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## Malaysian Computer Professional: Assessment of Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Commitment

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### Abstract

The contribution of emotional intelligence towards organizational commitment has been extensively documented in the literature. This study was conducted to address this gap. Adopting a survey research methodology involving 115 Information Technology Professionals working in Malaysian Administration Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU), the findings of the study reveal that out of the four clusters of emotional intelligence, only two turns out to be the significant predictors of organizational commitment. The findings further signify the importance of emotional intelligence in ensuring organizational commitment in the context of computer professionals.

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### 1. Introduction

Over the last decade, researchers of various disciplines have shown great interest in emotional intelligence. According to Salovey & Grewal (2005), emotional intelligence brings together the fields of emotions and intelligence by viewing emotions as useful sources of information that help one to make sense and navigate the social environment. Emotional intelligence (EI) which is also termed emotional quotient (EQ) is the ability to identify, assess and control

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one's emotion, the emotion of others, and that of groups (Goleman, 1995). EI is also defined as “the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth” (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). From the organizational perspective, the contribution of EI towards effectiveness can be viewed in terms of employee recruitment and retention; development of talent; teamwork; employee commitment, morale, and health; innovation; productivity; efficiency; sales; revenues; quality of service; customer loyalty; client or student outcomes (Cherniss, 2001). It is being recognized that, while the traditional intelligence quotient (IQ) can help a person to get a job, it is the emotional quotient (EQ) that will allow the person to keep the job and to progress satisfactorily in his or her career (Kaluzniacky, 2003).

In Malaysia, the issue of high turnover rates among the computing or ICT professionals is very alarming (Malaysian Employers Federation, 2012). The problem becomes more serious when these ICT professionals also have the inclination to leave the ICT career itself and work in a different set of career other than ICT (JobStreet.com, 2010). Despite the lucrative salary offered by the computing jobs (Jobstreets.com, 2014), Malaysian employment statistics reported that the ICT industry was placed first in the list as the highest turnover rate between 2011 and 2012 (Malaysian Employers Federation, 2012). Studies have shown that, lack of OC is one of the reasons why employees leave their jobs. Given the importance of OC, researchers have examined various determinants or predictors of OC and one of them is EI. Studies conducted in different types of occupation have shown that EI skills have effect on OC. However, further scrutiny on these studies unveiled that studies involving computer professionals is still at its infancy stage. Drawing upon this gap, a study was conducted with the following purposes; (i) to measure the level of EI of computer professionals, and (ii) to identify whether EI predicts OC.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1. Computer professionals*

A computer professional is a person who works in the computing industry. Titles that are associated to computer professionals include chief information officer; information system director; information center manager; application development manager; project manager; systems manager; operations manager; programming manager; systems analyst; business analyst; systems programmer; application programmer; emerging technology manager; network manager; database administrator; computer security manager; webmaster; and web designer (Rainer & Cegielski, 2013).

The Malaysian Computing Standard Program categorized computer professionals into four, namely computer scientist, information systems specialist, information technology professionals and software engineers (Malaysian Accreditation Agency, 2010). Computer scientists extend theories and practice for implementation of computer systems which has grown to include aspects of web development, interface design, security issues, mobile computing, and involvement in devising new ways to use computers (Malaysian Accreditation Agency, 2010). Information Systems Specialists are expected to become familiar with computer applications related to these traditional business areas, especially database-management systems and spreadsheets, and other off-the-shelf software products. IT professionals have a special focus on satisfying organizational needs that arise from Computing Technology (Malaysian Accreditation Agency, 2010). They assume responsibility for selecting hardware and software appropriate for an organization, integrating these with organizational needs and its infrastructure, and installing, customizing, and maintaining those applications for the computer users in the organization (Malaysian Accreditation Agency, 2010).

Software Engineers are expected to develop systematic models and reliable techniques for producing high-quality software on time and within a budget (Malaysian Accreditation Agency, 2010). In the computing career hierarchy, entry-level jobs require a higher need for technical skills and lower need for management and communication skills (Zhao, 2005). To ascertain that computing graduates would be competent in doing high-level technical work as well as managing people and services around the globe through the use of IT, educators need to consider incorporating three different types of mental processes or domains, namely, intelligent quotient (IQ), emotional quotient (EQ), and creativity quotient (CQ) (Zhao, 2005). This is because, skills and competencies in technology, innovation, management, and communication are developed from the combination of these three quotients.

