

"First-line" refers to the lowest level in the organization and the support force of the middle and high levels of the organization (Ximing, 2012). Although in terms of status, first-line managers are people on the edge of power, they are the final hub for the implementation of decision-making and deployment (Wuying, 1994). As the "terminal" and "tip" to promote the implementation of enterprise strategy, they are not only the executor of strategy but also the experienter of the market environment (Xin, Lei, Fang, & Chao, 2020). Therefore, first-line managers are the backbone of enterprises and play a vital role in the development of enterprises (Wei, 2013). However, it is found that since 2010, the academic research on first-line managers has shown an upward trend through literature search, but there is relatively little research on their competency, indicating the research gap in this field.

### **2) Competency concept**

The concept of competency was put forward by Professor McClellan of Harvard University in 1973. He defined competency as all the individual characteristics that can be distinguished between excellent and average performance and can be reliably measured or counted in a specific job and organizational environment. From the definition, we can get three principles to judge competency: first, competency should be related to the specific work situation. Second, the basis of this prediction should be based on objective data, which can be distinguished the excellent from the general individual. Third, competency should be able to predict job performance. Only the knowledge, skills and characteristics that meet above three principles can be regarded as competency and the real connotation of competency. Looking at the development of competency research, we can find that the connotation of competency, that is, the research of competency characteristics runs through.

Subsequently, many scholars conducted in-depth research on competency from

different angles (Guglielmino, 1979; Mclagan, 1980; Derouen, & Kleiner, 1994; Mirabile, 1997). By summing up the different definitions of competency by many scholars, we find that the relevant research can be divided into two categories: the view of characteristics and the view of behavior. According to the view of characteristics, competency is a combination of a series of characteristics, which can distinguish work performance. Spencer is a representative of this view. He defined competency as a person's potential characteristic, and there was an obvious causal relationship between this characteristic and his job performance, which is divided into five levels, from low to high, as motivation, trait, self-concept, knowledge, and skills (Spencer, Spencer & Wiley, 1993). This is also one of Spencer's important contributions. This definition is widely recognized by society and can be seen in research after the 1990s. Most studies only choose this definition. However, the characteristics view focuses on the implicit characteristics, which are often not as obvious as the explicit behavior. Therefore, there are often some problems in capturing the implicit characteristics, such as complex operation and too complex competency.

Different from the view of characteristics, the view of behavior emphasizes the external behavior performance. It believes that competency is the specific behavior performance of the comprehensive application of knowledge, ability and skills in the specific working situation to meet the working standards, which is expressed by competency. For example, Woodruffe defines competency as a series of behavior patterns necessary to complete work tasks, which are demonstrated by high-performance individuals (Woodruffe, 1993). The view of behavior gives the concept of competency an observable and measurable way, which makes the quantitative research of competency possible, which is also one of the unremitting pursuit of human resource management practice. In fact, what we see more often is the integration of these two views. Competency characteristics need to be reflected through behavior, and competency behaviors are abstracted through characteristics. Both focus on the factors that distinguish individual performance, but in different ways.

The definition of competency in this study adopts a view that combines the two concepts, considering that competency is a characteristic expression of excellent managers' competency behavior, that competency is a measurable and comprehensive expression of individual characteristics, and that competency is closely related to job performance and has the difference between jobs.

### **3) Competency model**

A competency model is a competency structure combined with excellent performance requirements for specific positions. It is an effective guarantee for a series of human resource management and development practices. In the current research on the competency model, the representative theoretical models are the iceberg model and the onion model. McClellan creatively put forward the iceberg model, which is divided into two parts: representation and concealment according to the different forms of individual quality. Spencer et al. (Spencer,

