



Conceptual Framework on Emotional Intelligence, Digital Competency and Organizational Readiness for Change

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ABSTRACT

Competency is identified to be an essential component in determining the proficiency of an employee's skills, knowledge, and abilities. Although it is a continuously developing concept, until today scholars still debate upon the exact factors that influence employee competence. In this paper, Emotional Intelligence is recognized as a mandatory element in the assessment of employees' competencies, which makes specific reference to an employee's mental capability to understand their emotions. This ability enables them to attain situational awareness and make adjustments particularly for problem solving or in decision making. Salovey and Mayer's (1990) in their study discussed the concept and, developed the first model explaining the nature of Emotional Intelligence that can be used to promote intellectual growth. This conceptual paper is presented and explained in a deductive manner from a general perspective to specific whilst, the purpose of systematically explaining the literature aims to produce a robust literature support. The first part of this literature launches the introduction of competency practices in the international context, followed by the presentation of literature concerning competency practices in Asia and Malaysia, whilst the third part clarifies the origins of emotional intelligence and digital competency. In addition to this, the final part of this paper encompasses the inclusion of organizational readiness for change as a mediating factor, with the conceptual framework diagram as this paper's critical construct. This conceptual paper gives recommendation for future studies exploration into additional potential and related factors, that may influence the practice of emotional and competency profiling in the Asian context.

1. Introduction

The emergence of new technology has resulted in significant changes in the human life. Although this has brought in a diverse pack of benefits for industrial needs, it is undeniable that some of its impact could cause adversity to those who find themselves incapable of become accustomed to this revolution. For instance, in the context of the human resource factors, the changes explained in this setting are "Digital Economy" and "Industrial Revolution 4.0". Both of which are moving on a parallel pathway, in tandem with the goal to ensure that all the intended initiatives are implemented. Incidentally, the interference of human factors plays a significant role particularly in shaping the adapting and aligning to these changes (Supramaniam & Singaravelloo, 2021). With the emergence of the digital economy agenda and the impact of a pandemic, the civil servant is entrusted to play a critical role in digitalization initiatives and leverage on their digital competency (Supramaniam & Singaravelloo, 2021).

The impacts of the pandemic, industrial revolution and the economic shift has created a competitive market for Sarawak, not only for the civil service (Sadovy et al., 2021) but also because, from a psychological and behavioural standpoint it is critical to acquire competence, particularly considering the unprecedented situation created by the pandemic. Therefore, emotional intelligence is a vital component in building psychological competence as an inner

motivator for good transformation outcomes, especially in the face of dynamic shifts and pandemics. In reference to this, Boyatzis, Rochford and Cavanagh (2017) identified Emotional intelligence as the capacity to monitor one's and others' moods and emotions (Boyatzis et al., 2017). In addition to that, its operational definition is described as emotional management and emotional coping that owned by the individual in order to suit themselves with surroundings.

2. Competency Study in an International Context

Competency study and applications arrived in the 1970s with the mission to comprehend employee competencies based upon past work on aptitudes, capacities, and subjective knowledge and, past fundamental work on emotional intelligence (McClelland, 1973). The history of competency profiling began with the study done by McClelland (1973) whereby he explored the test selection to improve employee competency. He did this by selecting the samples of fundamental tasks that needs to be performed by employees. The practice of competency profiling in later years expanded and became more significant in the human resource and psychology fields. In 1974 competency studies elevated their practices and developed models that studied job behaviour. In this context, the practice of competency profiling at the industrial level is still at a preliminary stage, where the significance of competency profiling may not be a critical factor contributing to productivity. McClelland (1973) measured competencies to effective on-the-job behaviours, aiming at accessing the capacity of a person to make certain responses or choice. Competency is not only the measure of core or functional, but 'to be' competencies by understanding and leveraging on it. How can you go beyond what you have currently, to be able to perform current tasks and what extra milestone can one go beyond? One needs to have 'potential' capacity and increasing this capacity can be done by facing responses or choices.

