

IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL LABOUR TECHNIQUES ON  
ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT, MEDIATED BY  
SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE: A STUDY OF  
MALAYSIAN TEACHERS

BY

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Business  
Administration)

Kulliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences  
International Islamic University Malaysia

OCTOBER 2021

## ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the impact of emotional labour techniques on organizational commitment mediated by spiritual intelligence. Emotional labour techniques are critical for service employees. Previous studies on emotional labour have focused on other service-based industries but very little has been done regarding studying its impact on teachers in Malaysia. Yet, teachers have a very demanding job. They are constantly in interaction with stakeholders (children or parents) and they must continuously display appropriate emotions. Given the assumptions of affective events theory (AET), maintaining the emotional boundaries required by the teaching profession may possibly make teachers vulnerable to unpleasant psychological and physiological experiences. Thus, the commitment level required from them to drive organizational agenda can likely diminish. Though, emotional labour techniques seem inevitable in the workplace, especially for teachers. However, based on assumptions of multiple intelligence (MI) theory, prior research suggests that developing spiritual intelligence may mitigate exigencies associated with workplace activities. In this regard, the current study attempted to establish a theoretical relationship between emotional labour techniques, organizational commitment, and spiritual intelligence. This relationship has been scantily researched. So, using a list-based simple random sampling technique, this study adapted the Emotional Labour Scale (ELS), the Three-Components model (TCM) scale, and the Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI-24) as survey instruments. By profiling teachers in the Klang Valley areas of Malaysia, the conceptual framework for the proposed theoretical relationship was assessed through standard Goodness-of-Fit (GOF) indices. Both surface acting and deep acting techniques are hypothesized separately in order to investigate existing equivocal outcomes in the emotional labour literature. In all, seven hypotheses were developed, tested, and validated through a two-stage Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) process. Six out of seven hypotheses were accepted as expected. Hence, the conceptual framework statistically and significantly supported the proposed theoretical relationship. The outcomes show that not only does surface acting technique impact teachers' organizational commitment negatively, but deep acting technique can also cause the same problem, albeit non-significant. The study found that teachers with heightened spiritual intelligence are less likely to experience emotional setbacks from the practice of surface acting and deep acting techniques. This shows that spiritual intelligence can mediate the relationship between teachers' emotional labour techniques and organizational commitment. These results fill some of the theoretical and contextual gaps in the literature. Likewise, it provides new insights to the ongoing debate about surface acting and deep acting techniques of emotional labour. In essence, this study has several implications for the advancement of current theories, relevant policy making, and professional practices. The study is limited in a number of ways. It is cross-sectional, purely quantitative, and has its social-demographic factors not examined. Hence, it highlighted potential areas for future research.