Spencer & Wiley, 1993). improved the "iceberg model" based on the concept of characteristics through 20 years of research on the combination of theory and practice, and changed the six levels of the original model to five. The competency elements included are mainly motivation, traits, self-concept characteristics, knowledge and skills. This model is more classical and popular. Spencer likens this model to the shape of an iceberg, in which knowledge and ability are located on the upper layer of the iceberg and above the water level, which is easy for people to observe, and relatively easy to change through external methods such as training. Personality traits, values and motivation are located at the bottom of the iceberg and below the level, which are not easy to be noticed or changed. As the foundation of a person's competency system, they have a fundamental impact on a person's behavior. The American scholar (Boyatzis, 1982) proposed the onion model on the basis of the iceberg model. The competency is wrapped from inside to outside like an onion. The closer to the inner layer, the more difficult it is to learn, and the outer layer is easier to cultivate than the inner layer. The nature of onion model is the same as iceberg model, but the expression of competency in onion model is more hierarchical, and the deeper characteristics are less easy to be found, but they have a deeper impact. Therefore, in the practice of human resource management, we should not only focus on superficial knowledge, certificates and skills but also pay more attention to the motivation, personal conduct and values of managers.

#### 4) The course of competency research in China

The research on competency by Chinese scholars began in the late 1990s (Wang & Shi, 1998) Although it started late, it has developed rapidly and has great potential. Its research focuses more on application model analysis, that is, competency theory and model are applied to managers in different fields and at different levels, mainly focused on middle and senior managers (Kan, Jicheng & Chaoping, 2002; Lifeng & Kan, 2004; Chongming & Minke, 2002) The research on competency can be roughly divided into three stages in China: **The first stage:** is foundation (from the 1990s to 2002). Peng and Kan (1998) were the first teams to explain competency in China. The main goal of the research is to evaluate the training needs. Wang Chongming (Chongming, 2001) took the lead in prescribing the specific meaning of competency, which makes China's research on competency have a clearer direction. **The second stage:** expansion (2003-2004). As early as 2003, a large number of scholars in China gradually turned their research objectives to competency, and the scope involved was also expanding. More and more scholars are not limited to some managers, but gradually conduct a deeper analysis of a professional post, such as entrepreneurs in high-tech enterprises and senior managers in family enterprises (Kan, Jicheng & Chaoping, 2002; Xiang, Lei & Jiamhong, 2004) **The third stage:** vigorous development (since 2005). At this stage, China began to understand and study competency from a new perspective, new breakthroughs were made in research methods as well (Xueng et al, 2006; Lufang et al, 2008) When studying vertical career development, Wansi (2005) first mentioned the new concept of developmental competence, which mainly refers

to the skills, knowledge, values, attitudes, social roles, self-concept, motivation and characteristics that senior managers need to develop towards a higher level in order to improve performance. Wang Zhen mainly takes the leaders of clinical medicine as the research object and believes that the required competencies include 18 items and 3 dimensions, which are integrity, honesty, public interest and dedication. The three dimensions mainly include management ability, cognitive skills and personality characteristics (Zhen, Jingkuan, Zhengxue & Kan, 2011). However, through literature search, it is found that the research on the competency of Chinese scholars is developing in different fields and different levels of managers, and the research on the competency model of bank managers is gradually enriched. It should be noted that the research results on the competency model of bank first-line managers are very lacking (Donghua, 2016). One possible reason is that the state-owned commercial banks have long had the thinking of "performance evaluation is all about loans" (Zhang & Fan, 2013), pay insufficient attention to the competency of managers, or despise and prejudice on the competency of managers. However, as mentioned above, competency research has environmental dependence and work situation relevance. At present, state-owned commercial banks are facing new challenges of Internet finance represented by the "new four modernizations" in the market, such as the financialization of deposit, diversification of financing, electronic payment and personalization of demand. The internal competition between the banking industry is actually very fierce. Managers of state-owned commercial banks, especially first-line managers, are facing increasing competitive pressure, more and more difficult performance assessment tasks, lower and lower treatment and high employee turnover rate. Taking the Agricultural Bank of China as an example, a total of 41600 people left from 2016 to 2020. However, the academic circles may pay insufficient attention to the research of competency in this field because of its monopoly to some extent. Therefore, this study constructs the competency model of first-line managers of state-owned commercial banks through grounded theory.

## **Research methods and procedures**

### **Purposeful sampling**

Based on the criteria confirmed in advance, this study selects the middle-level managers of state-owned commercial banks who can provide the largest amount of information for the research problem as the target group for in-depth interviews. This study made the following criteria for the target group:

First, the respondents have worked in the middle management position for no less than 5 years;

Second, the respondents are responsible for the management of first-line managers;

Third, the respondents have worked as first-line managers of state-owned commercial banks.