## 2.2 Emotional intelligence

The EI term is first introduced by Mayor & Salovey (1990) but made popular by Goleman (1995) who describe EI as a potential factor in understanding and predicting the performance of employees in the workplace. While there exist several models and framework for measuring EI, the model developed by Goleman (1995) is considered the most widely adopted. The Goleman (1995, 1998) EI model has four clusters, namely self awareness, self management, social awareness and relationship management.

Self awareness has three dimensions which are emotional, self awareness, accurate self assessment and self confidence (Goleman, 1998). Self awareness is defined as ‘knowing one’s internal states, preferences, resources and intuitions. Self-awareness relates to recognizing one’s emotions and their effects. Accurate self-assessment is the ability of knowing one’s own strength and weaknesses. Self confidence denotes a strong sense of one’s self-worth and capabilities.

Self management is defined as “the ability to regulate distressing affects like anxiety and anger and to inhibit emotional impulsivity” (Goleman, 1998). This sub-cluster is divided into six dimensions, namely, self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, achievement orientation, and initiative. Self-control relates to the ability of keeping disruptive emotions and impulses under control. Trustworthiness is concerned with the ability of displaying honest and integrity. Conscientiousness is defined as the ability of demonstrating responsibility in managing oneself. Adaptability means the ability of being flexible in adapting to changing situations or obstacles. Achievement orientation connotes that an individual has the guiding drive to meet an internal standard of excellence. Initiative entails that an individual is always ready to act.

The third cluster of emotional intelligence as identified by Goleman (1998) is social awareness which, if further divided into three dimensions which are empathy, service orientation and organizational awareness. Empathy means an individual has the skill of understanding others and takes an active interest in their concerns. Service orientation necessitates the need of an individual to have the ability to recognize and meet customers’ needs. Organizational awareness relates to the ability of an individual to empathize at the organizational level.

The fourth cluster is relationship management and contains eight dimensions, namely developing others, influence, communication, conflict management, visionary leadership, change catalyst, building bonds, and teamwork and collaboration (Goleman, 1998). Developing other is concerned with the competence of sensing others’ needs and bolstering their abilities. Influence denotes the ability of wielding interpersonal tactics. Communication entails the ability of sending clear and convincing messages. Conflict management is concerned with the skills of resolving agreements. Visionary leadership relates to the competence of Inspiring and guiding groups of people. Change catalyst implies that an individual has the skills of initiating and managing change. Building bonds connote that an individual has the ability to nurture instrumental relationship. Teamwork and collaboration means that an individual has the ability to create a shared vision and synergy in teamwork, working with others towards shared goals.

## 2.3 Organizational commitment

Organisational commitment is “a state in which an employee identifies with a particular organization and its goals, and wishes to maintain membership in the organization” (Miller, 2003). According to Meyer & Allen (1997), organizational commitment is a psychological state that characterizes organizational members' relationship with the organization and has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the. Meyer & Allen (1997) conceptualized organizational commitment into three distinct constructs, namely affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Continuance commitment is the extent to which employees feel committed to their organizations by virtue of the costs that they feel are associated with leaving. Affective commitment is positive feelings of identification with, attachment to, and involvement in the work organization. Normative commitment refers to commitment based on a sense of obligation to the organization.

## 2.4 Research framework

The literature indicates that factors that have bearings upon OC include organizational, individual and external. Within the individual domain, EI has been shown to have an effect on OC. According to Abraham (2000); Gardner & Stough (2002) emotionally intelligent employees are more able to effectively control strong emotional states experienced at work which translate into more committed to the organization than those employees who have difficulty with these aspects of EI. Taboli (2013) notes that employees who cannot evaluate and control their emotions and feelings have a smaller amount of organizational commitment. As shown in Table 1, previous studies have found that EI has a significant relationship with OC in the context of employees, mainly working in the service industries such as government agencies, hospitals, libraries, banks, and hotels.

