

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ON EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, DIGITAL COMPETENCY, AND ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS FOR CHANGE

Sopian Bujang, *Nadri Aetis Heromi Diana Marie Capel

Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development, University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS)

*Corresponding author: nadriahb@sarawak.gov.my

ABSTRACT: *Competency is necessary to determine the employee's level of skills, knowledge, and abilities proficiency. However, until today many scholars argued regarding the factors that may influence employee competency. Emotional intelligence is essential as one of the mandatory elements in assessing employee competency. It refers to the mental ability to understand its own emotion to suit itself with situational awareness to make conclusions or decisions. Salovey and Mayer's (1990) study discusses the concept and first model developed by Salovey and Mayer (1990), 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 a specific perspective. The purpose of systematically explaining the literature results in robust literature support in this conceptual paper. The first part of this literature begins by introducing competency practice in the international context. This is followed by the second part of this literature concerning competency practice in Asia and Malaysia. The third part of this conceptual paper explains the origin of emotional intelligence and digital competency. Next, the organization's readiness for change is a mediating factor. The conceptual framework presented in the diagram represents a critical construct in this conceptual paper. This conceptual paper will recommend that future studies explore other potential and related factors that may influence the practice of emotional and competency profiling in the Asian context.*

Keywords: The effect of Emotional Intelligence, Digital Competency.

1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of new technology resulted in significant changes in human life. Although the emergence of technological changes brings benefits to industrial needs, some also could cause misfortune to those unable to adapt to this revolution. For instance, human resource factors. The changes explained in this context are the "Digital Economy" and "Industrial Revolution 4.0". The digital economy and industrial revolution are moving on a parallel pathway to ensure all the initiatives are implemented. Of course, there will be interference from human factors that play a significant role in adapting and aligning to these changes [1].

With the emergence of the digital economy agenda and the pandemic's impact, civil servants are entrusted to play a critical role in digitalization initiatives and leverage their digital competency [1]. The impact of a pandemic, industrial revolution, and economic shift creates a competitive market for Sarawak, not only in civil service [2].

From a psychological and behavioral standpoint, it is critical to acquire competence, especially considering the unprecedented situation created by the pandemic's effect. 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. Emotional intelligence is the capacity to monitor one's and others' moods and emotions [3].

2. COMPETENCY STUDY IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Competency study and applications arrived in the 1970s with the mission to comprehend employee competency. It is based upon before work on aptitudes, capacities, and subjective knowledge and the past fundamental work on emotional intelligence [4].

The history of competency profiling started in the 1970s with the outbreak study done by McClelland [4]. In his study, he explored the test selection to improve employee competency by selecting the samples of fundamental tasks that need to be performed by employees.

The practice of competency profiling in later years is expanding and becoming more significant in the human resource and psychology field. In 1974 competency studies expanded their practices and developed the relevant models to study job behaviour. In this context, the practice of competency profiling at the industrial level is still at the preliminary stage where the significance of competency profiling may not be a critical factor contributing to productivity during hiring and recruitment.

McClelland [4] measured competencies to effective on-the-job behaviors. Assessment centers have become a joint exercise in organizations for developing competency. Though, past research finds that the appraisal focus 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 center 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 [5] 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 [3], at that point, expands on McClelland's [4] primary contention about the breaking points of emotional Intelligence.

3. COMPETENCY STUDY IN THE ASIAN CONTEXT

From an Asian perspective, it was found that most of the practice focuses on specialization in the knowledge and specific skill of the employee. A study by Wang, Xiong, Ma,

Gao, and Fu [6] revealed that the current practice in China context focuses. Not only that, Wang, Xiong, Ma, Gao, and Fu's [6] study also 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; however, it is tough to learn due to the natural competency that the person gains through intense experience exposure.

Another study by Dai & Liang [7] portrays that most of the competency modeling developed in local or Asian contexts may not achieve the desired result due to missed alignment with strategic human resource management. Strategic human resource management is a vital component that must be linked to the model developed by the respective organization. Dai & Liang [7] explained that to ensure competency modeling flourish employee competency and boosts organization performance, three mandatory areas that organizations ought to consider, namely: demonstrating unrivaled execution, accomplishing necessary arrangements, and catalyzing organizational change. Dai & Liang [7] not merely focused on the development of competency modeling; they studied the strategic issue that significantly linked employee and organization performance. The current study needs to review and scrutinize competency modeling holistically. This is due to the demand of today's market and industrial shift that influence competency to be changed based on the industrial requirement.

Wang et al. [6] and Dai & Liang [7] studies publicized that competency practice in the Asian context is on the verge of shifting toward industrial need. In this case, the industrial revolution plays a significant role in determining the type of competency model and practice that can be adopted based on the "Digital Age" needs. Thus, it is significant to study the practice and current competency practice and modeling patterns in the Asian context.