## خلاصة البحث

تستكشف هذه الدراسة تأثير استراتيجيات العمل العاطفي على الالتزام التنظيمي بوساطة الذكاء الروحي. إن أساليب العمل العاطفي ضرورية لموظفي الخدمات. وقد ركزت الدراسات السابقة حول العمل العاطفي على قطاعات الخدمات الأخرى، إلا أن الدراسات في تأثيره على المعلمين في ماليزيا ما زالت قليلة. وللمعلمين مهنة شاقة، لأنهم يتفاعلون دائما مع أصحاب المصلحة (الأطفال أو الآباء)، كما يجب عليهم أن يظهروا باستمرار المشاعر المناسبة. وحسب افتراضات نظرية الأحداث الوجدانية (AET)، إن الحفاظ على الحدود العاطفية التي تتطلبها مهنة التدريس قد يعرض المعلمين للتجارب النفسية والفسولوجية غير السارة. وبناء على هذا الأمر، فإن مستوى الالتزام المطلوب منهم لقيادة الأجندة التنظيمية قد يضعف. ولهذا، يبدو أن استراتيجيات العمل العاطفي بالنسبة للمعلمين في مكان العمل أمر لا مفر منه. ومع ذلك، استنادا إلى افتراضات نظرية الذكاء المتعددة (MI)، فإن الأبحاث السابقة تقترح أن تطوير الذكاء الروحي قد يخفف من المتطلبات المتعلقة بأنشطة مكان العمل. وفي هذا الصدد، حاولت هذه الدراسة إيجاد علاقة نظرية بين استراتيجيات العمل العاطفي والالتزام التنظيمي والذكاء الروحي. وهذه العلاقة لم تكن مدروسة من قبل بشكل كاف. فلهذا، باستخدام تقنية أخذ العينات العشوائية البسيطة المعتمدة على القائمة، قامت هذه الدراسة بتكييف مقياس العمل العاطفي (ELS)، ومقياس نموذج المكونات الثلاث (TCM)، وقائمة التقرير الذاتي للذكاء الروحي (SISRI-24)، لتكون أدوات للاستقصاء. وبتنميط المعلمين في مناطق وادي كلانج في ماليزيا، تم تقييم الإطار المفاهيمي للعلاقة النظرية المقترحة من خلال مؤشرات حسن المطابقة (GOF). وقد تم افتراض كل من استراتيجية التمثيل السطحي واستراتيجية التمثيل العميق بشكل منفصل للتحقق من النتائج الملائمة الموجودة في أدبيات العمل العاطفي. طوّرت سبع فرضيات، وتم اختبارها والتحقق من صحتها من خلال عملية نمذجة المعادلات الهيكلية (SEM) المكونة من مرحلتين، وتم قبول ست فرضيات منها كما هو متوقع. وبناء على هذا، فقد دعم الإطار المفاهيمي - من الناحية الإحصائية وبشكل ملحوظ - العلاقة النظرية المقترحة. وتُظهر النتائج أنه ليس فقط لأسلوب التمثيل السطحي تأثير سلبي على الالتزام التنظيمي للمعلمين، فإن أسلوب التمثيل العميق قد يتسبب في المشكلة نفسها، وإن كان في شكل غير ملحوظ. وجدت هذه الدراسة أن المعلمين من أصحاب ذكاء روحي مرتفع نادرا ما يتعرضون لتجربة الانتكاسات العاطفية بسبب ممارستهم لأسلوب التمثيل السطحي وأسلوب التمثيل العميق. هذا يدل على أن الذكاء الروحي يمكن أن يتوسط العلاقة بين أسلوب العمل العاطفي للمدرسين والالتزام التنظيمي. تملأ هذه النتائج بعض الفجوات النظرية والسياقية في الأدبيات، كما أنها أيضا توفر رؤى جديدة للنقاش المستمر حول أسلوب التمثيل السطحي وأسلوب التمثيل العميق للعمل العاطفي. وفي الخلاصة، هذه الدراسة لها بعض الانعكاسات في تطورات النظريات الحالية، ووضع السياسات ذات الصلة، والممارسات المهنية. إن هذه الدراسة محدودة في بعض النواحي: إنها دراسة مقطعية مستعرضة، ومعتمدة على طريقة البحث الكمي فحسب، وعواملها الاجتماعية والديموغرافية لم تكن تعرض للفحص. ومع ذلك فإنها قد سلطت الضوء على المجالات المحتملة للبحث للدراسات المستقبلية.

## **APPROVAL PAGE**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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## **DEDICATION**

In loving memory of my beloved mother, Alhaja Kamilat Iyabo Irorun Ogunsola, who passed on during the course of my Ph. D sojourn.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All adoration is due to Allah; who has nourished my soul from cradle up to this moment of my academic pursuit at the International Islamic University Malaysia. His Blessings be showered upon the beloved Prophet; Muhammed (SAW), a leader and teacher per excellence.

Thereafter, it relatively important to give credit to people whom without their effort, time and contributions, this thesis would not have been successful. With due regard, I acknowledge the intellectual contribution of my supervisors; Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rodrigue Ancelot Harvey Fontaine and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Tahir Jan. Their inspiring guidance prepared me for the task ahead. I thank them for being exemplary and visionary mentors.

My gratitude is also extended to the management and staff of Kulliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences (KENMS) for providing us with helpful instructors of erudite academic background, study materials, and an environment conducive for learning. These contributed immensely towards the progress of this thesis.

