

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION AND EMOTIONAL SPIRITUAL QUOTIENT AMONG MALAYSIAN STUDENTS

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**ABSTRACT:** *Communication skills and emotional spiritual quotient are important for employees to achieve organizational goals and mission. In order to achieve the organization's objectives, the level of communication apprehension must be low and emotional spiritual quotient must be high. This research intends to find out the level of communication apprehension and emotional spiritual quotient of students, whether significant relationship exist between all the dimensions of communication apprehension and emotional spiritual quotient, and whether there exist any differences between the communication apprehension and emotional spiritual quotient based on demographic factors. A total of 340 respondents were selected using the stratified random sampling method. The results indicate that there exists a significant and positive relationship between communication apprehension and emotional spiritual quotient. There are no significant differences between communication apprehension and emotional spiritual quotient based on demographic factors.*

**KEY WORDS:** *communication apprehension, emotional spiritual quotient, and Malaysian students.*

## INTRODUCTION

Communication educators have long been concerned with helping students who experience high Communication Apprehension (CA) avoid negative academic consequences. Although high CA has not been demonstrated to be related to intelligence, 50 years of research of CA research has shown that it is related to communication avoidance, negative perceptions by others and negative academic consequences. Hence, J.C. McCroskey states that communication apprehension is an individual level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated

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communication with another person or persons (McCroskey, 1982). This fear or anxiety, also known as stage fright or nervousness, can cause shaking knees, a quivering voice, the inability to speak, nausea, or may lead to a person completely avoid communication situations.

The price apprehensive individuals pay for their inability to communicate is significant. The consequences of apprehension are well established in the research providing evidence that apprehensive students have lower overall grade-point averages and score lower on college entrance examination (McCroskey & Andersen, 1976); they considered less competent, composed and attractive than more outgoing individuals; apprehensive individuals are less likely to receive job interviews, and when they are hired, they are less likely to seek career advancements (McCroskey & Leppard, 1975).

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Following from J.C. McCroskey's arguments that we need to identify factors, such as apprehension, that influence "positive or negative affect toward communication" (McCroskey, 1982:6); some researchers try to identify personality factors that might affect self-perceived communication competence. Although a meta-analysis of the relationship between communication apprehension and cognitive determined that a small but stable relationship exist between communication apprehension and cognitive performance ( $r = -.12$ ) as cited by J.C. McCroskey, and that communication apprehension is negatively related to college grade point average, little is known about the relationship between communication apprehension and emotional spiritual quotient (McCroskey, 1982).

The phrase "emotional intelligence" (EI) was coined by Yale psychologist, Peter Salovey, and the University of New Hampshire's John Mayer five years ago to describe qualities like understanding one's own feelings, empathy for feelings of others and "the regulation of emotion in a way that enhances living". Their notion is about bound into conversation, handily shortened to EQ (Emotional Quotient). A book, *Emotional Intelligence*, by Daniel Coleman who is a psychology Ph.D. has brought together a decade's worth of behavioral research into how mind processes feelings. His thesis: when it comes to predicting people's success, brainpower as measured by IQ and standardize achievement tests may actually matter less than the qualities of mind once thought of as "character" before the word began to sound quotient (in Coleman, Chalian & Robinson, 1993).

EI has roots in studies of "social intelligence" in the 1920s and perhaps earlier. It was "discovered" again by Salovey and Mayer in the 1990s who first called it "emotional intelligence" and represents two of the seven or multiple intelligence theorized by Gardner: interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences. Accordingly, P.G. Coleman, C.I. Chalian and M. Robinson popularized the concept in 1993, as well as the notion that EI might "matter more" than IQ (which represents one of Gardner's seven intelligences).

Currently, there are several definitions of EI in use, and they don't necessarily match well. EI is multifaceted construct and we don't have a clear, simple definition of it. Because of this, it has been difficult to develop a good paper-and-pencil test to measure EI. Nonetheless, following are two ways of the more widely used definitions at present. Coleman defines EI as "the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships" (Coleman, Chalian & Robinson, 1993:317). Meanwhile, L.J. Tischler, J. Biberman and R. McKeage refer to emotional intelligence as being "[...] an array of non-cognitive skills, capabilities and competencies that influence a person's ability to cope with environmental demands and pressures" (Tischler, Biberman & McKeage, 2000).

