

ISSUES AND GAPS IN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE STUDIES

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Abstract: Emotional intelligence study is vital in the working environment to determine employee competency. However, understanding the issues and gaps are the biggest challenge for organization and researcher. This paper will uncover the Issues and gaps in emotional intelligence profiling for competency profiling in an international context. Three (3) Gaps will be addressed in this paper, namely: The empirical gap, followed by the theoretical gap and the practical gap. From the issues and gaps, further research and concept can be developed to solve today's issues related to emotional intelligence and competency.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Issues, Gap, and EI profiling.

1. INTRODUCTION

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, international rivalry, technological disruption, and demand is crafting a more concentrated, tempestuous, multifaceted, and undefined organizational setting. Crafting new methods of competitive benefit has become the central part of distress for management in such an undefined and competitive organizational setting [1]. In the modern world, emotional competence and performance factors have always become the major obstacles preventing organizations from producing competent employees that fit into dynamic industrial movements [2].

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, dynamic technological change, and industrial revolution, organizations need to adapt and align to their objectives and strategy to encounter changes and the industrial revolution [3]. Covid-19 has a profound effect on working conditions, individual mental health, and social interactions between individuals, groups, and organizations, resulting in a "psychological pandemic"; as a result, various mediations are expected to be implemented to improve this situation [4].

The emergence of the technological and dynamic industrial revolution creates high demand, particularly in addressing the aspect of human capital [3 & 5]; related competency elements, such as emotional and social intelligence, must be developed to humanize the technological process.

Emotional intelligence, in brief, understanding, is defined as "the ability to effectively reason about emotions and use emotions to aid cognitive processes and decisions" [6]. Emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of competency and performance [7]. The contribution of emotional intelligence in human resource development is how emotional and social aspects help an individual sustain and develop healthy personalities and communication to adapt to dynamic industrial criteria. The emerging issue in digital emotional intelligence studies and practices has become a critical concern in the 21st Century. Not only for the government but also impacted many industries. Digital emotional intelligence will become new digital age competency to measure organizational performance.

However, there is still a lack of integration of emotional intelligence components in assessing the ability to adapt to new digital skills [8].

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

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Numerous organizations pay little attention to emotional intelligence as the best predictor for 21st-century competencies. Employee survival in 21 century is based on employees' emotional intelligence in adapting to the

environment and adjusting to current needs, such as digital competency. Individuals with higher emotional intelligence (EI) demonstrate prosocial behaviours, implicitly gaining the qualities to behave appropriately in interpersonally stressful situations [9] study. As businesses become increasingly global and countries become more interconnected, civil service is expected to provide and perform globally, according to stakeholder expectations [1]. Currently, the civil service in Malaysia is still deficient in emotional intelligence competency, as evidenced by the 14th general election in the country [9].

Another core issue that requires full attention in this study is how employees adapt to change readiness. Employee efficiency ascending after the changes of the technological edge comes from various training procedures and the unskillfulness of employee digital competency [10].

In some occupations, employee competency develops after technological shifts while remaining the same [5]. Some generations, particularly baby boomer employees, may have a low drive and perceive technological transformation as a risk for career development [10]. The transition of transformational agenda and organizational change requires a change management approach [3]. The employee would experience emotional intensity when an individual could not cope with the drastic changes resulting in poor performance and negative organizational performance.

Organizational change readiness is essential in preparing the organization's members to be prepared for the transformational agenda [11]. Nordin [11] explained that when an organization's members have poor emotional intelligence throughout the change process, organizational transformation negatively affects emotional intelligence. Poor adaptability occurs due to bewilderment, a lack of drive, and poor performance.

Over the past ten years, numerous organizations and governmental institutions highlighted the issues such as organizational transformation, change management, performance management, employee development, and succession planning by implementing competency modelling programs through strategic initiatives to align employee productivity with job requirements [5 & 11].

To shift toward "World Class Civil Service," it is vital for Sarawak Civil Service to understand the gravity of its employee readiness and ability to adapt to this change. Thus, this study includes organizational readiness for change elements as a mediator affecting digital competency in the Sarawak context. The matter of "how employee competency can help achieve organizational strategy and objective" has become the focal subject in attaining organizational efficacy [12]. The employee is the core foundation for the organization to achieve the desired future strategy.