Creswell (1998) and Morse (1994) believe that the sample size of qualitative research is 5 to 25, at least six. Therefore, this study preliminarily selects 6 experts for in-depth interviews.

This study is based on the research process of grounded theory. The process of data collection and data analysis are carried out alternately. Each time the data is obtained, it should be analyzed in time. The concept or category obtained through analysis should not only be compared with the existing concepts and categories, but also become the basis for guiding the selection of interviewees and data collection. The data collection process ended after information saturation. This study finally completed in-depth interviews with 20 middle managers to achieve information saturation. The interviewees are as follows (Table 1):

**Table 1** Summary of basic information of respondents

Number	Gender	Age	Served as sub-branch (vice president) time/year
E1	Male	47	8
E2	Female	50	9
E3	Male	54	10
E4	Male	48	8.5
E5	Male	53	11
E6	Female	51	9
E7	Male	55	13
E8	Female	49	8
E9	Male	46	8
E10	Male	52	11
E11	Male	37	5
E12	Female	40	6
E13	Male	44	7
E14	Male	35	2
E15	Male	35	2
E16	Female	41	6
E17	Male	45	10
E18	Female	39	5
E19	Male	36	4
E20	Male	34	3

#### Data collection

Use semi-structured interviews to collect data, and try to comprehensively and deeply

collect data that can reflect the competency of first-line managers of state-owned commercial banks. As a supporting tool for data collection, the interview outline can ensure that the questions point to the direction required by researchers and the consistency of interview topics. Researchers pass IOC tests with five experts before the interview.

This study uses a multivariate combination of research data for validity testing [33], also known as "triangulation". Conduct in-depth interviews with the respondents, inquire about his colleagues, observe the surrounding environment and consult the internal documents of the respondent's organization. Determine whether the information obtained from multiple channels is consistent.

### **Coding process**

Open coding is carried out for the data obtained each time to realize the conceptualization of the interview content. Then, according to the assumption of the relationship between concepts, complete the axial coding, select the core category that can systematically connect with other categories, and complete the selective coding.

**Open coding** Conceptualization/categorization based on open coding is a cumbersome process, which needs researchers' thinking, discussion, consideration and improvement. In this study, 309 concepts are obtained through open coding.

**Axial coding** Through open coding, researchers got 309 concepts. Combine these concepts, the relationship assumptions between concepts and similar concepts to form categories. From the initial relationship between concepts to the relationship between categories. All the interview materials are connected into a huge network, and the node of the network is the main category we need to refine, that is, competency characteristics. Those branches are used to explain the main category, that is, the sub category. Its relationship with the main category can be goal or incentive factor, object, power relationship, representation, part and so on.

Using the method of axial coding, after repeated discussion, analysis, induction and refinement, a total of 21 main categories and 50 subcategories are finally obtained. As shown in table 2.

**Table 2** Correspondence between main category and sub category

<b>Main category</b>	<b>Sub category</b>
Power motivation	Power domination, personal charm
Communicative motivation	External pressure, internal needs
Achievement motivation	High goal pursuit, high standard requirements, positive actions
Personality charm	Be principled, enthusiastic, appealing, well-mannered
Pragmatic	Rigorous and pragmatic, sense of responsibility
Preoccupation	Confident, focused

Purposeful	Persistence, stress resistance
Comprehensive	Balance differences, respect and understand differences
Dare to be responsible	Sense of responsibility, courage to take responsibility
Overall view	Overall consideration, sacrifice of "ego"
Integrity	Self control, compliance with professional ethics
Solidify cooperation	Concept communication, team motivation
Customer insight	Resource insight, leveraging external force
Personnel behavior management	Employee behavior identification and evaluation, employee anomaly detection and response, employee business supervision
Execution	Ability to achieve performance targets, practical skills
Contingency ability	Emergency handling, review of the situation
Communication	Communication skills, organizational skills, coordination skills
Learning capability	Unity of knowledge and practice, acquisition of new knowledge
Team building	Team motivation, coordination of internal relations of the team, allocation of human resources
Professional knowledge	Business management knowledge, economics knowledge, business risk identification, policy interpretation
Basic knowledge	Knowledge of industry characteristics, policies and regulations