In the past two years, two writers i.e. Emmons and Zohar Marshall have postulated the notion that spirituality could be an intelligence. In doing so, Emmons, writing in the discipline of psychology of religion, argues that spirituality meets Gardner's criteria for an intelligence and should be included as an intelligence. He also postulates that at least five core abilities that define spiritual intelligence namely: (1) the capacity for transcendence; (2) the ability to enter into heightened spiritual states of consciousness; (3) the ability to invest everyday activities, events and relationships with a sense of the sacred; (4) the ability to utilize spiritual resources to solve problems in living; and (5) the capacity to engage in virtuous behaviors or to be virtuous or to show forgiveness, to express gratitude, to be humble, and to display compassion (in Bootzin, 1975).

Zohar Marshall proposes that in addition to IQ and EQ (EI), there is another type of intelligence they call "SQ" or Spiritual Intelligence. Furthermore, they propose that IQ and EQ are subsidiary to and supported by SQ. So, SQ is the highest intelligence (in Bootzin, 1975; and Baumgardner, Kaufman & Levy, 1989).

"Spiritual" is used similarly, or in ways related to "emotional", or to particular behaviors or attitudes of an individual. For example, being spiritual has been equated with being open. Giving, compassionate, or what we imagine as "holy" in one's behavior, and is usually has to do with personal experiences of God, Allah, the Transcendent, the Beyond, the Sacred. The focus is on the direct experience of something other than what is normally the focus of the daily, material, sensory, or even emotional reality. On the other hand, many of results in daily living of having such experiences appear to be similar to the results (behaviors, feeling states, etc.) or being more emotionally mature or intelligent.

Using the competency framework, Higgs M. Dulewicz studied 100 managers over a 7-years old period by looking at a variety of their competencies and at their climb in their organizations. He also measured IQ, EI and potentially related personality traits. He used factor analysis and found six factors with Cronbach Alphas above 0.50. He found that competency based EI factors contributed 0.36 to predicting organizational advancement, *vs* IQ contributing (Dulewicz, 2000). Combined they predict 0.52 of advancement.

There is claim that, in spite of recent studies showing that most Americans believe in a God or Universal Spirit, the academic literature is void of much research

in this area. McCormick cites a number of studies that offer evidence that believing managers claim their relationship with God influences their work more than any other variable. In doing so, McCormick cites themes that emerged from the literature on spirituality and the workplace: compassion, right livelihood, selfless service, meditative work, and the problem of pluralism (in Emmons, 2000).

As for Islam, the evaluation of humankind is not only possible but is the main purpose and outcome of believing and practicing Islam. The approach of Islam to elevate the human self and get it closer to God is realistic, comprehensive, rational and direct. Mankind is a complex creation of God. Needless to say, it is only the Creator who could know precisely the intricacies of the human soul, and how they elevate it far and beyond. Divine messages are like “users’ manual” of this creation. Islam is a comprehensive “manual” of life that combines basic aspects (faith and worship, moral teachings and law) to offer the most intensive and effective means to know God and love Him, purify the soul and refine its human qualities, and establish a communal feeling of feeling of love, devotion and solidarity.

Reading, reciting and contemplating the Qur’an provides the Muslim with a clear vision of God and His universe and creatures, as well as keys to supreme morality. The text of the Qur’an is inimitable in its meanings, structures and rhetoric. And rhyme that motivate both the intellectual and the uninitiated. Reciting the Qur’an or praying to God using its wonderful phraseology, as well as other supplications taught by the Prophet of Islam, is a permanent wealth of direct communication with God.

Muslim ritual prayers are preceded by physical purification through washing the face, arms, and feet and wiping the head. This purification physically refreshes the body and mind to concentrate on the direct communication with God that follows. Obligatory prayers are performed five times around the clock, and there are also highly recommended prayers, especially late night prayers. In Arabic, *zakah* or obligatory charity, literally means purification of the money of the owner as well as purification of his heart of both greed and selfishness, replacing them with content, thankfulness, love, and willingness to sacrifice for others.