I wish to express my profound appreciation to my father, Alhaji J. I Ogunsola, and my siblings for their unwavering support during this journey. My gratitude extends to Alhaji Tajudeen A. Bakre, a philanthropist, whose gesture is immeasurable. Also, I thank my wife, Pharm. Mrs. Moriam Hassan-Qasim, for her loving care, patience, and understanding in the course of writing this thesis. To my lovely daughters, Mubeenah and Mumtazah, you are Jewels, I appreciate you for your continuous prayer for my success.

My appreciation also goes to friends and individuals who gave me support and inspiration during my entire study duration. My hearty gratitude goes to all respondents who sacrificed their valuable time to complete the survey questionnaire.

Finally, I acknowledge the good works of various authors whose journal articles, writeups, and books assisted me in carrying out this project.

May God Almighty bless you all. Amin.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .....	ii
Abstract in Arabic .....	iii
Approval Page.....	iv
Declaration .....	v
Copyright .....	vi
Dedication .....	vii
Acknowledgements .....	viii
Table of Contents .....	ix
List of Tables .....	xv
List of Figures .....	xvii
List of Abbreviations .....	xix
List of Symbols .....	xxi
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background of the Study .....	1
1.3 Research Problem .....	7
1.4 Research Objectives.....	14
1.5 Research Questions.....	15
1.6 Underpinning Research Theories .....	16
1.6.1 Affective Events Theory (AET).....	16
1.6.2 Three-Component Model (TCM) of Organizational Commitment .....	17
1.6.3 Theory of Multiple Intelligences.....	17
1.7 Justification for the Study .....	18
1.8 Significance of the Study.....	19
1.9 Definition of Terms .....	21
1.10 Organization of the Study .....	23
1.11 Chapter Summary .....	26
<b>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>27</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	27
2.2 Affective Events Theory (AET) .....	28
2.3 The Nature of Emotions and Moods.....	31
2.3.1 Emotions .....	32
2.3.2 Moods.....	33
2.3.3 Types of Emotions and Moods .....	34
2.3.4 Emotions, Display Rules, and Teachers' Code of Ethics .....	35
2.4 Emotional Labour .....	39
2.4.1 Types of Emotional Expression .....	42
2.4.2 Emotional Labour Techniques .....	45
2.4.2.1 Surface Acting Technique .....	45
2.4.2.2 Deep Acting Technique .....	47
2.4.3 Benefits of Emotional Labour Techniques .....	48
2.4.4 Dysfunctional Aspects of Emotional Labour Techniques .....	50

2.4.4.1 Health Consequences.....	52
2.4.4.2 Performance Consequences.....	54
2.4.4.3 Socio-Economic Consequences.....	56
2.4.5 Benefits Versus Costs of Emotional Labour Techniques on Employees .....	57
2.5 Organizational Commitment .....	59
2.5.1 Three - Components Model of Organizational Commitment (TCM).....	62
2.5.1.1 Affective Commitment (AC).....	63
2.5.1.2 Continuance Commitment (CC).....	64
2.5.1.3 Normative Commitment (NC).....	67
2.6 Managing Emotional Labour Techniques .....	68
2.6.1 Integrating a Mediator - Spiritual Intelligence.....	70
2.7 The Theory of Multiple Intelligences .....	73
2.7.1 Evolution of Spiritual Intelligence.....	75
2.7.2 Spirituality and Intelligence: The Interplay .....	77
2.7.3 Spirituality and Religion .....	80
2.8 Spiritual Intelligence.....	82
2.8.1 Conceptual Definitions of Spiritual Intelligence .....	82
2.8.2 Components of Spiritual Intelligence .....	85
2.8.2.1 Critical Existential Thinking (CET) .....	87
2.8.2.2 Personal Meaning Production (PMP).....	88
2.8.2.3 Transcendental Awareness (TA) .....	89
2.8.2.4 Conscious State Expansion (CSE).....	90
2.8.3 Developing Spiritual Intelligence.....	92
2.8.4 Critiquing Spiritual Intelligence.....	98
2.9 The Education System in Malaysia .....	102
2.9.1 The Teaching Profession in Malaysia.....	103
2.9.2 Overview of Malaysian Secondary Schools .....	107
2.10 Research Gaps .....	109
2.10.1 Theoretical Gap.....	110
2.10.2 Contextual Gaps.....	113
2.11 Relationship Among the Study Variables .....	115
2.11.1 The Impact of Emotional Labour techniques on Organizational Commitment .....	115
2.11.2 The Influence of Emotional Labour Techniques on Spiritual Intelligence .....	121
2.11.3 The Impact of Spiritual Intelligence on Organizational Commitment .....	129
2.11.4 The Mediating Role of Spiritual Intelligence between Emotional Labour Techniques and Organizational Commitment .....	132
2.12 The Conceptual Research Framework.....	141
2.13 Chapter Summary .....	141

**CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....144**

3.1 Introduction.....	144
3.2 Research Paradigm .....	144
3.3 Research Design .....	146

3.3.1	The Purpose of Study .....	147
3.3.2	Types of Study Investigation .....	149
3.3.3	Study Setting .....	149
3.3.4	The Unit of Analysis .....	150
3.3.5	Time Horizon .....	151
3.4	Sampling Design Process .....	152
3.4.1	Population, Sample Frame and Sampling Technique .....	153
3.4.2	Determining the Sample Size.....	155
3.4.3	Justifications for the Sample Size .....	156
3.5	Measurement and Scaling Instruments .....	157
3.5.1	Emotional Labour (Measurement and Scale).....	160
3.5.1.1	Justification for Emotional Labour Scale (ELS) .....	162
3.5.2	Organizational Commitment (Measurement and Scale).....	163
3.5.2.1	Justification for Three-Component Model (TCM) of Organizational Commitment .....	163
3.5.3	Spiritual Intelligence (Measurement and Scale) .....	164
3.5.3.1	Justification for Spiritual Intelligence (SQ) Scale .....	164
3.6	Data Collection Source .....	165
3.7	Data Collection Instrument.....	166
3.8	Data Analysis.....	168
3.8.1	Data Preparation and Screening .....	169
3.8.1.1	Missing Data.....	169
3.8.1.2	Outliers .....	170
3.8.1.3	Normality .....	170
3.8.2	Descriptive Statistics.....	172
3.8.3	Inferential Statistics.....	172
3.8.4	Reliability Analysis.....	173
3.8.5	Confirmatory Factory Analysis (CFA) .....	174
3.8.5.1	Higher - Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA).....	175
3.8.6	Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) – Full Model .....	176
3.8.6.1	Justifications for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)...	177
3.8.6.2	Procedural Steps in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) .....	178
3.8.6.3	Mediation Effect .....	183
3.9	Translation, Cross - Cultural Adaptation, and Psychometric Validation of Questionnaire for Malaysian Teachers.....	184
3.10	Translation, Adaptation, and Validation Procedure .....	186
3.10.1	Phase 1: Translation and Adaption .....	188
3.10.1.1	Preliminary Considerations .....	188
3.10.1.2	Forward Translation .....	189
3.10.1.3	Reconciliation .....	190
3.10.1.4	Backward Translation.....	191
3.10.1.5	Backward Translation Review.....	192
3.10.1.6	Expert Committee.....	192
3.10.1.7	Pilot Study .....	193
3.10.2	Phase 2: Psychometric Validation of the Malaysian Questionnaire Version .....	196
3.10.2.1	Internal Consistency Reliability Test .....	197
3.10.2.2	Validity Test .....	198

3.11 Pilot Study Report .....	198
3.11.1 Socio-Demographic Report.....	199
3.11.2 Reliability Report.....	200
3.11.3 Content / Face Validity Report .....	201
3.12 Chapter Summary .....	203

**CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF**

<b>RESULTS.....</b>	<b>205</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	205
4.2 Data Preparation and Screening.....	206
4.2.1 Missing Data .....	206
4.2.2 Outliers.....	207
4.2.3 Normality .....	208
4.3 Descriptive Statistics .....	209
4.3.1 Response Rate .....	210
4.3.2 Social – Demographic Characteristics of Respondents .....	212
4.3.2.1 Gender .....	213
4.3.2.2 Age.....	214
4.3.2.3 Level of Education.....	214
4.3.2.4 Work Experience .....	215
4.3.2.5 Marital Status.....	215
4.3.3 Questionnaire Items Characteristics.....	216
4.3.3.1 Emotional Labour Techniques Items.....	218
4.3.3.2 Organizational Commitment Items .....	220
4.3.3.3 Spiritual Intelligence Items.....	223
4.3.4 Multicollinearity Analysis.....	227
4.4 Structural Equation Modeling.....	229
4.5 Confirmatory Factory Analysis (CFA).....	229
4.5.1 Defining the Individual Constructs .....	230
4.5.2 Developing the overall Measurement Model.....	235
4.5.3 Designing a Study to Produce Empirical Results .....	236
4.5.4 Assessing Measurement Model Validity .....	237
4.5.4.1 Assessing the Measurement Model of Emotional Labour Scale (ELS).....	239
4.5.4.2 Assessing the Measurement Model of Organizational Commitment (OC).....	245
4.5.4.3 Assessing the Measurement Model of Spiritual Intelligence (SQ) .....	249
4.5.4.4 Unidimensionality .....	253
4.5.4.5 Overall CFA Results for Measurement Models .....	254
4.5.4.6 Construct Validity Testing.....	259
4.5.4.7 Reliability Test .....	264
4.6 Structural Model (Full Model Evaluation) .....	267
4.6.1 Specifying the Structural Model .....	267
4.6.1.1 Unit of Analysis.....	268
4.6.1.2 Model Specification Using a Path Diagram .....	268
4.6.1.3 Recursive Vs Non-Recursive Model .....	270
4.6.2 Assessing the Baseline Structural Model Validity.....	270
4.7 Hypotheses Testing.....	278

4.7.1	<i>H1</i> : Surface Acting Technique Predicts A Negative Impact on Organizational Commitment .....	279
4.7.2	<i>H2</i> : Deep Acting Technique Predicts A Negative Impact on Organizational Commitment .....	281
4.7.3	<i>H3</i> : Surface Acting Technique Predicts A Positive Influence of Spiritual Intelligence .....	284
4.7.4	<i>H4</i> : Deep Acting Technique Predicts A Positive Influence of Spiritual Intelligence.....	287
4.7.5	<i>H5</i> : Spiritual Intelligence Predicts A Positive Impact on Organizational Commitment .....	290
4.8	Testing for Mediating Relationship.....	292
4.8.1	<i>H6</i> : Spiritual Intelligence Mediates the Relationship Between Surface Acting Technique and Organizational Commitment .....	296
4.8.2	<i>H7</i> : Spiritual Intelligence Mediates the Relationship Between Deep Acting Technique and Organizational Commitment .....	302
4.9	Summary Results of Hypotheses Tests .....	308
4.10	Nested Structural Models .....	311
4.10.1	Nested Model 1 .....	312
4.11	Control Variables.....	315
4.12	Chapter Summary .....	316

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND**

	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>318</b>
5.1	Introduction.....	318
5.2	Overview of the Study .....	318
5.3	Discussion on the Findings.....	321
5.3.1	Social – Demographic Data .....	321
5.3.2	Research Questions .....	322
5.3.2.1	Research Question 1 (RQ1): Does surface acting technique predict a negative impact on organizational commitment? .....	323
5.3.2.2	Research Question 2 (RQ2): Does deep acting technique predict a negative impact on organizational commitment? .....	324
5.3.2.3	Research Question 3 (RQ3): Does surface acting technique predict a positive influence of spiritual intelligence? .....	326
5.3.2.4	Research Question 4 (RQ4): Does deep acting technique predict a positive influence of spiritual intelligence? .....	327
5.3.2.5	Research Question 5 (RQ5): Does spiritual intelligence predict a positive impact on organizational commitment? .....	330
5.3.2.6	Research Question 6 (RQ6): Does spiritual intelligence mediate the relationship between surface acting technique and organizational commitment? .....	331
5.3.2.7	Research Question 7 (RQ7): Does spiritual intelligence mediate the relationship between deep acting technique and organizational commitment? .....	332
5.4	Contributions of the Study.....	334
5.4.1	Theory .....	334
5.4.2	Policy .....	336

