

# The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Job Satisfaction: The Case of Malaysian Information Technology Professionals

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## Abstract

*The importance of emotional intelligence towards job performance has been extensively documented in the literature. Inspired by the scarcity of studies on emotional intelligence and its effect on job satisfaction among Information Technology Professionals, a study was conducted to fill this gap. Employing a survey research methodology involving 115 Information Technology Professionals working in Malaysian Administration Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU), the results of the study suggest that out of the four clusters of emotional intelligence which are self awareness, self management, social awareness and relationship management, only three turns out to be the significant predictors of job satisfaction. The self awareness cluster was not found to have any effect on job satisfaction. The findings further signify the importance of emotional intelligence in ensuring job satisfaction in the context of information technology professionals.*

**Keywords:** *emotional intelligence, job satisfaction, information technology professionals*

## 1. Introduction

The importance of emotional intelligence towards job performance has been extensively documented in the literature. Emotional intelligence (EQ) is defined as the ability to perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotion in thought, understand and reason with emotion, and regulate emotion in self and others [13]. In the past, when studying organizational behavior, emotions and EQ were not given serious attention, especially on their contribution towards creativity and productivity. In the same light, limited attempts were also made in investigating the effect of EQ on work attitude and behavior such as job satisfaction and job commitment. However, after the publication of the best-seller book on EQ the interest among researchers has drastically increased [see 6]. The book describes that EQ as consisting of four components, namely, self awareness, self-management, social awareness and social management [6, 8]. EQ, not intelligence quotient (IQ) is the true measure of human intelligence [6]. The qualities such as understanding one's emotions, recognizing and empathizing with other's emotions and regulating one's emotions are much more important than IQ [6, 8].

The literature indicates while studies on emotional intelligence have been numerous, very few have attempted to explore in the context of information technology professional. To fill this gap, a study was conducted with the following purposes; (i) to measure the

level of EQ of information technology professionals, and (ii) to identify whether EQ predicts job satisfaction.

## 2. Literature Review

Researchers have acknowledged that job satisfaction is a phenomenon which can be explained as having both cognitive and affective character. The cognitive component is made up of judgments and beliefs about the job, while the affective component comprises of feelings and emotions associated with the job. Job satisfaction is defined as the attitude and feelings people have about their work: positive and favorable attitudes towards the job indicate job satisfaction while negative and unfavorable attitudes toward the job indicate job dissatisfaction [18]. Job satisfaction is also believed to be dispositional in nature which assumes that measuring personal characteristics can aid in predicting the job satisfaction itself [5]. This is almost in line with the job characteristics theory [15] which suggests that critical psychological state of the employee will lead towards personal and work outcomes which include job satisfaction. The critical psychological states as identified by the theory include 'experienced meaningfulness of work', 'experienced responsibility for the outcomes of the work', and 'knowledge of the actual results of work activities' [15]. All of these characteristics matched directly or indirectly to the EQ characteristics. In other words, EQ should have influence and bearing upon job

satisfaction. Various studies have shown that EQ has strong relationships with job satisfaction. The studies include [1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 31 and 33].

**3. Research Framework**

Figure 1 depicts the research framework used in the study. The dependent variable is job satisfaction while the independent variable is emotional intelligence which is divided into four clusters, namely; self awareness, self management, social awareness and relationship management. The independent variables are mainly derived from the work of [6, 7, 8].