Table 1. Previous studies examining EI on OC

Authors	Context
Salami (2008)	Employees of services and manufacturing firms
Velmurugan & Zafar (2009)	Employees of hotels
Adeyoe & Torubelli (2011)	Civil servants across various ministries
Anari (2011)	School teachers
Downey et al (2011)	Government employees
Mohamadkhani & lalardi (2012)	Employees of hotels
Emrahimi et al (2013)	Managers and assistant manager in public schools
Muriuki & Gachunga (2013)	Employees of Ministry of Education
Gholami et al (2013)	Employees of banks and financial institutions
Dehghan & Saeidi (2013)	Employees of Ministry of Education
Sani (2013)	Public librarians
Sapta et al (2013)	Senior managers and directors
Taboli (2013)	Employees of university
Aghabozorgi (2014)	Nurses of public hospitals

Figure 1 depicts the research framework used in the study. The dependent variable is OC while the independent variable is EI drawn from Goleman (1998) which are self awareness, self management, social awareness and relationship management. Based on the arguments and evidences presented above, the following hypotheses are established: (i) H1: Self-awareness is a significant predictor of organizational commitment; (ii) H2: Self-management is a significant predictor of organizational commitment; (iii) H3: Social awareness is a significant predictor of organizational commitment, and (iv) H4: Relationship management is a significant predictor of organizational commitment.

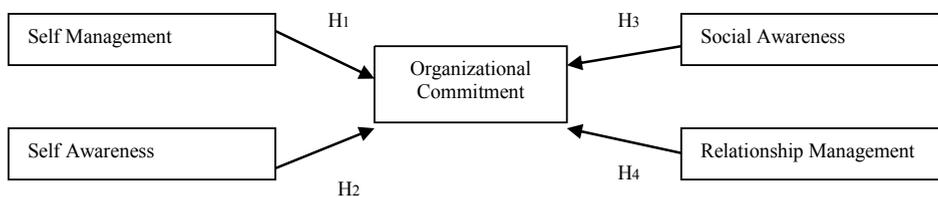


Figure 1: Research framework

### 3. Research Methodology

The study used survey research methodology. The population of the study was information technology professional working in the Malaysian Administration Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU). MAMPU is an agency under the Malaysian federal government established in 1977. The main role of MAMPU is to reform and modernize public administration in the Malaysian public sector (Hai, 2007). The agency was chosen because of the huge number of IT personnel who involved in medium and large scale IT development and implementation projects. Data was collected using the questionnaire which was developed based on the instruments by previous researchers. For each variable, five items were used and for each item a corresponding Likert scale anchored as 1 for “Strongly Disagree” and 7 = “Strongly Agree” were developed. The respondents were required to respond based on their level of agreeableness. Prior to main data collection, the questionnaires were pre-tested and pilot tested to address the validity and reliability requirements. Pre-testing were done involving two experts from academics and several prospective respondents. Based on their comments and feedback, the questionnaire was revised. Pilot testing involved the sending of the questionnaires to 30 respondents for the assessment of reliability based on Cronbach Alpha. The results of the analysis showed that the Cronbach Alpha scores surpassed the threshold value of 0.7, suggesting that the instrument was reliably sound for the main data collection. Based on the sampling frame containing names of IT personnel working in MAMPU, a systematic random sampling technique was used to draw the sample from the population. The questionnaires were distributed to the identified respondents and they were given about one week to respond. Reminders were given after one week for those who had not responded. After the one week period, a total of 115 questionnaires was returned. All of the questionnaires were found to be usable for further analysis. The execution of reliability analysis showed that the Cronbach Alpha for all variables are well above 0.7, implying that the measurement used is reasonably sound. The result of the reliability analysis is shown in Table 5.

### 4. Findings

Given that all data in this study are self-reported and collected through the same questionnaire during the same period, the problem of having common method variance is quite possible. To this effect, Harman’s single factor test was executed. All items from all variables under study were entered for analysis and constrained to a single factor. The results show that the single factor explained only 36.6% of the total variance, hence suggesting that the collected data is free from the threats of common method variance. Table 2 presents the demographic profile of the respondents. Out of 115 respondents who participated in the study, 55 or 47.8% of them are males while the remaining are females (52.2%), In terms of age, the highest percentage is from age between 30-39 (43.3%), and followed by 40 – 49 (24.3%).

