THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND JOB PERFORMANCE: A CASE OF O&G INDUSTRY IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Emotional Intelligence (EI) plays a vital role in Job Performance (JP), especially in avoiding turnover issue due to psychological distress in the workplace. This study examines the relationship between EI and JP of employees in the Oil and Gas (O&G) industry in Malaysia to determine its relationship as well as the demographics effect on these two components. Thus, three pioneering models of EI have been identified and Mixed Model introduced by Goleman was chosen and applied in this study. Two hypotheses have been proposed based on the conceptual. Concurrently, self-report survey questionnaires were distributed through a Google Forms to test the significance between these two components, EI and JP. Data were obtained from 103 staffs of one O&G company in Malaysia with an 84% response rate. Based on the findings, there is a significant relationship between EI and JP where the results align with some prior research. However, there is a lack of evidence to support the idea that demographics have significant effect on these components. Therefore, further research is recommended to identify other significant components that can improve EI and JP levels. Nonetheless, the results from these obtained data suggest the need to implement this framework to determine EI's level of the employees to strengthen the EI and enhance their JP. In view of the fact that by enhancing the EI it can affect the JP, and as a result, it contributes to organizational and management effectiveness to both industry practitioners and the academicians.

ABSTRAK

Kecerdasan emosi (EI) memainkan peranan yang amat penting dalam prestasi kerja (JP), terutamanya dalam mengelakkan masalah tukar ganti pekerja disebabkan oleh masalah ketidakstabilan emosi seperti tekanan yang berkaitan dengan pekerjaan. Tesis ini mengkaji hubungan antara EI dan JP pekerja dalam industri minyak dan gas (O&G) di Malaysia untuk menentukan hubungan serta kesan demografi terhadap dua komponen ini. Oleh yang demikian, tiga model perintis EI telah dikenal pasti dan Mixed Model yang diperkenalkan oleh Goleman telah dipilih dan digunapakai dalam kajian ini. Dua hipotesis telah dikemukakan berdasarkan kerangka konsep. Manakala, soalan kaji selidik pula telah diedar melalui Google Forms untuk menguji hubungan antara EI dan JP. Data diperolehi daripada 103 kakitangan dari satu syarikat O&G dalam Malaysia dengan 84% kadar maklum balas. Data analisis menunjukkan adanya hubungan ketara diantara EI dan JP dimana ianya selari dengan kajian yang telah dibuat oleh para penyelidik sebelum ini. Namun, terdapatnya kekurangan bukti untuk menyokong idea bahawasanya demografi memberi kesan kepada dua komponen tersebut. Maka, penyelidikan yang lebih mendalam disarankan untuk mengenal pasti komponen penting yang lain, yang dapat meningkatkan tahap EI dan JP. Walaupun begitu, hasil daripada data analisis menunjukkan keperluan untuk menggunakan konsep ini dalam menentukan tahap EI pekerja dan memperkuat EI untuk meningkatkan JP mereka. Seperti kenyataan di atas, meningkatkan EI dapat mempengaruhi JP, dan sebagai hasilnya, ia dapat menyumbang kepada keberkesanan organisasi serta pengurusan dalam pembangunan industri dan pendidikan.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFC - Affective Commitment

COC - Continuance Commitment

EI - Emotional Intelligence

GDP - Gross Domestic Product

H1 - Hypothesis 1
H2 - Hypothesis 2

HSSE - Health, Safety, Security, and Environment

IIRC - International Integrated Reporting Council

JP - Job Performance

KPI - Key Performance Indicator

LMX - Leader Member Exchange

LNG - Liquefied Natural Gas

MISC - MISC Berhad

NOC - Normative Commitment

O&G - Oil and Gas

OJT On the Job Training

PETRONAS - Petroliam Nasional Berhad

RBPS - Role-based Performance Scale

RO1 - Research Objective One

RO2 - Research Objective Two

RQ - Research Question

SME - Subject Matter Expert

SOCSO - Social Security Organization

SPSS - Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

WHO - World Health Organization

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the research topic, which consists of the background of study where it focuses more on current scenario in oil and gas (O&G) in Malaysia, followed by current issues faced by the management and lower-level employees, as well as research questions and objectives to clarify the purpose of this study. On top of that, the sub-chapter provides further explanation on scopes of the study, research stages, as well as the significance and limitations of the study.