5.4.3 Practice.....	339
5.5 Limitations of the Study .....	340
5.6 Recommendations for Future Research.....	342
5.7 Chapter Summary .....	343
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>345</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: CONTENT VALIDITY FORM.....</b>	<b>391</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: SURVEY INSTRUMENT .....</b>	<b>392</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: CONSENT LETTERS .....</b>	<b>400</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 Some Definitions of Emotional Labour	40
Table 2.2 Dysfunctional Aspects of Emotional Labour Techniques	51
Table 2.3 Dimensions of Organizational Commitment	60
Table 2.4 Some Articles and Journals on Spiritual Intelligence	76
Table 2.5 Conceptual Definitions of Spiritual Intelligence	83
Table 2.6 Summary of Spiritual Intelligence Components (SISRI -24)	92
Table 2.7 Developing Spiritual intelligence	93
Table 2.8 Numbers of Malaysian Secondary Schools and Teachers	108
Table 2.9 Theoretical Gaps Summary Table	110
Table 2.10 Contextual Gap Summary Table	113
Table 2.11 Current Research Alignment Table	140
Table 3.1 Measurement Instruments, Sub-dimensions, Sources and Total Items Adapted	159
Table 3.2 Index Category and the Range of Acceptance	174
Table 3.3 Possible Scenarios for Cross-Cultural Adaptation	186
Table 3.4 Cross - Tabulation	199
Table 3.5 Overall Reliability Statistics of the Pilot Study	200
Table 3.6 Content and Face Validity Evaluation Report	201
Table 4.1 Response Rate Analysis (Main Study)	212
Table 4.2 Cross-Tabulation	213
Table 4.3 Descriptive Statistic: Emotional Labour Scale (ELS- <i>my</i> )	218
Table 4.4 Descriptive Statistics: Three – Component Model (TCM- <i>my</i> )	221
Table 4.5 Descriptive Statistics: Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory	224
Table 4.6 Multicollinearity Analysis of Constructs <sup>a</sup>	228
Table 4.7 Observed Indicators Used in Teachers’ CFA	232

Table 4.8 CFA Result for Surface Acting Technique	241
Table 4.9 CFA Result for Deep Acting Technique	243
Table 4.10 CFA Result for Organizational Commitment Questionnaire	248
Table 4.11 CFA Result for Spiritual Intelligence Self Report Inventory	252
Table 4.12 Overall CFA Results	257
Table 4.13 Reliability and Validity Assessment Tests for Convergent Validity	260
Table 4.14 Constructs Correlation Matric for Discriminant Validity	263
Table 4.15 Structural Model Results	272
Table 4.16 Estimates of the Hypothesized Structural Model	277
Table 4.17 Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects	293
Table 4.18 Process Macro Causal Steps Hypothesis Testing	297
Table 4.19 Process Macro Causal Steps Hypothesis Testing	303
Table 4.20 Summary of Hypotheses Testing	308
Table 4.21 Baseline Model and Nested Model Results	312



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Organization of the Study Flowchart	23
Figure 2.1 Affective Events Theory	28
Figure 2.2 Affective Events Theory Linking Emotional Labour Process to Outcome	30
Figure 2.3 Relationship between Affect, Emotions and Moods	31
Figure 2.4 Major Categories of Emotions and Associated Subcategories	35
Figure 2.5 Value Chain Service Relationship	36
Figure 2.6 Emotional Labour, Emotional Expression and Techniques	43
Figure 2.7 Consequences of Emotion Labour Techniques	52
Figure 2.8 Benefits Versus Costs of Emotional labour Techniques	58
Figure 2.9 Three Components of Model (TCM) of Organizational Commitment	62
Figure 2.10 Domains of Multiple Intelligence	74
Figure 2.11 Classifications of Spirituality	80
Figure 2.12 Developing Spiritual Intelligence	95
Figure 2.13 Pictorial Presentation of Research Gaps	111
Figure 2.14 Conceptual Framework	141
Figure 3.1 The Research Design	147
Figure 3.2 Six-Stage Process for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)	178
Figure 3.3 Graphical Representation of Translation and Cultural Adaptation (TCA)	188
Figure 4.1 Sample Size Flow Chart	210
Figure 4.2a Default Measurement Model for Surface Acting Technique	240
Figure 4.2b Modified Measurement Model for Surface Acting Technique	240
Figure 4.3 Default Measurement Model for Deep Acting Technique	243