At the same time, assessment centres have become a joint exercise in organizations for the purpose of competency development and, in triangulation design competency assessment do require progression assessment, whilst profiling assessment helps in the assessment of current capacity. The capacity can be expanded by accessing progression assessment. Potential assessment gives the criteria of ready now and eases the process to reach it when once meets the requirement. Past research finds that the appraisal focused technique appears to assess the indistinguishable competency unevenly, exhibiting a broad overlay between the competency area estimated by various evaluation focuses on anticipated outstanding work in associations. Most recent examination has likewise settled that a complete area of capabilities can centre employment necessities for a broad scope of occupations in different associations in the western setting. Another area of competency profiling study that is significant in the 21st century is the study that links with the emotional competency of the individual. It offers a hypothetical structure for character association and connects it to a hypothesis of activity and employment execution. Boyatzis (2009) characterized 'emotional intelligence' as an 'educated capacity dependent on passionate on emotional intelligence which results in exceptional execution at work'. At the end of the day, if competency is a fundamental normal for the individual that prompts or causes compelling or prevalent performance', Boyatzis (2017), at that point, expands on McClelland's (1973) primary contention about the breaking points of emotional Intelligence.

3. Competency Study in The Asian Context

From the Asian perspective, a study by Wang, Xiong, Ma, Gao, and Fu (2016) revealed that the current practice in China context focuses on the specialization in the knowledge and the specific skills of an employee. Their study described two types of competencies: explicit and implicit. Explicit competency refers to the competency seen by others and can be quickly learned and adapted by others. Meanwhile, implicit competency is a type of competency that others can also see; although, it is found to be tough to learn due to it being a natural competency, one that the person gains through intense experience and exposure.

Another study by Dai & Liang (2012) reveals that most of the competency modelling developed in local or Asian contexts may not have achieved the desired results due to missed alignment with strategic human resource

management, a component vital to be strategically linked to the model developed by the respective organization. Dai & Liang (2012) explained that to ensure competency modelling flourish employee competency and boosts organization performance, three mandatory areas that organizations ought to be considered are namely: demonstrating unrivalled execution, accomplishing necessary arrangements, and catalysing organizational change. Dai & Liang (2012) did not merely focus on the development of competency modelling; they studied the strategic issue that significantly linked employee and organization performance. It is indeed pressing that the current study needs to review and scrutinize competency modelling holistically, due to the demands of today's market and industrial shift influencing the reality for competency to be altered based on real-time industrial requirements. Wang et al. (2016) and Dai & Liang (2012) studies also publicized the matter of competency practices in the Asian context are increasing its efforts to shift towards industrial needs. In this case, the industrial revolution undoubtedly plays a significant role in determining the type of competency model and practice that can be adopted based on the "Digital Age" needs. Thus, making the study of the ecosystem and, current competency practice and modelling patterns in the Asian context substantial.

4. Competency Study in Malaysia Context

International Competency practices and in the Asian context play a significant role in expediting employee competency by addressing digital competency for the local settings. In Malaysia, competency profiling plays a significant as a medium of assurance for employees to be equipped with relevant skills, knowledge and abilities suiting today's industrial requirements. Although Malaysia is often considered to be overdue in terms of its digital facilities and expertise as compared to first-world countries, there indeed notable positive progress, and awareness to compete in the global market. In addition to that, disparities have been identified in the Malaysian context of competency profiling, and in the model developed and practised. To support this statement, a study done by Mara, Tengku, and Arawati (2007) indicated significant gaps in competencies demanded by the workplace and revealed that "Local universities failed to emphasize comprehensively the requirement of competencies demanded by workplaces". These lacunae can be seen in a broad spectrum of liabilities to the organization and employee's poor competency development.

The respondents saw that comprehensive capability was increasingly significant in the work environment as appeared in the positioning of; relational abilities (2.0873), fundamental leadership aptitudes (1.9474), administration advancement (1.9119), consistent improvement aptitudes (1.6344), polished methodology (1.6096), data improvement and dispersion abilities (1.5536), and information in business condition (1.5286). Be that as it may, there were just a few positive holes for bookkeeping centre skills as appeared in the positioning of information in arranging and budgetary (1.0925), the executive's control framework (1.0441), deciphering and examining fiscal reports (0.8106), learning in bookkeeping (0.2588) and information in evaluating (0.0667). Conversely, there was just a somewhat negative hole in the tax collection information (- 0.0746).