1.2 Background of the Study

Emotional Intelligence (EI) plays a vital role in Job Performance (JP), especially in avoiding turnover issue due to work-related stress (Naseem, 2018). In other words, EI associates with work satisfaction and JP (Yan *et al.*, 2018). EI is defined as a critical factor to develop JP (Rezvani & Khosravi, 2019). It acts as the main factor in determining employees' capability to deliver good services in meeting customers' requirements (Darvishmotevali *et al.*, 2018). Particularly, helps the organization achieve its aim to sustain in global competitive market (Lakshmi & Rao, 2018). Thus,

this study will focus on the relationship between EI and JP as well as the demographics effect on these two components where it will narrow down to four components of EI: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management; and five components of JP: job, career, innovator, team, and organization.

1.2.1 Oil and Gas Industry Overview

The oil and gas (O&G) industry is also known as petroleum industry. This includes the exploration and extraction process, refining, transporting, and exporting natural resources such as fuel oil and natural gas (Muspratt, 2019). This industry is divided into three sectors: upstream; midstream; and downstream. The upstream is more on the exploration and production phase, where it involves the drilling activities, pumping out the crude oil and natural gas from wells (Ahmad *et al.*, 2019). The midstream is the interconnecting part between the upstream and downstream, where it involves processing the crude oil and natural gas pumped out from the wells, storing, and transporting it to assigned plant (Ahmad *et al.*, 2019). Once the crude oil and natural gas arrived at the plant, the refining process takes place, where it recognized as downstream sector (Ahmad *et al.*, 2019). Generally, companies operating in O&G industry has their own operations from upstream to downstream sectors. In this case, we called as fully an integrated operation company (PETRONAS, 2021).

1.2.2 Oil and Gas Industry in Malaysia

The O&G industry in Malaysia has grown since the establishment of PETRONAS in 1974 (Asia, 2018). This industry is the second highest exporter earner after electrical and electronics which play a significant role in the economic growth (Ishak, 2019). According to Mahidin (2019), the O&G industry has contributed more than 20% to Malaysian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and an average of 7.3% to gross output value annually. This indicates that this industry is one of major contributors and top exporters where it plays important role in the growth of Malaysia economy.

Besides, Malaysia also has a strategic location within Southern Asia as illustrated in Figure 1.1. Its western part is Peninsular that has the Strait of Malacca. Meanwhile, the eastern part is Sabah and Sarawak near to the South China Sea. Nearly all of Malaysia's oil and gas products come from these coastal basins (Villar & Hamilton, 2017).



Figure 1.1: Maritime Border of Malaysia. (Wikimedia Commons, 2018)

MINAT As mentioned earlier, Malaysia is the second-largest exporter of the O&G in Southeast Asia and the second-largest exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG) globally (Ahmad et al., 2019). Statistically, Malaysia has exported 26.8% of refined petroleum products, 18.3% of LNG, and 23.0% of crude petroleum in quarter 4 of 2018 with a total export good value RM264.5 billion (DOSM, 2019). As a matter of fact, commodity demand in Malaysia depends on the crude oil price (Ismail et al., 2019). Thus, the study shows that the export of petroleum has significant relationship with long-term economic growth in Malaysia. As a result, this industry is becoming eager and intensive in growing its revenue where human resource identifies as a contributor to the operational efficiency (The Star Online, 2015).

Looking at economic growth forecast, this industry target to grow and sustain itself in the global competitive market (Lakshmi & Rao, 2018). Hence, in order to achieve its target, there is a need for this industry to focus more in enhancing the capacity and capability of its' employees (Yusof et al., 2015). In light of the above, PETRONAS has set a key performance indicator (KPI) of 70:20:10 Learning Development model for itself and its' group of companies to address this challenge and facilitate the target achievement in measuring the JP (Lim, 2019). The 70% of the Learning Development model is through real-life learning, which is related to on-thejob training (OJT) or job application of knowledge and skills, where it may come from various exposures including the employee's current job and projects (PETRONAS, 2020). Whereby, the 20% is through formal and informal coaching and networking to enhance the social learning process (PETRONAS, 2020). Lastly, the 10% is through e-learning training or Harvard Manage Mentor (HMM) modules as provided by company or can be requested by the employees themselves which is accessible through myLearning or sumtotal platform (PETRONAS, 2020).

1.2.3 Challenges for PETRONAS and MISC Berhad

PETRONAS is an exporter of LNG, where it delivers integrated O&G operations from upstream, midstream, and downstream (Ahmad *et al.*, 2019). This organization has global record of accomplishment of upstream and midstream activities across more than 23 countries and involved in downstream activities through refining, trading, and marketing of the petroleum products for the domestic and international market (PETRONAS, 2021).