**Selective coding** Iceberg model and onion model are the research results formed around the competency model, which can be used for reference. On the basis of fully understanding the text information, concepts and categories, after many comparisons, and constantly asking: "can these categories summarize a more important core? How can these categories be continuously gathered on the core categories to form a systematic theoretical framework? " After this continuous questioning, refining, integration and induction, the context of the data is gradually clear. The competency of first-line managers in state-owned enterprises consists of five core categories: motivation, values, personality, ability and knowledge. These five core categories can be meaningfully related to the largest number of categories and play a leading role in the 21 main categories. The corresponding relationship is shown in Table 3 and Figure 1:

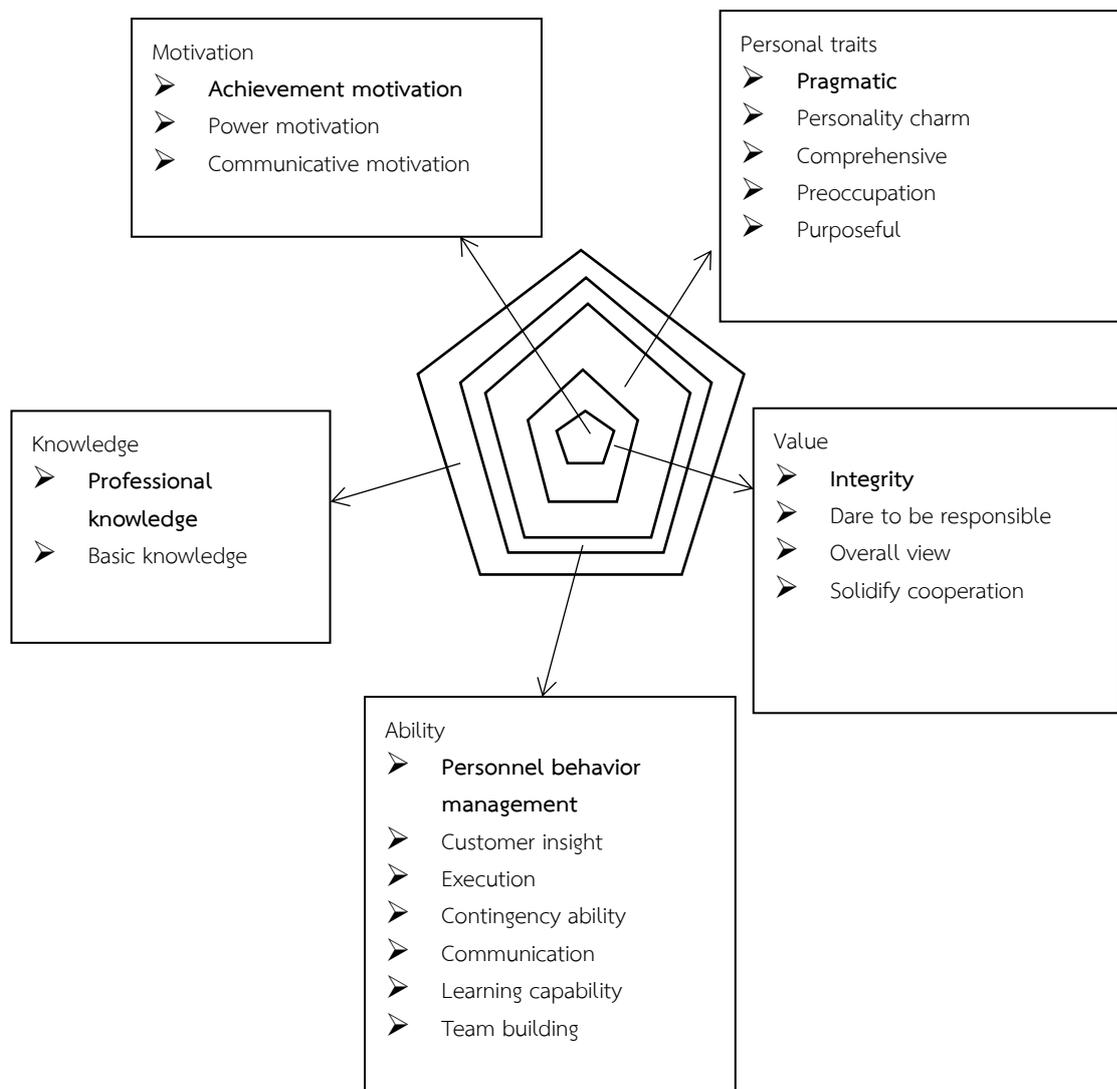
**Table 3** Correspondence between core category and main category