As shown in Table 1, self awareness has three dimensions which are emotional self awareness, accurate self assessment and self confidence. Self awareness is defined as ‘knowing one’s internal states, preferences, resources and intuitions [8]. Emotional self-awareness has been found to have an effect on job performance in the context of a financial planner who had to continuously deal with clients [7]. Accurate self assessment has been reported to have a strong bearing on performance among knowledge worker, including computer scientists [26]. In an earlier study, [23] it was discovered that self confidence was the strongest predictor of job performance. Based on the above mentioned evidences and following the results of previous studies [1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 31 and 3], this study postulates that: *H1: There is a positive relationship between self awareness and job satisfaction*

**Table 1** Operational definition of self awareness variable

Variable	Operational Definitions
Emotional Self-Awareness	Recognizing one's emotions and their effects
Accurate Self-Assessment	Knowing one's strengths and limits
Self-confidence	A strong sense of one's self-worth and capabilities

The self-management cluster has six dimensions as presented in Table 2. Self management is defined as “the ability to regulate distressing affects like anxiety and anger and to inhibit emotional impulsivity” [7]. Individuals who are able to balance their drive and ambition with Emotional Self-Control has shown to become top performers in their workplace [27]. Trustworthy individuals are forthright about their own mistakes and confront others about their lapses, lacking this ability will have a negative effect on work performance [8]. Outstanding performances in virtually all jobs have been greatly influenced by conscientiousness [22]. Individuals who have the strong ability of adaptability will demonstrate on their job creativity and apply new ideas in achieving results. This ability has also been proven to have strong influence on job performance among those at

the management ranks [17]. Individuals with high achievement are proactive, persistent, have an optimistic attitude toward setbacks, and operate from hope of success [7]. This ability, which is also termed as achievement orientation has been shown to have strong influence on performance [17]. Individuals with the initiative competence act before being forced to do so by external events [7] and this ability is found to be very crucial in determining performance, especially in the services and consulting industries. Operationalizing job performance from the lens of job satisfaction, previous studies have revealed that EQ are significant predictors of job satisfaction [1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 31 and 33]. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is formulated: *H2: There is a positive relationship between self management and job satisfaction.*

**Table 2** Operational definitions of self management variable

Variable	Operational Definition
Self-control	Keeping disruptive emotions and impulses under control
Trustworthiness	Displaying honesty and integrity
Conscientiousness	Demonstrating responsibility in managing oneself
Adaptability	Flexibility in adapting to changing situations or obstacles
Achievement Orientation	The guiding drive to meet an internal standard of excellence
Initiative	Readiness to act

The third cluster of emotional intelligence as identified by [8] is social awareness which, if further divided into three dimensions which are empathy, service orientation and organizational awareness (see table 3). The empathy competence is crucial for superior job performance, especially when the focus is on interactions with people [8]. This ability has been found to have strong correlations with work performance [4]. Employees with service orientation competence displayed outstanding work performance [17].

**Table 3** Operational definitions of social awareness variable

Variable	Operational Definition
Empathy	Understanding others, and taking an active interest in their concerns
Service Orientation	Recognizing and meeting customers’ needs
Organizational Awareness	Empathizing at the organizational level

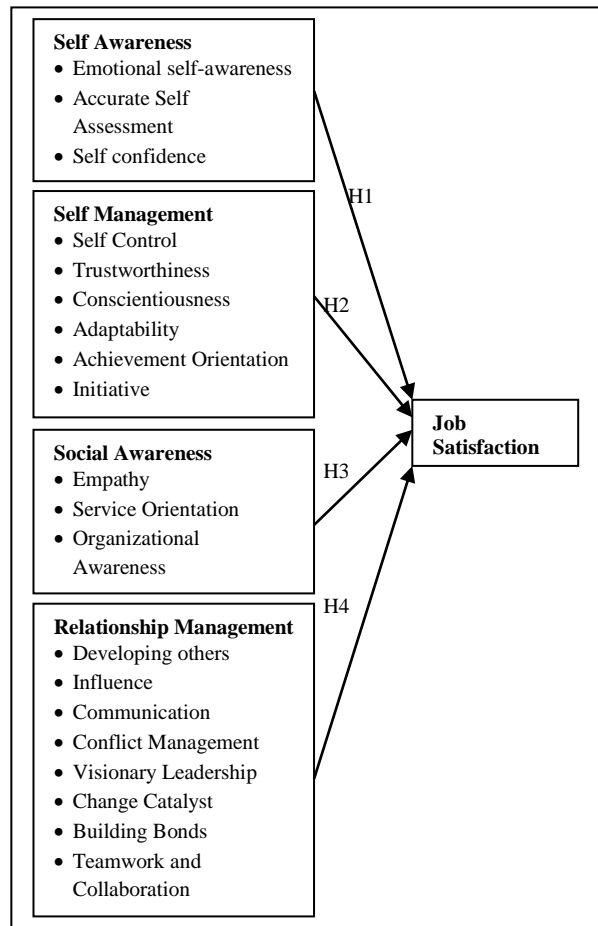
In addition, these top performing employees are equally competent in terms of organizational awareness ability. This ability enables them to read situations objectively and respond effectively [27]. Previous studies have