It was previously focused more on these activities (PETRONAS, 2019). However, it is experiencing rapid growth and has undergone an organizational transition from a "resource-based economy" which is raw materials' extraction to a "service-oriented economy" which is more focus on human resource (Mat *et al.*, 2020). The transition happened during its merger with MISC Berhad, a Malaysian energy shipper (MISC Berhad, 2017). Having merged under same organization, it has expanded its' activities into shipping industry and added value in business, investment, and exportation (MISC Berhad, 2017). Also, this acquisition indirectly allows MISC to be a one-stop maritime center for PETRONAS and act as supporter to upstream and downstream activities for PETRONAS (The Star Online, 2015).

As shown in Figure 1.2 below, this organization and its' group of companies has adopted IIRC Framework that introduced six capitals; (1) financial, (2) manufactured, (3) intellectual, (4) human, (5) social and relationship, and (6) natural to increase the visibility and sustain itself in the global competitive market (IIRC, 2021). However, it focuses more on two of the six capitals: natural capital and human capital to support its sustainability strategy (PETRONAS, 2020). Natural capital plays

a significant role to support business plans and activities, whereby human capital is important to ensure balanced focus and emphasis on resource efficiency (PETRONAS, 2020).

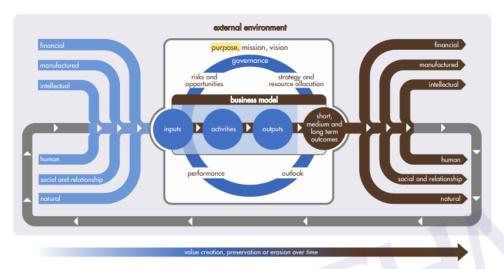


Figure 1.2: Six Capital. (IIRC, 2021)

Although the crude oil price fluctuated and gives significant impact on the operating cost and revenue, this organization remained and endured this global financial crisis (Ali, 2015). In addition, it widened its' perspective and ready to take on challenges to move forward and sustain itself in the global competitive market (The Star Online, 2019). However, there are few challenges encountered in providing good services to meet customer satisfaction, where they need to compete with other major international O&G players (HRDF, 2019).

In addressing these challenges, this organization aims to enhance the capacity and capability of its' employees and train them to improve the deliverable and good services to its customers (Alam, 2018). However, the nature of work in the O&G industry is risky, where it requires strong physical and psychological health as well as exceptional skills and caution in performing the tasks (Saxena *et al.*, 2020). This is due to the tight and irregular routine (volume of work against time) where the employees frequently need to commute or travelling to and from the workplace; or crossing multiple workplaces; or changing shift; or adjusting to different time zone and still require higher concentration at work.

In fact, there are certain cases where these sire inspectors, marine engineers, marine pilots developed emotional deterioration and faced fatigue management issues where it caused poor performance and sometimes caused incident in the workplace or on road either during commute to or from the workplace (Chan, 2011). This high volume of work can relate with high level of psychological demands and caused low levels of well-being, indirectly decrease the JP. According to study, these employees are 8.5 times more likely to be injured or died while on the job than employees who work in other industries (Dave, 2018).

Therefore, selecting a high-performing talent i.e., experienced technical personnel with global mindset, high critical thinking and problem-solving skill is necessary (MISC Berhad, 2020). Nonetheless, as shown in Figure 1.3, there was an inclined in the total number of employees for the past three years. This tremendous recruitment volume causing restlessness among top management (MISC Berhad, 2020).

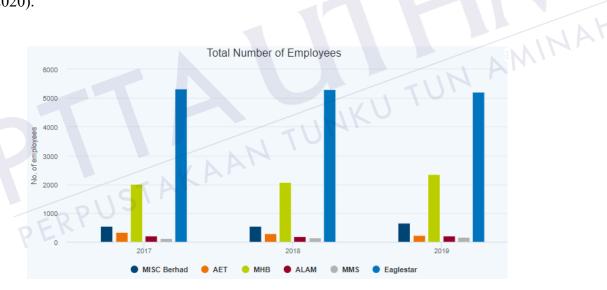


Figure 1.3: Total Number of Employees. (MISC Berhad, 2020)

On that account, EI has been identified as an essential criterion in determining employees' JP (Mobli & Pillamari, 2020). As emphasized by Mayer and Salovey, it is concluded that EI has a significant influence in enhancing employees JP in addition to strengthening physical and psychological health (Fernández-Abascal & Martín-Díaz, 2015).