Technological change and industrial movement are inevitable, but many companies cannot sustain themselves due to these dynamic changes [13]. It enhanced the pace of digital change across the board. Numerous countries have shifted to a digital world for jobs and education. Employees must learn new information and abilities to effectively utilize digital technology [3].

The best example is NOKIA. NOKIA lost due to the inability to cope with market needs and industrial movement. As a result, an organization like NOKIA failed to identify digital needs, shifting the market. It is also shown poor competency of NOKIA employees in aligning with current digital competency is one of the contributing factors why a big company like NOKIA made losses and collapsed in 2015 [14]. Emotional intelligence is a significant domain for employees or individuals to adapt to digital needs in the 21st Century; in this context is digital competency [9 & 15]. The organization also plays a vital role in understanding its members' change readiness, which will help the employee develop and alter their emotional intelligence based on new required digital competency and talent [3 & 11]. Thus, the issues are based on proven studies that consider emotional intelligence, organizational readiness for change, and digital competency as vital to ensure the employee is competent with the needs of Industrial Revolution 4.0.

In this study, three (3) main research gaps will strengthen the statement problem: empirical, theoretical, and practical.

3. EMPIRICAL GAP

The value of emotional intelligence studies gives researchers different insights based on context, population, and needs. In this study, the empirical gap is essential to comprehend the consistency of the findings based on the characteristics. The inconsistency of the findings is due to the objective and targeted population. The argument has fumed into the end opinion regarding the comprehension of emotional intelligence and its past contributions. However, the crux of the issue is the debate on the empirical findings from seminal studies conducted in an international context, based on the rationale of this increased interest in emotional intelligence study. This study uses the basis of previous studies in the 90s and 2000 to relate to the present empirical gap, which should justify the seminal studies.

As a result, various outcomes from different assessment lenses have been discovered. According to a study by Salovey and Mayer [6], emotions are generated when intense feelings, while moods are produced when emotions are soft concentration.

From various empirical findings. Thus, emotions and moods can be portrayed by the following conditions: grief and antagonism, exhilaration, and excitement. On the other hand, a study by Hede and Hede [26] showed different findings that indicated emotional conditions that can coordinate and be impacted by individuals' practices, like joy, outrage, anxiety, and sadness. However, they could not be constrained by individuals, and they could sometimes be outside and against individuals. Hence, it very well may be said that individuals can continue talking or acting positively to upgrade their positive considerations and, in this manner, improve their positive, passionate states like certainty, innovativeness, and eagerness.

With the rising prominence of the function of emotion in the firm, the overall visualization is that feelings have not gotten a lot of consideration in the brain science (psychological field)

of work and the interaction of dynamics, and the emphasis was on discernment and soundness [16].

Goleman's [27] study gives different findings explaining that emotion assumes a vital part in human behaviours; for example, the difficulties and disarray in the work environment, particularly in circumstances of crisis, have acquired interest from researchers like Goleman [27] attempted the dynamic methodology instead of feeling itself. Goleman [27] aimed to utilize emotional intelligence in the workplace. Emotion has been characterized by Goleman [27] as the desire to act, the continuous strategies and thoughts for individuals to deal with their life [27].

Contrary to Goleman's [27] study Azouzi and Jarboui's [35] research showed that a high emotional intelligence rate is not always positively correlated with the executives' suggestibility concerning behavioural biases, which means the result showed some insignificant effects in the workplace. A study by Boyatzis *et al.* [2] also showed that peer evaluation significantly predicted employee effectiveness, while general ability did not affect workplace effectiveness [2]. However, a recent study by Debes [28] in the Cyprus context revealed a significant positive correlation between perceived emotional intelligence and self-efficacy in the workplace context. Compared with the previous findings, there were considerable gaps in inconsistency and interest in the context of an organization. Supramaniam and Singaravelloo's local study [9] explained that a substantial amount of research involving the Malaysian context had been conducted in the education sector but with relatively little research in the public sector. Due to a scarcity of research, it is difficult to delve deeply into the application of emotional intelligence, particularly concerning transformation, change agendas, and digital initiatives [9 & 15].