4. COMPETENCY STUDY IN MALAYSIA CONTEXT

Competency practices in international and Asian contexts play a significant role for local contexts in expediting employee competency by addressing digital competency. In Malaysia, competency profiling is significant to ensure that employees possess relevant skills, knowledge, and abilities that suit today's industrial requirements. It is undeniable that Malaysia is still behind in terms of digital facilities and expert workforce as compared to the first-world country. However, there is positive progress and awareness to compete in the global market.

There are gaps in competency profiling, and the model developed and practiced in Malaysian contexts. To support this statement, a study done by Mara, Tengku, and Arawati [8] indicated significant gaps in emphasis competency demanded by workplaces.

Mara, Tengku, and Arawati [8], also revealed that "Local universities failed to emphasize comprehensively the requirement of competencies demanded by workplaces".

There were lacunae that can be seen in broad abilities. 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 center 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 did a study, and Azid [9] explained the trend of the current competency modeling in Malaysia. Razak et al. [9] study analyzed the Workforce competency model based on the SMART technique, which is Systematic, Measurable, and Accuracy, reliable, and time-based. Razak, Kamaruddin, and Azid's [9] study also 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. Razak, Kamaruddin, and Azid [9] cover limited and specific elements in the manufacturing industry.

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 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 [10] revealed core competencies necessary for small and medium enterprises: business/ management, interpersonal/personal, global mindset, and technological competency. 4 main core competencies are based on the ASTD model. Haruna and Marthandan's [10] study showed the current practice of competency modeling and profiling in a local context based 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.

Haruna and Marthandan [10] portray that four core competencies are a determinant of stimulating 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 modeling is suitable to overcome industrial 4.0, where digitalization is about to emerge in today's market and affect 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, is it necessary to have digital competency? This rhetorical question gives researchers a glimpse of the need for digital competency in

the 21st century. Not many studies in this context address digital competency and industrial revolution 4.0. Emotional and competency study is significant for the organization; it is also crucial for human resource practitioners to comprehend trends and market conditions. This study explained why digital competency is significant in supporting industrial revolution 4.0. Industrial revolution 4.0 is the transition in how industries enter a new phase of evolution. Industrial 4.0 is 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 the industrial revolution 4.0, Pereira & Romero [11]. In the 21st century, demand for digital tools is significantly increasing due to the industrial requirement that requires the business to be dynamic, adaptive, and effective. To serve this purpose, digital competency is imperative for employees and organizations to master competency[11]. Digital competencies are the skills necessary to work in digital environments and manage electronic infrastructures and services, Khan & Bhatti [12]. Ferarri [13] described digital competency as the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and digital literacy needed to develop and manage digital information systems. Digital competency is essential for the digital economy, particularly in industrial 4.0. Brown [14] explained that 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 a means of developing digital competency.

Aviram and Eshet [15] 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 importance of digital competency and digital literacy is to improve human talents to communicate and operate with machines based on the required competencies. To do that, there many areas in digital competencies need to be considered without overlooking underpinning factors such as "Soft Skills" and human attributes, Aviram & Eshet [15].

The industrial 4.0 engine is running based on technological tools, which are far more advanced and consist of immense dichotomy compared to the previous industrial transition. Industrial 3.0 depends on traditional production with less interference from technological tools where the emergence of technology is still immature. Unlike industrial 4.0, most businesses operate virtually without human interaction and rely on sensors and big data analytics. To suit these changes, digital competency and digital literacy are essential to ensure employees and organizations survive with dynamic industrial and economic movements. This study can 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 research, resulting in several research articles on the issue, Cabero et al. [16]. Cabero et al. [16] study discovered that females showed substantial differences in age and domains of expertise, whilst males did not, with gender differences being more favorable and significant for the female gender.

On the other hand, in a study done by Grande et al. [17], 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 the late 20th century, several scholars and studies showed some interest in psychology to investigate emotional Intelligence. In Carl Jung's study in 1921, Steiner [18] describes that an individual used some feeling functions to comprehend the world and think with the heart. Steiner's [18] study suggested the existence of emotional literacy that concerns how literate humans assess it based on emotion and are 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 [19] describe emotional Intelligence as the mental ability to understand its own emotion to suit themselves with situational in order to make a conclusion or decision. Salovey and Mayer's [19] study discusses the concept and first model developed by Salovey and Mayer [19], explaining the nature of Emotional Intelligence that can be used in order to promote intellectual growth.

Goleman's [20] study on emotional intelligence emphasizes the aspect of emotion, brain function, and social behaviour to help children. Goleman [20] also investigated how emotional Intelligence becomes the factor that influences individuals and society. The evolution in emotional intelligence study started from "curiosity to understand" human emotion and how its influence individual and society. In 20th century, psychologists started to explore the other underpinning factors that may contribute to emotional intelligence and its application in any field.

The evolution of emotional study continues after 20 years by many 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 [19]. The instrument was developed to deeply comprehend emotional intelligence and link it with social and work requirements.