Similarly, the needy recipients’ hearts are filled with satisfaction and warm wishes to the rich instead of class hatred and malicious envy. In the lunar month of Ramadan, Muslims abstain from food, drink and sexual activities from dawn to sunset during the whole month. There are also recommended fasts on certain days and occasions (or any other day) around the year. The fifth pillar of Islam, *Hajj* or the pilgrimage, also presents a unique opportunity of spiritual evolution. Assembling in Makkah together with millions of Muslim, all in the simplest of garments, is a living unforgettable glorification of God by mankind and a reminder of the ultimate grand assembly of all generation in the Hereafter.

Based on the above discussion, the purpose of the present study was to add empirical data to the body of research regarding apprehension among Malaysian students. Based on the description of previous findings, research that explores the relationship between communication apprehension and emotional spiritual quotient, offers initial concerning communication apprehension and emotional spiritual

quotient among students, and gives empirical evidence as to the effects of communication apprehension and emotional spiritual quotient on the academic performance of the students.

### METHOD: RESPONDENTS AND INSTRUMENTATION

This study utilized a survey approach to gather data. The organization was a public university in the northern part of Malaysia. Respondents for this study were 404 undergraduate students (359 female, 45 male) enrolled in communication courses refer figure 1 to figure 5. Questionnaires were administered during regular class time in the second and third week of the second semester 2004/2005 session. Participation was voluntary and students were assured of confidentiality.

The instrumentation for this study is Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA). I used the PRCA-24 to assess levels of communication apprehension. The PRCA-24 contains 24 Likert-type statements concerning feelings about communication with others in four contexts: dyad, group, meeting and public. Besides an overall score across the 24 items, sub scores can be computed in the four contexts. The instruments have been used in many studies and has demonstrated adequate internal consistency and test-retest reliability (Rubin & Graham, 1988; and Rubin *et al.*, 1990). In this study, the PRCA-24 had a .86 Cronbach alpha. For PRCA contexts were: dyad,  $\alpha = .76$ , group,  $\alpha = .72$ , meeting,  $\alpha = .88$ , and public,  $\alpha = .86$ . PRCA-24 scores have a potential range of 24 to 120.

Emotional spiritual quotient was measured using questionnaire proposed by R.A. Emmons (2000). The questionnaire based on 99 characteristics of God believed by Muslim.

### RESULTS

Students were categorized as having high or low CA using standard deviation criteria (Bootzin, 1975). Low CA was defined as a score more than one standard deviation below the mean on the PRCA-24 trait and context scores and high CA, a score one standard deviation above the mean. Accordingly, for the trait score, 123 students (14 male and 109 female) and high CA, 278 students (30 male, 248 female). See figure 1 as follows:

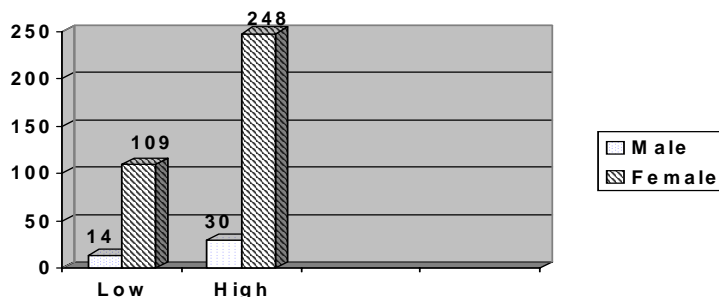


Table 1 provides detailed result of t-test, beginning with a comparison between results of the PRCA overall mean scores followed by Group, Meeting, Interpersonal and Public Speaking. At = 0.05 the analysis shows no significant difference between the means of the two groups (male and female) on their overall self-reported setting of CA, Group, Meeting, Interpersonal and Public Speaking.

**Table 1:**  
 Comparisons of Mean CA Levels of Male and Female

| PRCA-24         | Gender | N   | Mean  | SD    | t    | Sig. |
|-----------------|--------|-----|-------|-------|------|------|
| CA              | Male   | 45  | 77.20 | 12.40 | 1.40 | .16  |
|                 | Female | 359 | 75.34 | 7.78  |      |      |
| Group           | Male   | 45  | 20.00 | 5.49  | 1.23 | .22  |
|                 | Female | 359 | 19.27 | 3.24  |      |      |
| Meeting         | Male   | 45  | 19.51 | 5.71  | 1.36 | .18  |
|                 | Female | 359 | 18.74 | 3.24  |      |      |
| Interpersonal   | Male   | 45  | 18.80 | 2.35  | .91  | .36  |
|                 | Female | 359 | 18.83 | 2.08  |      |      |
| Public Speaking | Male   | 45  | 18.89 | 2.24  | .16  | .88  |
|                 | Female | 359 | 18.83 | 7.78  |      |      |