Razak and Kamaruddin and Azid (2011) further explained that the trend of the current competency modelling in Malaysia context whilst Razak et al. (2011) study analyzed the workforce competency model based on the SMART technique, which is Systematic, Measurable, and Accuracy, reliable and time-based. The Razak, Kamaruddin, and Azid's (2011) study revealed that the WFCM is the most reliable model and tools that can be adopted by other organization. This model allows the assessment to give feedback and understand the task accurately. However, the limitation of Razak, Kamaruddin, and Azid (2011) is due to its coverage of limited and specific elements in the manufacturing industry and because it does not include the bigger spectrum of the population. This model may not be able to cover intangible stimuli such as emotional quadrant and culture change which act as a stimulus for employee competency. Improving employee competency based on tangible factors or merely focusing on the skill and knowledge is difficult. Therefore, the current study includes a broad element in illustrating the best possible digital competency model for the 21st century.

Another local study by Haruna and Marthandan (2017) portrayed four core competencies that play the role of a determinant in stimulating employee competency. Haruna and Marthandan (2017) revealed core competencies necessary for small medium enterprise include business/ management, interpersonal/personal, global mindset, and technological competency. These 4 main core competencies are based on the ASTD model. They proposed the use of this model for competency assessment. Haruna and Marthandan's (2017) study showed that the current practice of competency modelling and profiling in a local context based are on the selected SMEs in Malaysia.

The study also showed that there was a significant effect on work engagement in order to enhance employee competency. The practice and focus on employee competency in Malaysia are still based on the current needs in the respective field of work. However, there was no guarantee that the current practice of competency profiling and competency modelling is suitable to overcome industrial 4.0, where digitalization is about to emerge in today's market and affecting how work is done. It is undeniable that previous studies provide significant cognizance to ensure the current study comprehends the status of competency profiling practices in the local context.

5. Digital Competency

Digital competency is the core element of the industrial revolution, and it is undeniable that human factors play a significant role in operating the machine and building and communicating with the machines. However, the rhetorical question of whether it is necessary to have digital competency give researchers a glimpse of the need for digital competency in the 21st century although it is acknowledged that not many studies in this context address digital competency and industrial revolution 4.0. Emotional and competency study is significant for the organization, at the same time crucial for human resource practitioners to comprehend trends and market conditions. This study explains the reason behind the significance of digital competency in supporting industrial revolution 4.0 and how the industrial revolution 4.0 play a role in the transition of industries entering a new phase of evolution and' has it has become less reliant on the human ability to produce its output. It is about connection, sensors, big data, mobility, storing, and artificial intelligence, which are vital elements in industrial revolution 4.0, Pereira & Romero (2017). In the 21st century, the demand for digital tools has increased significantly due to industrial requirements that entails for businesses to be dynamic, adaptive, and effective. Digital competency is imperative for employees and organizations have to take all efforts to master the competency to serve this purpose (Pereira & Romero, 2017). Digital competencies are the skills necessary to work in digital environments and manage electronic infrastructures and services (Khan & Bhatti, 2017). Ferarri (2012) described digital competency as the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and digital literacy needed to develop and manage digital information systems. It is a competency essential for the digital economy, particularly in catching up with industrial 4.0. Brown (2014) explained digital literacies" as a capacity to reflect on the nature of digital space concerning sustainability challenges and "digital ethics" as a capacity to reflexively engage with digital space in ways which build rich discourses around sustainability. Critically reflective and exploratory activities in digital space are the means of developing digital competency.

