

Talent Management and Competitive Advantage: The Moderating Effect of Knowledge Integration

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to examine the effect of talent management on competitive advantage. The study also aimed at analyzing the role of knowledge integration, as a moderator, in the correlation between talent management and competitive advantage. Data was collected through questionnaires from a sample of 235 employees working in top 10 firms in Jordan. Descriptive statistics, correlations and hierarchical regression analyses were used to test the hypotheses. Findings showed that competitive advantage was significantly related to talent management and also to knowledge integration. Furthermore, the study revealed that knowledge integration was a significant moderator in the correlation between the talent management and competitive advantage.

Keywords: Strategic Planning, Human Resource Management, Competitive advantage, Knowledge integration

1. INTRODUCTION

Today's business environment is more global and competitive than it has been in the past. The modern business is characterized with shorter product life cycles, rapid new product introductions, increasingly knowledgeable, well informed, and sophisticated customers. Thus, the organizations that always strives to excel need to be improved continuously capabilities to suit the needs of their customers and their expectations, and that this improvement - as theory of competitive advantage based on resources suggests - needs to different resources, and perhaps the most important are human resources, information, and time. If firms have access to similar resources, competitive advantage will be enjoyed by the firms possessing strategic capabilities that determine the efficiency of transformation of inputs into outputs, i.e. of "activating" resources. Such capabilities stem from the nature of organizations as complex social routines [1]. Studies have shown that human resources management in different organizations faces current and future challenges brought by global crisis and its resulted changes in the fields of business, skills and required capabilities for human resources. In order to face these challenges in business organizations, human resources management should hire and maintain capable, qualified and distinct people. As a result, the concept of talent, and talent management emerged. The talent and talent management are a distinctive power to organization

management and its leadership, and give it the speed of excellence and in dealing with the current and future environmental opportunities, risks and challenges. The idea of talent management came to keep up with the competitive dynamics in business environment in order to achieve competitive advantage. Knowledge is one of the most important strategic resources necessary to achieve integration between organization resources and capabilities, especially in dynamic and complex environments. The best use of the capabilities of the organization requires basically achieve full coordination between the various kinds of knowledge in the organization at the individual level and Organizational. This coordination is not only important to explicit knowledge documented in knowledge bases, but also includes tacit knowledge in the minds of staff (human resources). Hence, the integration of knowledge linked to important human resources, which sheds light on the relationship between integration of knowledge and human resources management, especially talented ones, which means talents management and how to take advantage of them as Strategic assets contribute to the organization's competitive advantage through the integration between knowledge, skills, abilities, through the activities of the organization, functions and still valid independently and overlapping.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Talent Management

Recently most of the organizations realized that talent management is an important process and it reflected on the performance of organizations and market share. Most researchers of this topic agreed that it is difficult to put a precise definition of talent management because there are multiple definitions and terms related to this subject. [2] Look to talent management from four perspectives first: Talent management as a collection of typical HRM practices. [3] Argued that "Talent management processes include workforce planning, talent gap analysis, recruiting, staffing, education and development, retention, talent reviews, succession planning, and evaluation". [4] Claimed that "The various aspects of talent management are recruitment, selection, on-boarding, mentoring, performance management, career development, leadership development, replacement planning, career planning, recognition and reward". Second: Talent management as a categorization of talent. [5] Argued that "Effective resource allocation means unleashing the value of

talent by mobilizing talented people for the best opportunities". [6] Said that "Talent development requires more than engaging in traditional succession planning. Talent-rich organizations look at cadres of talent at different levels in the organization. From this group they will select a few people to be organizational leaders". Finally: Talent management as the identification of pivotal talent positions.[7] interviewed that "the activities and processes that involve the systematic identification of key positions which differentially contribute to the organization's sustainable competitive advantage, the development of a talent pool of high potential and high incumbents to fill these roles, and the development of a differentiated human resource architecture to facilitate filling these positions with competent incumbents and to ensure their continued commitment to the organization". [8] Argued that multinational enterprises and global organization need to

Hypothesis A: talent management is positively related to competitive advantage.

Hypothesis a1: talent management is positively related to speed in respond to market.

Hypothesis a2: talent management is positively related to product / service quality

Hypothesis a3: talent management is positively related to innovation speed.

