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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.