Core category	Main category
Motivation	Achievement motivation, power motivation, communication motivation
Value	Integrity, dare to be responsible, overall view, solidify cooperation

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Personality traits	Pragmatic, personality charm, comprehensive, preoccupation, purposeful
Ability	Personnel behavior management, customer insight, execution, contingency ability, communication, learning capability, team building
Knowledge	Professional knowledge, basic knowledge

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**Figure 1** Competency model of first-line managers in state-owned commercial banks

### Theoretical saturation test

In this study, another three respondents who met the purposeful sampling were selected for theoretical saturation test. (Norman, 2017) The test found that the core competency categories of first-line managers cover a very rich content. For the existing 21 main categories, no new main categories have been found, and no new competency characteristics belonging to sub categories have been found in each main category. Therefore,

the competency model of first-line managers in state-owned commercial banks is saturated in theory.

## Discussion

### **1. In terms of motivation requirements, achievement motivation is the primary competency of first-line managers of state-owned commercial banks.**

In the core category of motivation in this paper, compared with power motivation and communication motivation, the achievement motivation of the competency of first-line managers of state-owned commercial banks is more important, which is supported by the research of (Qiang & Wei, 2012). According to the concept of responsibility consciousness put forward by Wang Chongming and Chen Minke (Chongming & Minke, 2002), first-line managers must have the responsibility consciousness of daring to take responsibility, and the relationship between responsibility consciousness and management performance is closer. In fact, the sense of responsibility is closely related to the motivation of achievement motivation, or the wide concept of responsibility itself contains the elements of achievement motivation. Stewart also believes that the combination of responsibility consciousness and achievement motivation will produce incremental validity (Stewart, 1999) which has an important impact on job performance.

According to the field survey of this paper, we find that the first-line managers of state-owned commercial banks have two main characteristics in terms of achievement motivation: (1) They like moderately challenging performance goals and are not satisfied with aimlessly going with the flow and settling down, but always want to make a difference. Therefore, they always carefully choose their own goals, or bargain in the communication process of setting the company's performance goals, and rarely automatically accept the goals selected by their direct superiors. And they are willing to take the initiative to achieve their goals rather than seek help from others, showing a sense of responsibility. (2) They are very concerned about timely and clear performance feedback. Because goals and the degree to which they are accomplished are very important to them, they are particularly eager to understand the reasons for their performance gaps and whether they are making progress. This may be related to the career catch-up pressure and life pressure of first-line managers of state-owned commercial banks (Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996) The Matthew effect in the workplace is real (Feichtinger et al, 2021) and the greater the scale of state-owned commercial banks, the more obvious the Matthew effect in the workplace. For managers at the first-line level, how to get promotion opportunities as soon as possible is very critical, which means that those first-line managers with high-performance motivation pay great attention to clear and timely performance feedback because performance goals are overriding.

### **2. In terms of personal traits, pragmatic is the primary competency of first-line managers of state-owned commercial banks.**

In the core category of personal traits in this paper, compared with personality charm, comprehensive, preoccupation, purposeful, pragmatic of first-line managers of state-owned commercial banks is more important, which is an important factor affecting organizational performance. This is basically consistent with the long-term research conclusion carried out by AON Hewitt consulting company in the world (AHEERRC, 2014), and also consistent with the research found by Yang Bo and others that there is an obvious strong positive relationship between employee engagement indicators and the performance measured by enterprise key business indicators (Bo, 2012)

This paper believes that first-line managers with pragmatic will invest in higher enthusiasm, more responsible attitudes to work actively and diligently, receive higher pay and more opportunities for promotion, and serve as a virtuous example [40], which in turn makes it easier to form a virtuous cycle of performance-motivation between employees-companies (Sluess et al, 2012; Brown et al, 2005)