2.2 Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage was defined as is gained advantage over competitors by offering more value to customers, either through lower prices or through the provision of additional benefits and services [11]. Recently internet play important role in building and sustaining a competitive advantage in organization. But we have to note that internet firms require dynamic business models that are diverse from traditional brick-and-mortar firms to deal with the accelerated growth and business pressure [12]. [13] Argued that organizations can improve decisions and yield competitive advantage through combined theoretical knowledge with adequate contextual knowledge. Consequently it can be an important resource. [14] Argued that each individual component of TQM was related with competitive advantage. These components are: top management commitment/leadership, teams, culture, training/education, and process efficiency. [15] suggest "that companies attempting to leverage their project management process as a source of competitive advantage need to invest in intangible project management assets, in addition to investment in tangible project management assets. Intangible project management assets are based on tacit knowledge which is not readily transferable or copied like tangible project management assets. While companies are increasingly investing in tangible project management assets such as project management tools and techniques, methodologies, and project management offices. This highlights a need for senior managers and project management practitioners to recognize and promote the importance of processes and practices for facilitating the development and sharing of tacit project management knowledge – intangible assets which provide competitive advantage". Information system integration brings massive competitive power to organizations if it integrated into the product and process dimensions [16].

Hypothesis B: knowledge integration is positively related to competitive advantage.

focus on global talent management (GMT) and they proposed model show GMT drivers as follow: Exogenous drivers of GTM challenges and it include the following dimensions: Globalization, Demographics, and the Demand-Supply Gap. Endogenous drivers and it includes the following driver Regiocentrism, International Strategic Alliances, and Required Competencies. [9] Claimed that talent management has positive effect on competitive advantages. In addition they agreed that knowledge management leverage talent in organizations. Also they confirm that all KM activities: knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, developing knowledge competencies, and knowledge retention can be enhanced via the application of talent management (TM) principles. We agree with [10] who said that "Talent is critical because it is the role of a strong HR function to manage everyone to high performance". Hypothesis b1: knowledge integration is positively related to speed in respond to market.

Hypothesis b2: knowledge integration is positively related to product /service quality

Hypothesis b3: knowledge integration is positively related to innovation speed

2.3 Knowledge Integration

Recently knowledge is an important strategic resource. In addition Knowledge integration plays an important and vital role in organizations and is one of the success key in private and public organizations. Also "Knowledge is the most important strategic resource and the ability to acquire and develop it, share it and apply it can lead to sustainable competitive advantage" [17]. [18] Defined knowledge integration as "Knowledge integration is the task of incorporating new information into existing knowledge. The task is difficult because the consequences of an addition to an extensive knowledge base can be numerous and subtle". Also Knowledge integration is defined as "a goal-oriented process with the purpose of taking advantage of knowledge complementarities which exist between individuals with differentiated knowledge bases" [19]. [20] Defined "Knowledge integration as the synthesis of individuals' specialized knowledge into situation specific systemic knowledge". From the previous definitions we noted that knowledge integration used by organization to increase organizational value in addition to get competitive advantage. [21] Emphasized that knowledge management systems (KMS) are vital tools to gain competitive advantage in organization through corporate portals which present rich and composite shared information workspace for the creation, exchange, and knowledge use. Also they explained that Integration is one of corporate portal's features which refer to the ability to access and index information from distinct data supplies such as file servers, databases, business systems, groupware systems, file repositories, and the web. The main objective of knowledge integration is to serve innovation and relationship management in organization [22]. [23] Claimed that knowledge integration and knowledge-integrating procedures are vital to business performance. [24] Argued that developing successful socio-technical systems is a crucial to able integrates different knowledge and perspectives that supported from different users. Also they described characteristics of

the Socio-technical Walkthrough (STWT) method to support knowledge integration. [25] Suggest that knowledge integration has positive effect on projects performance, and provide three finding "First, the process of knowledge integration is dependent on interaction between the projects and the organizational context of the projects. Second, the process of knowledge integration depends on the concerned actors' "time for reflection", "the nature of the activities in the project", and "interest and motivation of the involved actors". The third finding concerns the role of management for knowledge integration". Creative process needs for knowledge integration systems to connect all the stages with each other in order to investigate, recognize, choose, and combine ideas in a business model. That obtains to overcome ambiguity, as a result reducing knowledge disparities and illustrative people's attitude and actions [26]. [27] Argued that knowledge integration with other systems is the key to rising and maintaining sustainable competitive advantage. Also he discussed Enterprise Application Integration (EAI) model Hypotheses C: knowledge integration positively moderates the relationship between **Talent management and competitive advantage**

Hypothesis C1: knowledge integration positively moderates the relationship between **Talent management and speed in respond to market**.