Considering the fact that EI has a significant relationship with JP, the O&G industry in Malaysia needs to be more focused on strengthening the EI in order to

achieve the organization's objective to sustain itself in the global competitive market. However, the O&G industry in Malaysia is more focused on retaining experienced and skilled employees (Bento & Garotti, 2019). Therefore, the idea that EI is a key to developing and improving the skills and capabilities that will simultaneously enhance the JP has been identified as a theoretical gap in this study. In other words, it is crucial to develop a conceptual framework to understand further the relationship between EI and JP, where they have a significant relationship with each other.

1.3 Problem Statement

According to earlier study, retention of high-performing talents is a common issue in O&G industry (Faye, 2019; Kumari & Bahuguna, 2020; MISC Berhad, 2020). The turnover rate of high-performing talents is a concern among top management, where it led to a constantly hiring trend of new employees (MISC Berhad, 2020). Since, it is extremely critical for the O&G industry to retain high-performing talents in an organization to sustain itself in the global competitive market, as more than 90% of the spots are critical position (MISC Berhad, 2020).

Table 1.1: Total Number of Employees in three consecutive years 2018 to 2020.

BERY	2018	2019	2020
Total Number of	8,587	8,839	8,932
Employees (nos)	0,307	0,039	0,932

Based on the figure tabulated in Table 1.1, it shows an increasing number of new employees (MISC Berhad, 2020). Nonetheless, this tremendous recruitment volume is necessary to ensure all critical positions especially, technical and frontlines spots, are filled to avoid jeopardizing the operation (MISC Berhad, 2020).

In addressing this issue, this organization has developed a robust succession planning program as one of the strategic priorities to retain a pool of qualified and competent employees in the organization (MISC Berhad, 2020). The senior positions are required to meet and complete the succession planning as part of their KPI to avoid high turnover rate and to retain high-performing talents (Lim, 2019). As mentioned in earlier sub-chapter, KPI is a tool to measure employees' performance. Thus, by

meeting this KPI, indirectly the senior positions help the organization to identify competent and right talent who can provide full commitment, professionalism, and enthusiasm in performing their job, and comply with the specified operational standard and requirement of the organization (MISC Berhad, 2020). This is also to avoid shortage of employee and fatigue-related incidents (Chan, 2011). Taking this into consideration, it shows that the O&G industry prioritizes safety in their organization. Furthermore, if there be any Health, Safety, Security, and Environment (HSSE) events occurred in the workplace, it may potentially affect the employees' JP, organization reputation, and worst-case scenario it may affect stakeholders' interest as well (Che Abdul Rahman *et al.*, 2018).

In supporting the above, data from Malaysia Social Security Organization (SOCSO) indicates that more than 60 thousand work-related incidents were reported on average 17 incidents per day (Che Abdul Rahman *et al.*, 2018). The most common factors causing work-related incidents are physical and mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression (Zezelj *et al.*, 2019). According to a survey, the causative factor of these health disorders are due to a lack of EI in the workplace (Zezelj *et al.*, 2019). This also supported by World Health Organization (WHO) statement that employees' health disorders were the main causative factor of work-related incidents (Che Abdul Rahman *et al.*, 2018). This health disorder issues can relate with emotional deterioration and fatigue management issues that may decline levels of employees' well-being and indirectly decrease the JP.

Although there are other components affecting the JP such as general intelligence, social intelligence, and spiritual intelligence (Jain & Duggal, 2018). And there are also other few methods that can be used in identifying, differentiating, and assessing the skills and capabilities of the employees in performing their tasks (Krishnan *et al.*, 2018). Lack of EI in the workplace has been identified as one of the theoretical gaps in this study. It is believed that EI can enhance employees' JP which indirectly helps in achieving organization's aim to sustain itself in the global competitive market. For a better comprehension of employees' EI in the O&G industry, two main issues affecting it will be further explained in next sub-chapter.

1.3.1 Retirement

The first issue that affects employees' EI is the retirement of veterans, which were the critical and senior employees in the organization (Sumbal *et al.*, 2018). In addition to this, the veterans have more experiences from their job rotations and work performed in a variety of geographic locations throughout their careers (Sumbal *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, veterans often have a high level of JP as compared to less experienced employees (Ngotngamwong, 2020). Considering the fact that they have a good rapport with customers and have been serving them longer, it helps them work faster and more efficiently in meeting customers' needs and demands, aside from gaining trust in a long-term business relationship (Khan, 2018). Indirectly, when the customer reached maximum satisfaction, this indicates the effectiveness of the services. Hence, based on the services received, it will lead to customers' loyalty (Schirmer *et al.*, 2018).