In early 2000, Schutte et al. [21] assessed the emotional intelligence scale based on a model developed by Salovey and Mayer [19]. Schutte et al. [21] the study explained critical areas of the emotional intelligence domain based on

Goleman's [20] and Salovey and Mayer's [19] studies. The purpose of Schutte et al. [21] study was not only to assess emotional intelligence characteristics but also to 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, Rochford, & Cavanagh [3]. According to Boyatzis [5], competency is the behavioral manifestation of emotional intelligence in a way that individuals 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: - Top student with a CGPA of 3.9 and with a lack of soft skills versus a student with a 3.5 CGPA with the ability to evaluate the critical situation. This analogy explains how emotional Intelligence helps define individual Intelligence not purely 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 [22] explained that there are correlations between people skills, emotional intelligence, and social skills. "People skills" refers to individual skills and current competencies. Riggio and Reichard [22] describe based on the study that focuses on three main components to investigate essential and practical leadership skills. Although Riggio and Reichard's [22] study aimed at future leaders, it does provide the empirical finding necessary for this study to explain the correlation between competency and emotional Intelligence.

Boyatzis, Rochford, and Cavanagh [3] referenced that emotional soundness, self-inspiration, overseeing relationships, mindfulness, and respectability developed as the best indicators of competency. Boyatzis, Rochford, and Cavanagh [3] also explained that competencies could be developed through emotional intelligence training that suits industrial needs, mainly digital competency.

Emotional intelligence is also essential to improve 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. [23].

Emotional Intelligence is significant in evaluating employee

competency. However, it is not easy to gain and maintain. Emotional intelligence can be trained to achieve social and emotional stability to improve individual competency, Gruicic & Benton [24].

8. ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS FOR CHANGE AS MEDIATING FACTOR

Organizational readiness for change is a significant mediation variable for this study. The development of this hypothesis is based on previous studies' recommendations. A study done by study Norshidah [25] indicated that emotional Intelligence contributes toward organizational readiness for change. Allaoui did a study, and Benmoussa [26] also supported that individual factors are more important than other factors to increase performance and manage emotions. Norshidah's [25] study also discusses the impact of emotional Intelligence on individual competency. Thus, the development of this hypothesis aligned with the study's objective.

A study by Norshidah [25] 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 [25] 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 [27] 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 behavior towards change initiatives implemented or proposed, Hallgrímsson [28].

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 [25].

Allaoui and Benmoussa's [26] 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 [26] highlighted emotional Intelligence in managing perception and noted that favorable attitudes toward organizational transformation would contribute to the organization's success.

Mukhtar and Fook [29] 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 favorable influence on an organization's attitude toward change. Supported by Supramaniam and Singaravello [1] 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.

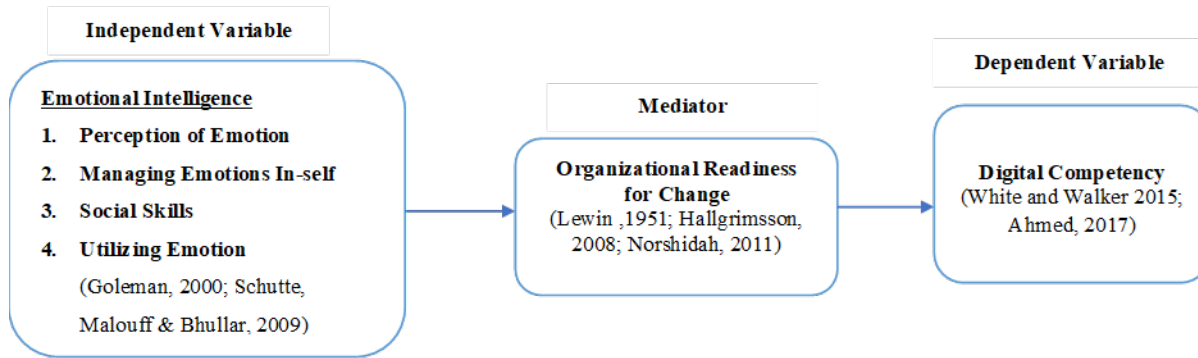


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

9. 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 [30], Lewin [31], and Digital Competence Model by White and Walker [32]. 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 [30] is the mixed emotional intelligence model that measures self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. Goleman [30] studied four main domains to measure employee emotional intelligence in the working environment. In 2009, Schutte et al. [21] 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 [19]. The application of Schutte et al. [21] emotional intelligence model measures the emotional intelligence of individuals in the working environment and social setting. A study by Goleman [30] 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 [25] stated that emotional Intelligence is the domain that influences the outcome of organizational readiness for change. Hallgrímsson [28] mentioned that emotional factors and stability are indicators of change management success. As for mediators, organization readiness for change is derived from Lewin [31]. 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 modeling method, Hair *et al.* [33]. 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 [30] and Boyatzis, Rochford, and Cavanagh [3] 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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