which include four levels of integration: (a) data, (b) process, (c) knowledge management and (d) application integration. EAI be able to integrate the knowledge that is stored in numerous locations, services and web. So, it results in more efficient, effective, instructive and perfect decisions. [28] proposed that there is a significant relationship between a team's creativity and its ability to knowledge integration. Many prior researchers emphasized that organizations should take place Knowledge integration in concerned with the use of suitable mechanisms for managing knowledge complementarities to be selected in a cost-economizing mode ([29]; [19]; [30]. [31] Proposed that "the factors at the team level (e.g., goal congruence, task cohesion, interpersonal cohesion, and transformational leadership) and the qualification of team members (e.g., common knowledge, functional expertise, and their network positions) influence team socialization and thus, increase the effectiveness of tacit-to collective knowledge transformation".

Hypothesis C2: knowledge integration positively moderates the relationship between **Talent management and product / service quality**

Hypothesis C3: knowledge integration positively moderates the relationship between **Talent management and innovation speed**

3. RESEARCH MODEL

After presenting the theoretical background and the proposed hypotheses, the research depicts the expected direction of the relationships between all the variables in Fig. (1).

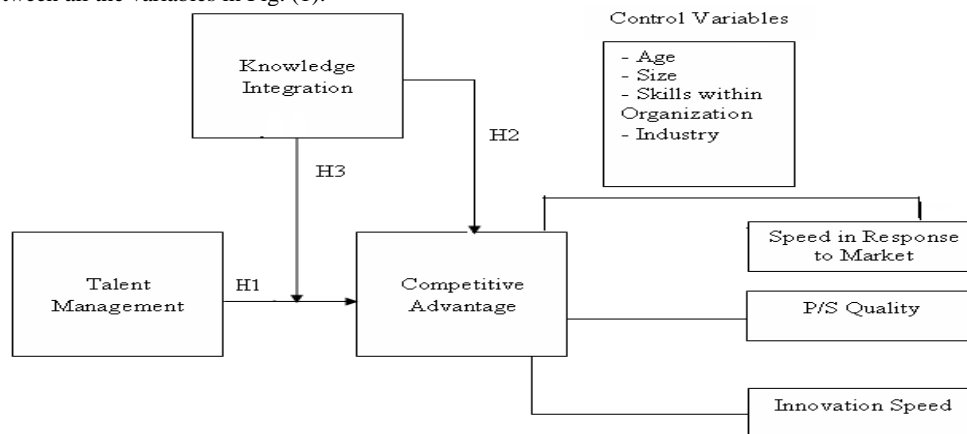


Fig. (1): The Research Model

Fig (1) illustrates the relationships between the constructs under study. This model includes the three hypotheses to be investigated, which represent the following three constructs talent management as the independent variable, competitive advantage as the dependent variable, and knowledge integration as the mediator between the two constructs.

4. SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION

This study conducted an empirical investigation to test direct effects of talent management, knowledge integration on competitive advantage and identify the moderating effects of

knowledge integration on the relationship between talent management and competitive advantage. This study examined a sample of 15 different firms from the top 30 firms listed in Amman stock exchange, ten from the selected firms agreed to cooperate all of the 421 employees with respective departments and sections were randomly chosen. A total of (235) questionnaires were filled out and found statistically useful for the analysis, resulting in an overall response rate of 55.8 percent of total questionnaires distributed. we took several steps to ensure and establish data validity and reliability, the questionnaire was refined through cautious and

rigorous pre-testing in order to provide subjective assessments of contents validity , a initial survey instrument was reviewed by 5 specialized in HRM and knowledge management areas and 10 executives of the firms participated in our prior

5. MEASUREMENT

All the measurement items in the present study were adopted from the relevant literature, with minor modifications and rewarding consistency

Talent management: The present study used an instrument developed by ([21]) in particular, all (30) Items were measured using a5- point likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Competitive advantage: The instrument to measure competitive advantage was adopted from the work of few researches such as [32] all (48) items consisting of 3 distinct variables (speed in respond to market, product service quality, innovation speed) were measured using 5-point likert scale.

research to closely assess , inspect and focus on instrument clarity , question wording , ease of understanding and validity , its logical consistencies , sequence of items , potentially confusing items and contextual relevance.

Knowledge integration: The moderator was measured by adapting the instrument used by ([22]; [28] [31]).

Control variables

To fully account for the differences among organizations, we also include organization age, size, skills, and type of industry as control variables.