The importance of digital competency and digital literacy is towards accomplishing the goal to improve human talents in their ability to communicate and operate with machines, particularly based on the required competencies. To be able to do that, there are numerous areas in digital competencies that needs to be considered without overlooking underpinning factors such as "Soft Skills" and human attributes (Aviram & Eshet, 2006). Aviram and Eshet (2006) described five main elements in measuring digital competency or digital literacy: - Photo visual literacy, reproduction literacy, hypermedia literacy, information literacy, and socio-emotional literacy. The industrial 4.0 engine is running based on technological tools, which is far more advanced and consists of immense dichotomy compared to the previous industrial transition. Industrial 3.0 mainly depended on traditional production with less interference from technological tools where the emergence of technology is still immature. Unlike industrial 4.0, most businesses operated virtually without human interaction and rely on sensors and big data analytics.

To comply to these changes, digital competency and digital literacy are essential to ensure employees and organizations survive within this dynamic industrial and economic movements. This study seeks to conceptualize

and investigate the gaps based on the importance of digital competency in the 21st century. Digital competency is the study's dependent variable and the study's output that needs to be further elaborated. The hypothesis development for this variable was based on the recommendations, suggestions and findings from the previous studies related to the study's objectives.

The digital culture has now altered how individuals acquire information, communicate, and learn. In this environment, digital competencies are critical for fostering continuous learning responsive to individuals' changing circumstances. The relevance of gender-based assessments of digital competencies has grown in recent years in education-based research, resulting in several research articles on the issue, Cabero et al. (2021). Cabero et al. (2021) study discovered that females showed substantial differences in age and domains of expertise, whilst males did not, with gender differences being more favourable and significant for the female gender. On the other hand, in a study done by Grande et al. (2020), gender variations in university stated perceptions were discovered. Men were more likely to see themselves as competent in using technology, with better information management and online collaboration abilities in digital media. In comparison, women reported using devices more often and conversing with social media, image and text processing, and graphic design.

6. The Origin of Emotional Intelligence Studies

In the era of industrialization and late 20th century, several scholars and studies showed interest in psychology that investigates emotional Intelligence. In Carl Jung's study in 1921, Steiner (1984) described that an individual uses some 'feeling' functions to comprehend the world and think with the heart. Define emotional intelligence as – the origin of emotional intelligence. In addition to this, Steiner's (1984) study highlighted the existence of emotional literacy concerning the methods whereby the literate human assesses it based on emotion and become aware of what is happening around them. Steiner's study also discusses the concept of emotion and awareness to improve individual well-being in society. In later years, Salovey and Mayer (1990) described emotional intelligence as the mental ability to understand one's own emotion to conform with situational conditions in order to make a conclusion or decision. In their study, Salovey and Mayer's (1990) discusses the concept and first model developed by Salovey and Mayer (1990), explaining the nature of Emotional Intelligence that can be used in order to promote intellectual growth. On the other hand, Goleman's (1995) study on emotional intelligence emphasizes on the aspect of emotion, brain function, and social behaviour to help children. Goleman (1995) also investigated how emotional Intelligence becomes the factor that influences individuals and society.

The evolution in emotional intelligence study began from "curiosity to understand" human emotion and how its influence individual and society. In the 20th century, psychologists lead the exploration of other underpinning factors that may contribute to emotional intelligence and its application in any field. Only after 20 years this study was probed further by psychologists around the globe. A seminal study by Schutte, Malouff and Bhullar [21] evaluated the emotional scale based on a novel model developed by Salovey and Mayer (1990). The instrument was developed to deeply comprehend emotional intelligence and link it with social and work requirements.

Then, in early 2000 Schutte et al. (2009) assessed the emotional intelligence scale based on a model developed by Salovey and Mayer (1990). Schutte et al. (2009) whereby the study explained critical areas of the emotional intelligence domain based on Goleman's (1995) and Salovey and Mayer's (1990) study.

The purpose of Schutte et al. (2009) study was not only to assess emotional intelligence characteristics but to also achieve high validity and reliable scale of emotional Intelligence. In a nutshell, the origin of emotional intelligence was derived from personality and emotions that is significant for an individual to suit themselves with the social environment and workplace environment, especially on competency and work performance. Thus, emotional intelligence is a significant contributing factor to employee competency. This study has four factors in developing emotional intelligence variables: perception of emotion, managing emotion, social skills and utilizing emotion. Four factors were based on Schutte Self Report Inventory.