Pearson product moment correlation was used to test the hypotheses advanced earlier. The correlation procedure applied to these data indicated the presence of a positive and weak relationship between communication apprehension and emotional spiritual quotient ( $r = .25$ ,  $p$  [is less than] 0.01). Similarly, the results indicated that there are significant and weak relationship between ESQ and group communication ( $r = .28$ ,  $p$  [is less than] 0.01) and meeting ( $r = .21$ ,  $p$  [is less than] 0.01). Interpersonal communication and public speaking does not correlate significantly with ESQ.

**Table 2:**  
 Correlations among Study Variables

|                 | Emotional Spiritual Quotient |
|-----------------|------------------------------|
| CA              | .25**                        |
| Group           | .28**                        |
| Meeting         | .21**                        |
| Interpersonal   | .08                          |
| Public Speaking | .07                          |

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that there is a significant relationship between CA and ESQ. The findings indicate that even though the level of spirituality among Malaysian students is high but they are still having communication apprehension.

Therefore, educator must continue to pursue ways to help all Malaysian students in term of their communication problem. Adapting teaching strategies to the learning style preferences may be one way instructors can further help them to overcome their communication anxiety.

Another important relationship examined in this study is the relationship between group and meeting with ESQ but no significant relationship was found between interpersonal and public speaking with ESQ. Further examination is needed to explain why this two traits produced the increased apprehension among the students. Perhaps it is in this context that the social and personality correlates of communication apprehension that have also associated with high academic achievers have their greatest situational impact. However, the result of this study advances the literature by indicating that emotionally intelligence students also facing communication apprehension.

Result of t-test revealed that there is no significant differences between male and female in term of their CA. This is probably due to level of education received by both genders. There are limitations in the present investigations that place restrictions on generalizations that can be drawn. In the main, these studies employ restricted samples, a limited number of settings, and limited data collection strategies, all of which limit the generalizability of these findings. Research using a broader sample, in diverse settings and various data gathering strategies is in order.

Although I observed some clear relationships between Communication Apprehension (CA) and ESQ (Emotional-Spiritual Quotient), salient factors might mediate these results. One factor that I did not consider is the length of time students are in the academic setting. In their longitudinal study, Rubin *et al.* found that communication majors' "communication competence decreased significantly during sophomore year, but then increased significantly during the junior and senior years" (in Dulewicz, 2000). Given these results, it would be useful to consider whether academic classification or academic longevity affects students' communication apprehension.

Predicting college students success involves many measurable and salient factors; yet identifying all of them is almost impossible. This study adds additional information about the impact Communication Apprehension has on ESQ. Furthermore, I now need to extend these research efforts to examine another important learning outcomes such as career success.

## **CONCLUSION**

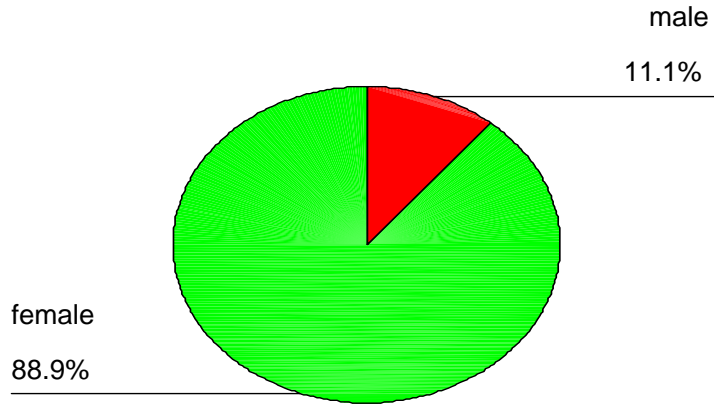
Employers and other external stakeholders have identified the needs for students to acquire effective communication skills. The research indicates that the extent to which CA affects individuals determines both effectiveness of their communication skills and the efficacy of efforts devoted to their development. Thus, if progress is to be made in enhancing the communication skills of Malaysian students, it is necessary to deal with CA, which from the available evidence would appear to be widespread.