5.1 Reliability analysis

Reliability is the extent to which a measure is free from variable errors. For the purpose of this study, the internal consistency method assesses the Cronbach alpha statistics, which indicates strong reliability if the alpha co-efficient exceeds 0.7 and moderate reliability if the alpha co-efficient exceeds 0.6 table (1) shows that both scales and all of variable exceeded 0.7 and score strong internal consistency.

Table (1) Reliability statistics for scale

Scale	Cronpach
Talent management	0.7823
Knowledge integration	0.9197
Speed to response to market	0.8243
Product / service quality	0.9235
Innovation speed	0.8892

5.2 Analysis

This study adopted hierarchical regression to test it's hypotheses. Before discuss regression and to confirm the adequacy of all models within the study, all variable were standardized for diagnostic analysis. each regression coefficient in models 2 , 3 , 5 , 6 , 8 , 9 (table 2 , 3 , 4 , 5) , records (VIF) variance inflation factor less than 5 (1.121 , 1.163 , 1.210 , 1.237 , 1.265 , 1.297) , respectively . All of these VIFs were implying minor multicollinearity. Also all models indicating random assumptions and that appear from the durbin-watson statistics (187 , 2.32 , 211 , 2.21 , 2.35 , 2.23) for models 2 , 3 , 5 , 6 , 8 , 9 respectively.

The correlation matrix (table2) shows correlations for all study variables. Table (2) shows that talent management (0.48***, p<0.001) knowledge integration (0.38**, p<0.001) were significantly and strongly correlated with speed in responding to market. Talent management (0.56***, p<0.001) and knowledge integration (0.56***, p<0.001) were significantly and strongly correlated with product service quality. Also talent management (0.42**, p<0.01) and knowledge integration (0.33**, p<0.01) were significantly and strongly correlated with innovation.

Table 2: Correlation matrix

N variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Speed in responding to the market	1								
P/S Quality	0	1							
Innovation speed	0	0	1						
Talent management	0.48***	0.56***	0.42**	1					
Knowledge integration	0.38**	0.58***	0.33**	0.47**	1				
Age of the firm	0.24*	0.35*	0.28	0.17	0.23*	1			
size of the firm	0.22*	0.18	0.05	0.13	0.25*	0.11	1		
Skills level	0.25*	0.29*	0.30**	0.31*	0.19*	0.24	0.12	1	
Industry	0.022	0.03	0.12	0.14	0.09	0.08	0.02	0.04	1

Notes: n = 235; and at * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table 3. Results of speed in responding to the market

Independent Variable	Model1		Model2		Model3	
	b	t	b	t	b	T
Controls						
Age	0.14	1.43	0.12	1.46	0.04	0.5
Size	0.25	2.12*	0.23	1.6	0.21	1.82
Skills	0.24	2.02*	0.20	1.77	0.17	1.67
Industry	0.05	0.44	0.06	0.46	0.1	0.67
Direct effects						
Talent management			0.58	3.59***	0.52	3.45***
Knowledge Integration			0.5	3.06***	0.43	2.93***
Moderating effects						
T.m x know.I					0.28	2.05*
R²	0.19		0.51		0.62	
ΔR²			0.32***		0.11**	
F	4.61*		11.45***		7.65***	

Table 4. Product /Service Quality

Independent Variable	Model4		Model5		Model6	
	b	t	b	t	b	t
Controls						
Age	0.11	0.24	0.04	0.16	0.06	0.15
Size	0.37	2.86***	0.33	2.45**	0.32	2.53**
Skills	0.08	0.33	0.05	0.07	0.06	0.09
Industry	0.14	0.35	0.12	1.3	0.1	0.37
Direct effects						
Talent management			0.35	2.70**	0.34	2.56**
Knowledge Integration			0.43	3.04***	0.42	2.97***
Moderating effects						
T.m x know.I					0.33	2.15**
R²	0.22		0.47		0.54	
ΔR²			0.25***		0.07**	
F	6.67**		14.61**		8.48***	

Table 5. Innovation Speed

Independent Variable	Model7		Model8		Model9	
	b	t	b	t	b	t
Controls						
Age	0.10	1.37	0.08	0.37	0.06	0.26
Size	0.28	2.46*	0.21	1.88	0.19	1.80
Skills	0.22	2.01*	0.18	1.75	0.17	1.7
Industry	-0.03	-0.42	-0.04	-0.44	-0.08	-0.65
Direct effects						
Talent management			0.56	3.35***	0.50	3.45***
Knowledge Integration			0.47	3.14***	0.41	2.91***
Moderating effects						
T.m x know.I					0.36	2.13*
R²	0.18		0.50		0.59	
ΔR²			0.32***		0.09**	
F	5.1*		10.94***		5.84***	