However, since they have approaching retirement, they will leave the organization with an empty position that may not be easy to fill (Sumbal *et al.*, 2018). With that in mind, the first problem the organization possibly faces is the new employee who will be filling those position will likely require a longer time in meeting organization standard (Epiphany, 2019). Besides, they will also feel depressed and demotivated when they unable to meet certain standard set bt the organization (Scott, 2019).

Therefore, by strengthening the EI, it will help them in managing their emotions (Deutschendorf, 2017). Aside from that, they will also be able to cope with pressure and cultivate their adaptability and flexibility in dealing with new challenges (Houston, 2019). In addition, it demonstrates the ability to adapt through actions that can maximize opportunities in acquiring and developing skills and capabilities (Tan, 2016). Furthermore, according to the previous research, EI can enhance the JP, and it also helps stabilizing the emotions and improve the way of managing stress, coping with pressure, and fostering adaptability in dealing with new challenges (Segal *et al.*, 2019).

1.3.2 Turnover

The second issue that affects employees' EI is the turnover of experienced and professional employees (Laulié & Morgeson, 2021). There are a couple of factors that driven employees' turnover, as shown in Figure 1.4 (Kekutia, 2019).

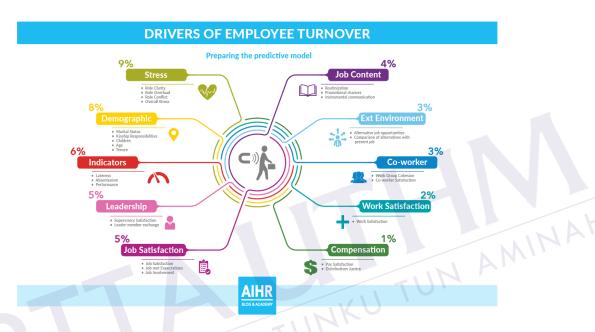


Figure 1.4: Drivers of Employee Turnover.

(Kekutia, 2019)

Based on all these factors as illustrated in Figure 1.4, demographics and stress predominate as the main causes of turnover rates (Kekutia, 2019). These factors reflect the employees in the O&G industry as they are often exposed to the highest risk of fatalities and accidents (Jiang *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, due to the risky nature of the business, which can lead to long-term health implications, they are required to have good demographics background, especially in term of the year of experience in O&G field, as well as strong physical and psychological health to face these challenging operational environments (Husseini, 2020). Otherwise, they may not be able to meet the standard that has been set by the organization (Husseini, 2020).

Regardless of other causes of employee turnover, heavy work overload is the main reason for employees suffering and struggling in their day-to-day life (Kekutia, 2019). As they need to handle existing tasks, learn new things where it perhaps out of

their job scopes, and perform multiple tasks due to the shortage of manpower, this deteriorate their emotions (Florentine, 2019). In other words, a high rate of turnover erodes the morale of the employees and decline the JP (Allen, 2019). On the other hand, employees with a high level of EI able to manage their emotions, and indirectly they will be able to cope with pressure and cultivate their adaptability and flexibility in dealing with new challenges and perform their tasks well (Segal *et al.*, 2019).

1.3.3 The Main Factors Causing Retirement and Turnover

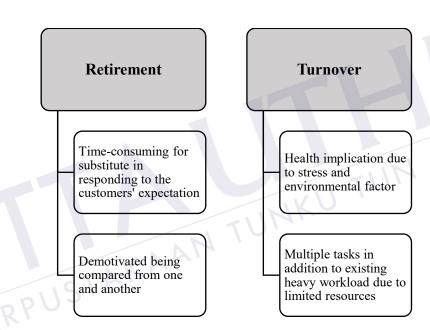


Figure 1.5: Job Performance Issues in the Oil and Gas Industry, Malaysia.

A summary of the issues is shown in Figure 1.5. Based on factors mentioned in earlier sub-chapter, emotional deterioration is the main cause of early retirement and employees' turnover, where it deteriorate the emotions and negatively affect the JP which indirectly makes it difficult for the O&G industry in achieving its aim to sustain itself in the global competitive market (Hordos, 2018). Nonetheless, as retirement is inevitable, the O&G industry should study the root cause of turnover to improve the JP (Kekutia, 2019). Many studies have found that emotional deterioration is a major cause of physical and health disorders that indirectly lead to turnover and lower the JP (Segal *et al.*, 2019). In supporting this statement, data obtained from earlier study indicate that symptoms of anxiety and depression or any other emotional deterioration

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