According to a study by Lee [15], public service positions demand greater emotional control in the Korean context since they interact with residents, and individuals often seek governmental assistance during the worst moments of their lives. This emotional labour may result in a greater risk of burnout and job dissatisfaction. Notably, burnout and job satisfaction directly correlate with organizational outcomes, such as the desire to leave, absenteeism, work performance, and service quality [4]. Adverse organizational outcomes may affect client services' quality, consistency, and stability, resulting in significant difficulties inside businesses [17].

Many organizations negate emotional intelligence as contributing factor to employee competency. Several practitioners and researchers argued it is hard to maintain this, also proven by Supramaniam and Singaravelloo [9], Sadovyy *et al.* [17], Lee [15], Kearney *et al.* [29], Gruicic and Benton [30 & 25]. Based on the findings, it is significant for this study to investigate emotional intelligence as contributing factor to digital competency in the Sarawak context. This study is guided by the seminal study done in international, Asian, and Local Contexts.

A study done in Malaysia by Tharbe *et al.* [31] discovered various components of emotional intelligence that were not mentioned in the western conceptualization of emotional intelligence. Furthermore, the research defined two themes that were mainly connected to the emotional intelligence of

professional assistants: intrapersonal professional talents and professional interpersonal abilities. In multicultural countries, especially Malaysia, the element of the patient was not investigated as part of the emotional intelligence component. From the perspective of different emotional intelligence levels based on gender, an empirical study by Olson *et al.* [32] showed a statistically significant difference between secondary teacher outcomes based on gender towards emotion management. The sample and population used by Olson *et al.* [32] is the population taken from Australian teachers. A study by Al-Qadri and Zhao [33] discovered statistically significant variations in individuals' emotional intelligence based on gender. By contrast, there were no statistically significant variations in respondents' emotional intelligence levels by grade.

Bikse *et al.* [3] study indicated that the pandemic's effect has compelled several sectors and businesses to embrace digital transformation and alter their approaches to creating, delivering, and capturing value for their end-user. Especially in the civil service context, organizations are forced to operate in a dynamic environment to ensure that service is delivered to the end user [15]. According to Bikse *et al.* [3], in the European context, a significant portion of the Latvian and EU populations, 58 percent of EU citizens and 41 percent of Latvian citizens, still lack fundamental digital skills and are gradually developing them. A significant study issue in this context is that digital transformation as part of change management activities is not inextricably related to developing human capital capabilities. The Malaysia context study by Khan *et al.* [5] mentioned a lack of developed indicators such as emotional intelligence and change management readiness and tools to assess the present demand and supply of digital competence in Malaysia since existing measures were produced according to international standards.

Nordin [11] and Bikse *et al.* [3] argued that transformation is part of change readiness and management strategy. Additionally, businesses will confront the additional problem of managing extensive data in the near future. If they cannot manage change, their competitive position will deteriorate drastically if it catalyzes a genuine industrial revolution based on converging technologies and the impact of pandemics [3]. On the other hand, Mukhtar and Fook [18] study on attitude toward organizational change refers to a person's overall assessment of the change, which may be positive or negative. Even if organizational change aims to benefit the business and its workers, employees may exhibit adverse reactions to the change. This kind of reaction results from the extreme pressure, stress, and uncertainty caused by the organizational shift. Indeed, as several studies have shown, a negative attitude in readiness for change is a significant factor in the high likelihood of organizational transformation failure [18]. The study above provides different outcomes due to different views and philosophical interests in explaining the application of emotional intelligence between perceived emotional intelligence and self-efficacy in the workplace context. Different views and the nature of the emotional study and related factors give unique insight for the researcher to explore due to dynamic changes and needs based on the industrial requirement. Due to the different outcomes and nature of the

empirical studies mentioned, empirical gaps in this study were identified from the Macro and Micro perspective in tandem with the study's objective.

4. THEORETICAL GAP

There was a great debate and critique regarding using the emotional intelligence theory. Lindebaum [20] asserts that the ability model is a dual framework for evaluation. There is reason to suppose that emotional capacities grow with age. For example, various academics have shown that natural emotional intelligence or particular areas correlates substantially with age [19]. By contrast, no growth in trait emotional intelligence is found with age in research that uses trait emotional intelligence tests [20]. The criticisms below are directed at the empirical evidence that emotional intelligence grows with age when measured using a capability scale.