7. Emotional Intelligence on Digital Competency

Emotional Intelligence is characterized as the capacity to screen one's and others' feelings and emotions (Boyatzis et al, 2017). According to Boyatzis (2009), competency is the behavioural manifestation of emotional intelligence in a way of how individual use their emotional and social components to build their competency. Emotional Intelligence is significant for digital competency profiling because education performance can be different from mental performance. For instance, A Top student with a CGPA of 3.9 but lacks in soft skills, versus a student with a 3.5 CGPA with the capability to evaluate critical situations. This analogy explains how emotional Intelligence helps define individual intelligence not merely based on his or her educational performance but a "mental performance" to comprehend the situation and make a rational decision. This concept is useful particularly when hiring a pool of candidates with good grades but lacking emotional and social Intelligence.

A study by Riggio and Reichard (2008) explained that there are correlations between people skills, emotional intelligence and social skills whereby "People skills" refers to individual skills and current competencies. This description by Riggio and Reichard (2008) is based on the study that focuses on three main components to investigate essential and practical leadership skills. Although Riggio and Reichard's (2008) study aimed at future leaders, it provided the empirical finding necessary for this study in explaining the correlation between competency and emotional Intelligence. Boyatzis, Rochford, and Cavanagh (2017) referenced that emotional soundness, self-inspiration, overseeing relationships, mindfulness and respectability developed as the best indicators of competency. They also explained that competencies could be developed through emotional intelligence training that suits industrial needs, mainly digital competency.

Emotional intelligence is found to be essential in improving employee performance and organizational image in the long run. The linkage between employee emotional and social intelligence toward organizational performance can be found if employees master individual emotional and social Intelligence, Kearney et al. (2017) making emotional Intelligence significant component in evaluating employee competency. However, it is not easy to gain and maintain. Emotional intelligence can be developed to attain social and emotional stability that improves individual competency, Gruicic & Benton (2015).

8. Organisational Readiness for Change as Mediating Factor

Organizational readiness for change is a significant mediation variable in this conceptual framework. The development this conceptual framework is based on previous study seminal studies recommendations. A study done by Norshidah (2011) indicated that emotional intelligence contributes toward organizational readiness for change. on the influence of emotional Intelligence on organizational readiness for changes in higher learning institutions in Malaysia revealed that emotional Intelligence significantly contributes to organizational readiness for change. In the context of Norshidah's (2011) study, organizational readiness for change in internal and external environments cover technology, structure, strategies, directions, and leadership. A similar study was done in Greece by Vakola, Tsaousis, and Nikolaou (2004) revealed the contribution of emotional Intelligence to the attitude to organizational changes. Emotional Intelligence is the driver of organizational changes that lead to employee perception based on their experience and behaviour towards change initiatives implemented or proposed (Hallgrímsson, 2008).

Allaoui, and Benmoussa (2020) also supported the idea of individual factors being more important than other factors in increasing performance and manage emotions. On the other hand, organizational change will negatively impact emotional Intelligence when the member of an organization has low emotional Intelligence during the change process. This happens due to confusion, low motivation, and low performance, Norshidah (2011). Allaoui and Benmoussa's (2020) research in the Moroccan environment found that although there was a substantial positive influence on workers' attitudes toward change, individual characteristics were more relevant than other aspects. Allaoui and Benmoussa (2020) highlighted emotional Intelligence in managing perception and noted that favourable attitudes toward organizational transformation would contribute to the organization's success. Mukhtar and Fook

(2020) study on the impact of perceived leadership styles and emotional intelligence on an organization's attitude toward change and discovered that perceived leadership styles and emotional intelligence had a favourable influence on an organization's attitude toward change. Supported by Supramaniam and Singaravelloo (2021) said that the emotional capacities of employees have been shown to significantly affect an organization's ability to change and hence positively influence performance. The construction of organizational readiness for change refers to the previous studies conducted in the local and international contexts concerning emotional Intelligence and competency.