revealed that social awareness is critical in ensuring job satisfactions [1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 31 and 3]. With these backgrounds, the following hypothesis is established: *H3: There is a positive relationship between social awareness and job satisfaction*

The fourth cluster is relationship management illustrated in Table 4 and contains eight dimensions. Competence in developing others is a hallmark of superior managers [17]. Top performers will influence competence drawn on a wide range of persuasion strategies than others do, including impression management, dramatic arguments or actions, and appeals to reason [8]. This competence has also been proven to have an excellent effect on job performance [17]. Employees who exhibit on Communication competence are effective in the give-and-take of emotional information, thus making them perform well in their workplace [8]. Conflict management relates to the ability of resolving disagreement between disputing parties with diplomacy leading towards win-win situations. Visionary leadership competence relates to the ability of an employee to articulate and arouse enthusiasm for a shared vision and mission [8]. This ability will drive others to work together cooperatively leading towards better work performance. An individual with the catalyzing change competence would develop greater effort and better performance from subordinates, making their work more effective [30]. Individuals with building bonds competence will become successful and effective managers [29]. *Collaboration and Teamwork* competence will promote conducive and productive working climate among peers and colleagues. In relation to job satisfaction, empirical studies have shown that relationship management is one of the significant predictor [e.g. see 1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 31, 3]. To this effect, this study develops the following hypothesis: *H4: There is a positive relationship between relationship management and job satisfaction*

**Table 4** Operational definition of relationship management variable

Variable	Operational Definition
Developing Others	Sensing others' needs and bolstering their abilities
Influence	Wielding interpersonal tactics
Communication	Sending clear and convincing messages
Conflict management	Resolving disagreements
Visionary Leadership	Inspiring and guiding groups of people
Change catalyst	Initiating and managing change
Building Bonds	Nurturing instrumental relationship
Teamwork and collaboration	Creating a shared vision and synergy in teamwork, working with others towards shared goals



**Fig 1.** Research framework

**4. Research Methodology**

The study used survey research methodology involving 115 employees working in Malaysian Administration Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU). 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. A systematic random sampling technique was used to determine 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.

**Table 5** Reliability analysis of research variables

Variable	Cronbach Alpha	Overall Cronbach Alpha
Emotional Self-Awareness	0.763	Self Awareness = 0.889
Accurate Self-Assessment	0.770	
Self-confidence	0.785	
Self-control	0.846	Self Management = 0.918
Trustworthiness	0.803	
Conscientiousness	0.830	
Adaptability	0.759	
Achievement Orientation	0.700	
Initiative	0.700	Social Awareness = 0.920
Empathy	0.874	
Service Orientation	0.885	
Organizational Awareness	0.700	Relationship Management = 0.951
Developing Others	0.852	
Influence	0.858	
Communication	0.770	
Conflict management	0.856	
Visionary Leadership	0.906	
Change catalyst	0.790	
Building Bonds	0.772	
Teamwork and collaboration	0.887	
Job satisfaction	0.891	

**5. Findings**

Table 6 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 6** 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

The results of the descriptive analysis for self awareness dimensions are shown in Table 7. The mean values for all dimensions 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 these IT professionals felt that their self awareness competence is high.