Tables 3 , 4 , 5 present a series of hierarchical regressions for (speed in responding to market and product / service quality and innovation speed . model 1. containing only the four control variables , demonstrated a low multiple squared correlation coefficient ($R^2 = 0.19$) . indicating the influence of organization size and skills within the firm ($b = 0.25 , 0.24$, $p < 0.05$) . adding two major variables , talent management , knowledge integration , increased R^2 by 32% over that records in model (1) ($\Delta R^2 = 0.32$, $p < 0.001$) . after introducing interaction term of (talent management x knowledge integration) in model 3 , R^2 increased to 0.62 (Δ

$R^2 = 0.11$, $p < 0.001$) high regression coefficients for talent management ($b = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$) knowledge integration ($b = 0.43$, $p < 0.001$) revealed the strong and stable direct effects of talent management and knowledge integration on firms ability to respond to it's markets

Moderating effect of knowledge integration (fig.2) also indicated that knowledge integration is positive moderator of the relationship between talent and speed in responding to market, thus, hypotheses a1 ,b1 ,c1 are supported regarding to speed in responding to market.

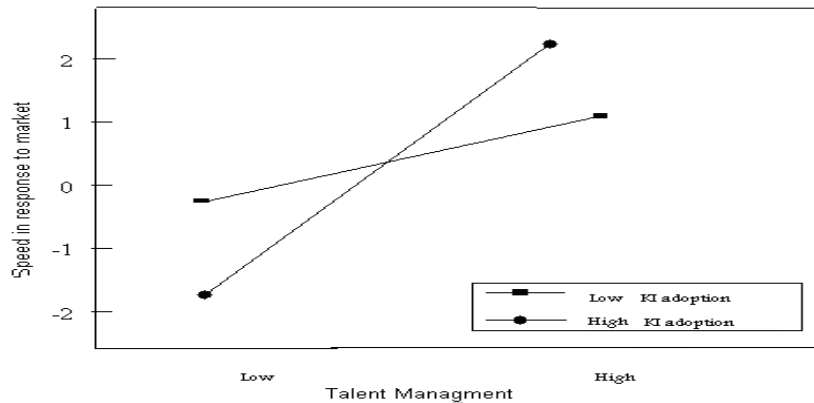


Fig.2: Moderating effect of KI adoption on the relationship between talent management and speed in response to market.

Model 4 in table 4, also containing the same control variables, but revealed a fair multiple squared correlation coefficient ($R^2=0.22$). indicating the importance of organizational size ($b= 0.37$, $p<0.001$)in product /service quality that the firm introduced to their customers .in model 5 and by adding two major variables, talent management , knowledge integration , R^2 increased by 0.25% over that in model 4 ($R^2= 0.25$, $P<0.001$). After introducing the interaction term (talent management x knowledge integration) in model 6 , R^2 increased to 0.54 ($R^2= 0.07$, $p < 0.01$).high regression

coefficient for talent management ($b= 34$, $p<0.001$) indicated that direct effects of talent management and knowledge integration were strong and stable to enhance quality of product ,service .moderating effect of knowledge integration (fig.3) also shows that the process of knowledge integration at the researched firms is a positive moderator in the relationship between talent management and product / service quality . Thus hypotheses a2, b2, b3 are supported regarding to product /service quality.

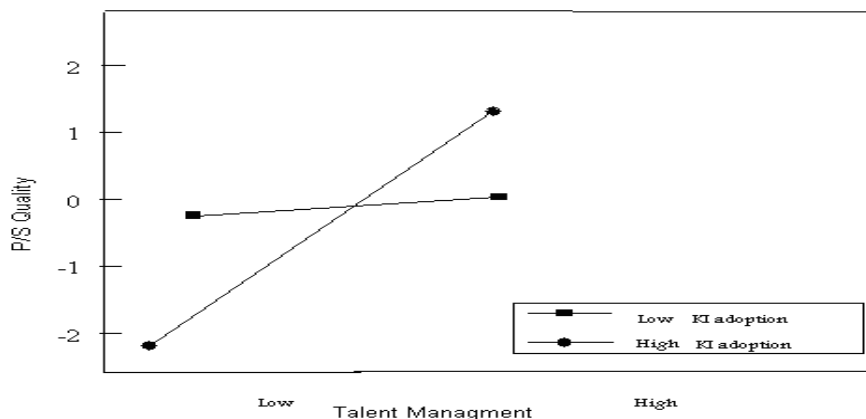


Fig.3: Moderating effect of KI adoption on the relationship between talent management and P/S Quality.