The fundamental mechanism remains somewhat unclear [21]. Lindebaum [20] also claimed that the ability model is a potential vehicle due to its focus on emotional and intellectual development. Lindebaum [20] hypothesizes that usual or preferred patterns of behaviour (i.e., EI as a characteristic) seldom result in this. Progressive emotional and intellectual development necessitates a shift away from favoured forms of behaviour, particularly if they have been shown to be harmful or severe in the past. For example, the thought of rejection from a social group may be excruciating, causing people to hide their feelings [22].

As a result, people may engage in continuous activity following team expectations, despite their hunches that this does not feel better. The need to seem predictable is such a fundamental aspect of human nature that it may easily be used to coerce several individuals into doing things they would not normally do [20].

The conflict between behavioural and emotional theories needs to be solved and not solely based on assumptions. A previous Mo [23] study explained different models of Emotional Intelligence and their gaps in greater detail. Mo's [23] study also mentioned the uniqueness of each model based on specific research conducted by the Mayer and Goleman Emotional Intelligence Model. The two models provided different insights and areas of concern. Mayer's four emotional intelligence models were meant to measure emotional perception, facilitation, understanding, and managing emotions [23]. Mayer's instrument is not used for self-assessment, where the assessment is prone toward the assessor to assess the subject; it was developed for ability tests. However, the Mayer model covers the aspect of the prominent five personalities with the ability to distinguish between the big five personalities.

Unlike Mayer's emotional intelligence model, the Goleman model was developed to identify emotional intelligence based on individual awareness, personal management, social consciousness, and social competencies. Goleman mixed model Instrument was developed for self-report with no covariance with other emotional tests such as Bar-on and SSRI. On top of that, the Goleman model does not include the Big five personality test in the instrument developed. As a result, of this theoretical gap, the current study proposed to cover both elements to close the theoretical gap. The mixed model approach is proposed to close the theoretical gap between the

two models.

5. PRACTICAL GAP

The practice and implementation of Emotional Intelligence profiling (EI) are vital to measuring the levels of employee emotional intelligence. There are dissimilarities in emotional intelligence profiling practices that drive employee performance and competency.

Concerning the above statement, the Public Service Index of 4.3 percent in 2021 and The Fragile States Index of 56.9 percent have shown that Malaysia's government needs to straighten the service delivery to the people [24]. The lower the number or percentage is, the better reflection of the country's performance. The public service index indicators measure health, education, water and sanitation, transportation infrastructure, energy and power, and internet and connection. While The Fragile State index measures security apparatus, factionalized elites, group grievance, economic decline, uneven economic development, human flight and brain drain, state legitimacy, public services, human rights and the rule of law, demographic pressures, refugees and internally displaced persons, and external intervention. The statistics showed that civil service performance is reflected in the service delivery received by the people. Malaysia's public service index should be 2.5 to 2.0, while the fragile index should be below 25 percent [24].

The result above is the repercussion of change, political stability, and transformation initiatives. The government initiates critical strategies, activities, and action plans for transformation. However, organizations must consider this when introducing change and transformation plans [11 & 34]. Lee [15] mentioned that civil servants play a significant role in ensuring the people receive the service and proper infrastructure, creating endless demand from the public.

Due to this, emotional intelligence profiling is significant for comprehending the gravity of adaptability for everyone in civil service. Supramaniam and Singaravelloo [9] expressed that civil service in Malaysia is experiencing government and leadership changes during the 14th general election, and this causes demand and emotional competence in adapting to the changing structure, leadership, culture, service delivery, and working tools. The practice of emotional intelligence profiling in the Malaysian context is still lacking due to a lack of awareness and support from relevant parties [9].

Most practices are done in the international context and less in the local context. In Sarawak, the implementation of emotional intelligence profiling is only limited to recruitment exercises in civil service. The implementation of emotional profiling was only based on succession planning, whereby much less practice was done due to the factors of budget, size of the business, and time-consuming. This study is crucial for practitioners, organizations, and Sarawak Government. Sarawak Government is on its transformation journey, particularly addressing high-quality employee and talent management under the transformation agenda, Socio-economic transformation plan, Post-Covid Development Strategies, and Digital Government [1].

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

To explore new areas of the study, the researcher needs to understand issues, gaps, and concerns. Exploring issues and gaps in a local and international context will help the researcher expand knowledge and best practices in emotional intelligence and competency profiling.

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