**Table 7** Descriptive analysis of self awareness variables

Variable	Mean	Std Deviation
Emotional Self-Awareness	5.902	0.562
Accurate Self-Assessment	5.869	0.567
Self-confidence	5.815	0.577
Overall	5.862	0.569

The result of the descriptive analysis of the self management is portrayed in Table 8. Just as self awareness, the mean values for all dimensions are well above 5.00, while the standard deviations are mostly less than 1.00. The values simply suggest that the respondents of the study felt that their self management competence is also high.

**Table 8** Descriptive analysis of self management variables

Variable	Mean	Std Deviation
Self-control	5.679	0.649
Trustworthiness	6.212	0.497
Conscientiousness	5.995	0.641
Adaptability	6.005	0.482
Achievement Orientation	6.089	0.470
Initiative	5.720	0.646
Overall	5.950	0.564

Table 9 shows the results of the descriptive analysis on social awareness variables. The mean values are all above 5 (where 1 is the minimum and 7 is the maximum) while the standard deviation is all less than one. The finding indicates that the respondent perceived their social awareness competences as very high.

**Table 9** Descriptive analysis of social awareness variables

Variable	Mean	Std Deviation
Empathy	6.061	0.588
Service Orientation	6.038	0.591
Organizational Awareness	5.913	0.576
Overall	6.004	0.585

The results of the descriptive analysis of the relationship management skills indicate that the mean values for all dimensions are greater than 5.0 (where 1 is the minimum and 7 is the maximum) while the standard deviations are less than 1.0. These values imply that the relationship management competences of the IT professionals are high (Table 10).

**Table 10** Descriptive analysis of relationship management variables

Variable	Mean	Std Deviation
Developing Others	5.621	0.763
Influence	5.341	0.757
Communication	5.939	0.53
Conflict management	5.553	0.622
Leadership	5.631	0.815
Change catalyst	5.537	0.711
Building Bonds	6.107	0.553
Teamwork and collaboration	6.052	0.57
Overall	5.723	0.665

Table 11 presents the descriptive analysis of the job satisfaction variable. The mean is 5.58 while the standard deviation is 0.85 which suggests that the IT professionals are very satisfied with their jobs.

**Table 11** Descriptive analysis of job satisfaction

Variable	Mean	Std Deviation
Job Satisfaction	5.582	0.850

Table 12, 13 and 14 showcase the results of the multiple regression analysis between the independent variables and a dependent variable. The results clearly show that out of the four independent variables, three variables which are self management, social awareness and relationship management have a significant relationship with job satisfaction. Self awareness was not found to have any influence on job satisfaction. The combination of self management, social awareness and relationship management accounts for about 52.1% variance in job satisfaction.

**Table 12** Model summary of regression analysis

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
0.733 <sup>a</sup>	0.538	0.521	0.58848

**Table 13** ANOVA of regression analysis

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	44.320	4	11.080	31.995	0.00
Residual	38.094	110	0.346		
Total	82.414	114			

**Table 14** Coefficients of regression analysis

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Standard Error	Beta		
Constant	-.772	.786		-.982	.328
Self_Aware	.224	.177	.130	1.271	.206
Self_Mgt	-.631	.265	-.317	-2.386	.019
Soc_Aware	.731	.262	.444	2.785	.006
Rel_Mgt	.781	.230	.473	3.399	.001

**6. Discussion and Conclusion**

The main objective of this study has been to measure the level of EQ of the information technology professionals. In addition, it also seeks to identify whether EQ has a relationship with job satisfaction. The results indicate that the EQ level of the information technology 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 that three EQ clusters which are self management, social awareness and relationship management have a strong and positive relationship on job satisfaction. Self awareness was found to have insignificant relationship. These findings are almost consistent with previous studies such as [1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 31 and 33]. The finding of this study has evidently shown the contributing effect of EQ towards job satisfaction. The findings further signify the importance of emotional intelligence in ensuring job satisfaction in the context of information technology professionals.

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