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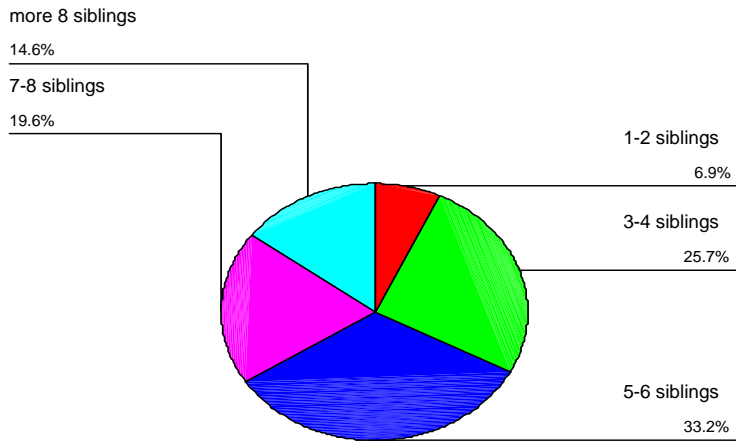
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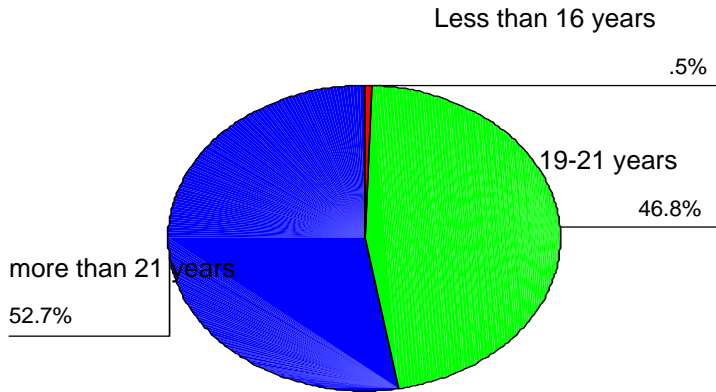
### gender



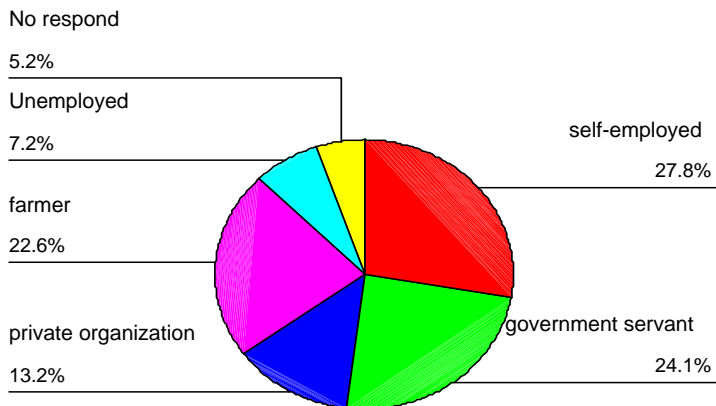
### Siblings



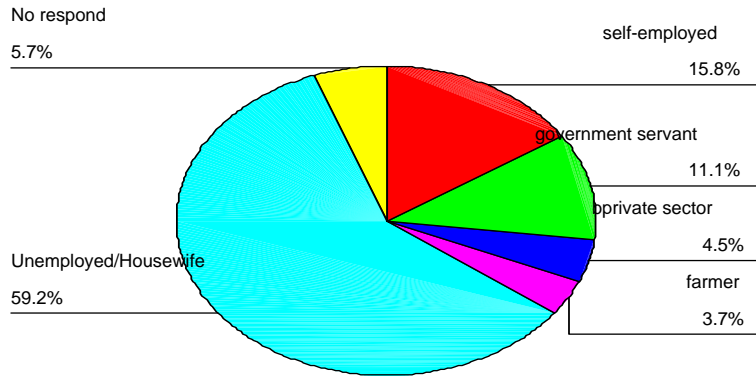
### Age



### Father's occupation



Mother's occupation





There is a significant relationship between CA and ESQ. The findings indicate that even though the level of spirituality among Malaysian students is high but they are still having communication apprehension. Therefore, educator must continue to pursue ways to help all Malaysian students in term of their communication problem.