9. Conceptual Framework

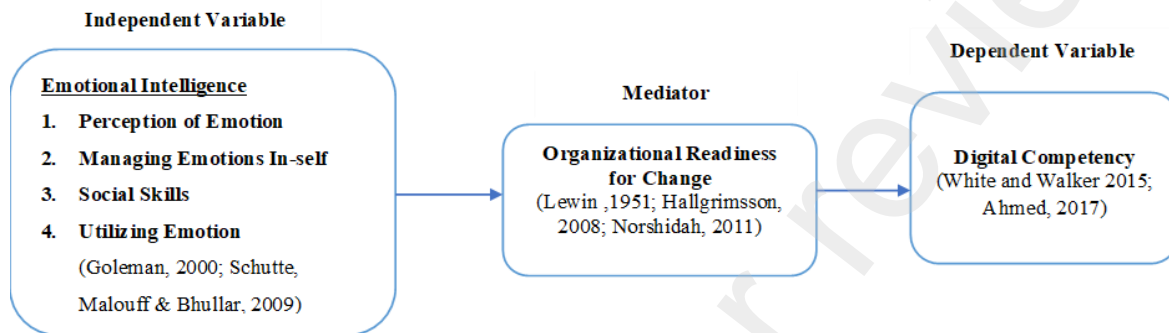


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The conceptual study framework is synthesized by using the Open System Theory in explaining the alignment of all models related to the variable in the study and integrating the emotional Intelligence model of performance by Goleman (2020), Lewin (1951), and Digital Competence Model by White and Walker (2015). The variables involved in the study will address the study's outcome and show the path of the hypothesis to be tested. The model of performance by Goleman (2020) is the mixed emotional intelligence model that measures self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. Goleman (2020) studied four main domains to measure employee emotional intelligence in the working environment.

In 2009, Schutte et al. (2009) enhanced the study by specifically narrowing it down to the specific instrument development known as SSRI (Schutte Self Report Inventory) based on the mixed Goleman Model of performance and Ability model by Salovey and Mayer (1990). The application of Schutte et al. (2009) emotional intelligence model measures the emotional intelligence of individuals in the working environment and social setting. A study by Goleman (2020) showed that a high level of emotional intelligence results in high emotional adoption with the changes surrounding and helping individuals develop new skills required to perform a specific task. Emotional Intelligence in this study acts as an independent variable that may influence the outcome of organizational readiness for change. To prove this relationship and the significance of the alignment study Norshidah (2011) stated that emotional Intelligence is the domain that influences the outcome of organizational readiness for change. Hallgrímsson (2008) mentioned that emotional factors and stability are indicators of change management success.

As for mediators, organization readiness for change is derived from Lewin (1951). These variable concerns are measuring the impact of emotional intelligence and how organizational readiness for change affects digital competency. The emotional intelligence outcome will be tested to organizational readiness for change to study the mediation effect on change readiness in the organization's context. The mediation effects will be tested in two ways, direct and indirect effects, by using pathway analysis in the structural equation modelling method (Hair et al., 2012). While digital competency will act as the dependent variable in the study, emotional intelligence will be tested on the effect of digital competency. A previous study by Goleman (2020) and Boyatzis, Rochford, and Cavanagh (2017)

showed a positive effect of emotional Intelligence on competency. Organizational change for readiness will be tested based on the moderation effect on both ways to emotional Intelligence and digital competency.

10. Conclusion and Recommendation for Future Research

Competency requirement is vital for competency assessment. Competency requires related factors based on current conditions and industrial needs. This is significant for an organization to comprehend current competency and desire future competency. This study proposed a future study to conduct a triangulation study that covers areas such as succession planning and job demand. On top of that, this study also proposed future studies to view related factors based on the bottom-to-top evaluation. In conclusion, the study of competency requirements provides a strong competency profiling process and assessment derived from internal and external factors.

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