Model 7 also containing the same control variables ,revealed a fair multiple squared correlation coefficient ($R^2=0.19$).suggesting the importance of organizational size

and skills within the firm in innovation .adding two major independent variables to model 8 ,talent management and knowledge integration , increased R^2 by 32% over that in

model 7 ($R^2 = 0.32$, $P < 0.001$). After introducing the interaction term (talent management x knowledge integration) in model 9, R^2 increased to 0.59 ($R^2 = 0.09$, $P < 0.01$). High regression coefficients for talent management ($b = 0.50$, $p < 0.00$), knowledge integration ($b = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$) indicated that direct effects of talent management and knowledge

integration were strong and stable to create and support innovation. Moderating effect of knowledge integration (fig.4) also shows that knowledge integration is a positive moderator in the relationship between talent management and innovation, thus hypotheses a3, b3, c3 are supported regarding to innovation speed.

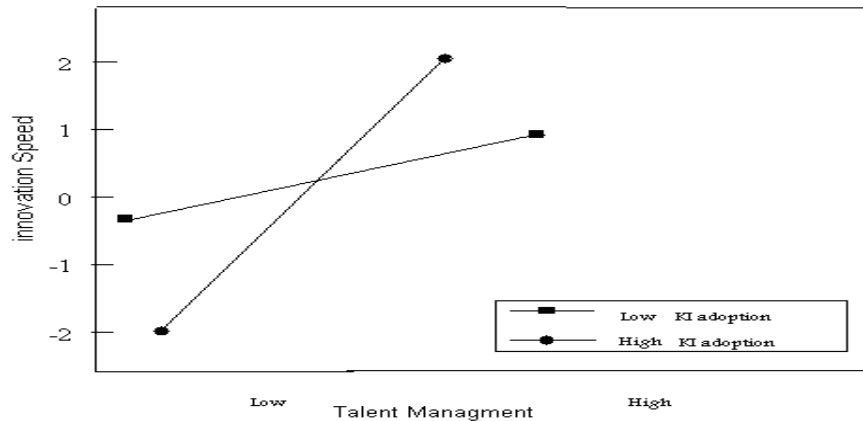


Fig.4: Moderating effect of KI adoption on the relationship between talent management and Innovation Speed.

6. DISCUSSION

This study provides important managerial implications for talent management and competitive advantage. The results of this study indicate that talent management represents one of the most important functions affecting competitive advantage achievement, Hence organizations must work on linking talent management as a strategy with corporate and business strategy, as well as coordination of different function .so that a high degree of competitive advantage can be achieved. Talent management and knowledge are integrated into firm strategy, so talent management activities and knowledge integration activities can be viewed as a source of competitive advantage. knowledge integration has become useful tool to gain competitive advantage .evaluation of the level to which talent management is evolved in competitive advantage achievement and integrated into strategic management of the firm is based up on the ability of top managers to provide a strategic integration of knowledge management practices ,the second set of findings revealed that knowledge integration is more influential than talent management and all control variable as knowledge integration has direct and indirect effect on competitive advantage .firms with highly knowledge integration not only possess effective talent management and high degree of competitive advantage, but also strengthen the relationship between talent management and competitive advantage .talents and competitive advantage develop in the same direction when firms are highly knowledge integrated .production of knowledge , gathering and conversion of existing knowledge into most appropriate form , certainly reflect positively on speed in respond to market ,product /service quality ,and innovation speed ,which gives the firm a distinct competitive positive position .this study demonstrated that knowledge integration has a direct influence on competitive advantage,(speed in respond to market product /

service quality innovation speed),each element of three elements of competitive advantage that has been tested can only be achieved through the integration of knowledge at organizational , collective and individual level . Managers should thus work hard to choose appropriate strategy to achieve integration in the knowledge that linked as we mentioned earlier to the firm strategy.

7. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to achieve two main purposes, the first one is to discuss and empirically tested the relationship between talent management and competitive advantage. All hypotheses concerning this purpose were supported which indicates significant effect of talent management on competitive advantage (speed in respond to market, product /service quality , innovation speed) the second purpose was to investigate the moderating effect of knowledge integration on the relationship between talent management and competitive advantage, the results have support for knowledge integration as a significant mediator in the relationship between talent management and competitive advantage.

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