Table 2. Demographic profiles of respondents

	Variable	Freq	Percent
Gender	Male	55	47.8
	Female	60	52.2
Age	21-29	27	23.5
	30-39	40	34.8
	40-49	28	24.3
	>49	20	17.4

Table 3 presents the results of the reliability analysis and descriptive analysis. The Cronbach Alpha for all variables surpassed 0.7, suggesting that the measurement used in the study is reasonably sound. The mean values for all clusters of the EI are well above 5.00 (based on the Likert scale, where 1 is the minimum and 7 is the maximum), while the standard deviations are mostly less than 1.00. These values suggest that, generally computer professionals who participated in the study felt that their EI skills are high. With regard to the OC, the mean score also surpassed the

mid-value of 4 and recorded a value of 5.731, while the standard deviation is 0.531. Given these findings, it is quite safely to conclude that respondents of the study felt that they are highly committed towards their organizations.

Table 3. Descriptive analysis of self awareness variables

Variable	No of items	Cronbach Alpha	Mean	Std Deviation
Self Awareness	15	0.889	5.563	0.491
Self Management	30	0.918	5.949	0.426
Social Awareness	15	0.920	5.908	0.516
Relationship management	40	0.951	5.737	0.515
Organizational Commitment	5	0.836	0.5761	0.531

Table 4, 5 and 6 present the results of the multiple regression analysis between the EI and OC. The results clearly show that out of the four independent variables, two variables which are social awareness and relationship management have a significant relationship with OC. Self awareness and self management are found not to have any influence on OC. The combination of social awareness and relationship management accounts for about 36.8% variance in OC.

Table 4. Model summary of regression analysis

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
0.625 <sup>a</sup>	0.390	0.368	0.42238

Table 5. ANOVA of regression analysis

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	12.549	4	3.137	17.585	0.00
Residual	19.625	110	0.178		
Total	32.174	114			

Table 6. Coefficients of regression analysis

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t
	B	Standard Error	Beta	
Constant	1.931	0.564		3.424
Self_Awareness	0.128	0.127	0.118	1.011
Self_Management	-0.123	0.190	-0.099	-0.646
Social_Awareness	0.325	0.188	0.316	1.729*
Relationship_Management	0.329	0.165	0.319	1.994*

(\* p < 0.05)

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The main objective of this study has been to measure the level of EI of the information technology professionals. In addition, it also seeks to identify whether EI has a relationship with OC. The results indicate that the EI level of the computer professionals is high. Out of the four clusters, the highest scoring is for social awareness followed by self management and self awareness. Relationship management scored the lowest out of the four clusters. Further analysis using multiple regressions revealed two EI clusters which are social awareness and relationship management have a strong and positive relationship on OC. Self awareness and self management are found to have insignificant relationship with OC. The findings suggest that the lack of social awareness and relationship management skills among the computer professionals will have significant impact on their OC. On the other hand, deficient in self awareness and self management will not do any harm on the commitment of these computer professionals.

A possible explanation of the above finding could be because self awareness and self management are inner skills of oneself, which do not have to directly and heavily associated with others. In contrast, social awareness and relationship management are skills that require individual to deal and interact with others. In a typical workplace setting, especially in the context of computing works, dealing and interacting with others, such as colleagues, users, vendors, customers are almost inevitable. Computer professionals spend a great deal of time communicating with these groups of people, thus the need to be competent in social awareness and relationship management is apparent.

The contributions of the study can be viewed from several perspectives. From the empirical viewpoint, it has identified the dimension of EI that has bearing on OC in the context of computer professionals. It also provides additional evidence on the contribution of EI on OC. From the practical viewpoint, it sends a strong message on the importance of EI skills for computer professionals. The finding should alert the authorities concerned on the need to provide further training on EI skills. While this study has achieved its objectives, it also has several limitations. Firstly, the sample size involved in the study is relatively small. Secondly, only one organization participated in the study. Future studies should consider expanding the sample size and instead of focusing to one organization, several organizations should be engaged. Larger sample size taken from several organizations or companies would make generalizations of the findings possible.

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