**3. In terms of values, integrity is the primary competency characteristics of first-line managers of state-owned commercial banks.**

Compared with dare to be responsible, overall view, solidify cooperation, integrity is more important values. This conclusion can be explained from the following aspects: (1) although a relatively standardized and perfect modern enterprise system has been established based on the company law, compared with non-state-owned enterprises, the integrity risk of state-owned commercial banks is still high, frequent and so on. Therefore, in addition to standardizing the work process of anti-corruption risk prevention and strengthening the construction of anti-corruption system, the integrity self-discipline trait of the management of state-owned commercial banks this is also very important. According to incomplete statistics, from January 2018 to June 2019 alone, more than 30 banking executives and officials of relevant regulatory authorities have been sacked. After 2019, it has increased to an average of at least two cases of banking executives being subject to disciplinary review, supervision and investigation due to violations of law and discipline every month. (2) Since state-owned commercial banks do not exactly pursue profit maximization, they have to take on the goal of helping the state regulate the economy, so state-owned enterprises adhere to the philosophy of "morality first" in hiring, and especially have higher requirements for self-discipline.

**4. In terms of ability, personnel behavior management is the primary competency of first-line managers of state-owned commercial banks.**

In the core category of competency traits in this paper, compared with customer insight, execution, contingency ability, communication, learning capability, team building, the personnel behavior management traits of the competency of first-line managers of state-owned commercial banks are more important, which is an important factor affecting organizational performance. This is consistent with Zajonc's social facilitation theory. Zajonc

believes that the existence of others has a positive or negative impact on individual performance (Zajonc, 1965) and that the daily supervision and guidance of first-line managers stimulate audience effects and co-actor effects, which trigger employees' awareness of uncertainty, and further generate a higher energy level (Zajonc, 1980), which further enhances employees' psychological stimulation level, have a positive impact on task performance (Hull, 1952)

**5. In terms of knowledge, professional knowledge is the primary competency of first-line managers of state-owned commercial banks.**

Professional knowledge is actually technical skills. In the core category of knowledge characteristics in this paper, the professional knowledge characteristics of the competency of first-line managers of state-owned commercial banks are more important than the basic knowledge. This is related to the management level of the first-line managers of state-owned commercial banks. After all, they need to fight in the front line. Robbins and Robert Katz also believe that technical skills are the most important skills of first-line managers. Robert Katz believes that managers at different management levels undertake different types of work, and the management skills required are also different; For first-line managers, their work is generally to complete the tasks assigned by their superiors, so technical skills account for the largest proportion.

## **Conclusion**

Using the research method of grounded theory, taking the first-line managers of state-owned commercial banks as the research object, this paper makes in-depth interviews with 20 middle-level managers of state-owned commercial banks, collects qualitative data through semi-structured interviews, codes and constructs a theoretical model by using grounded theory, and constructs a competency model of first-line managers of state-owned enterprises. It is found that the competency model of first-line managers in state-owned enterprises consists of five dimensions: motivation, values, personal traits, ability and knowledge. Among them, the motivation dimension includes three competency characteristics: achievement motivation, power motivation and communication motivation, of which the most important is achievement motivation; The value dimension includes four competency characteristics: integrity, dare to be responsible, overall view, solidify cooperation, of which the most important is integrity; The dimension of personal traits includes five competency characteristics: pragmatic, personality charm, comprehensive, preoccupation, purposeful, of which the most important is pragmatic; The competency dimension includes seven competencies: personnel behavior management, customer insight, execution, contingency ability, communication, learning capability, team building; There are two competency characteristics, of which professional knowledge is more important than basic knowledge.

The limitations of this paper are: (1) the number of in-depth interviews is small, which

affects the adequacy of information and the accuracy of research results to a certain extent; (2) The grounded theory approach requires the coder to have a sufficiently acute theoretical sense, but it is difficult to always maintain a neutral mind in the process of coding and analysis, which inevitably overcomes the researcher's a priori subjective thinking; (3) The competency model of first-line managers in state-owned enterprises proposed in this study has not been tested quantitatively. Subsequent research can develop a scale to empirically test the competency model of first-line managers in state-owned enterprises proposed in this study.

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