Figure 4.4a Default Second-Order Measurement Model for Organizational Commitment	246
Figure 4.4b Modified Second-Order Measurement Model for Organizational Commitment	246
Figure 4.5a Default Second-Order Measurement Model for Spiritual Intelligence	250
Figure 4.5b Modified Second-Order Measurement Model for Spiritual Intelligence	250
Figure 4.6 Overall Measurement Model	255
Figure 4.7 The Schematic View of Structural Model	269
Figure 4.8 Structural Model	270
Figure 4.9 Schematic View of Mediation Model	293
Figure 4.10 Nested Structural Model.	312

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Affective Commitment
AET	Affective Events Theory
AGFI	Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index
AMOS	Analysis of Moment Structures
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
C.R.	Critical Ratio
CC	Continuance Commitment
CET	Critical Existential Thinking
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CMIN/DF	Normed Chi-Square
CR	Construct / Composite Reliability
CSE	Conscious State Expansion
DA	Deep Acting
DOS	Department of Statistics (Malaysia)
D-QEL	Dutch Questionnaire on Emotional Labour
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
ELS	Emotional Labour Scale
ELS-my	Emotional Labour Scale (Malaysian Version)
EPU	Economic Planning Unit (Malaysia)
ETP	Excellent Teacher Programme
GFI	Goodness-of-Fit Index
GOF	Goodness-of-Fit
HR	Human Resource
IBM	International Business Machines
MI Theory	Multiple Intelligences Theory
MLE	Maximum Likelihood Estimation
MOE	Ministry of Education (Malaysia)
MOF	Ministry of Finance (Malaysia)
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education (Malaysia)
MP	Malaysian Plan
NC	Normative Commitment
NFI	Normed Fit Index
NUTP	National Union of Teaching Profession (Malaysia)
OC	Organizational Commitment
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
PMP	Personal Meaning Production

PNFI	Parsimony Normed Fit Index
R-Matrix	Correlation Determinant Value
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
RNI	Relative Noncentrality Index
S.E	Standardized Estimates
SA	Surface Acting
SD	Standard Deviation
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
SISRI-24	Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory -24
SISRI-my	Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (Malaysian Version)
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SQ	Spiritual Intelligence
TA	Transcendental Awareness
TCA	Translation and Cultural Adaptation
TCM	Three-Components Model
TCM-my	Three-Components Model (Malaysian Version)
TED	Teachers Education Division
TLI	Tucker Lewis Index
WHO	World Health organization

## LIST OF SYMBOLS

$d/f$	Degree of Freedom
$\chi^2$	Chi-Square
$p$	P – value
$\alpha$	Cronbach’s Alpha
$z$	z scores for kurtosis and Skewness
$<$	Less than
$>$	More than
$\leq$	Less than or equal to
$\geq$	More than or equal to
$\pm$	Plus or Minus
$\beta$	Beta
$b$	beta (unstandardized)
$H$	Hypothesis

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The main purpose of this research is to examine the impact of emotional labour techniques on organizational commitment of teachers in Malaysia, mediated through spiritual intelligence. This chapter discusses the background of the study, identifies the pertinent research problems in the literature, specifies the research objectives and questions. This chapter equally highlights the significance and justifications for the research. Finally, the organization of the study is presented in a form of flow chart in order to provide step-by-step clarity on the research work.

### **1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Emotional labour was proposed as a construct by Hochschild in 1983. Emotional labour is when employees observe the emotional requirement of a job. In doing so, employees' personal emotions sometimes conflict with the emotions they have to display. Hochschild distinguishes between two acting techniques - surface acting and deep acting. Emotional labour is a critical issue for service-based organisations or profession like teaching.

Since its introduction over three decades ago, research has looked at its advantages and disadvantages for organisations and employees. To date, there is very little research on the relationship between emotional labour techniques (i.e., surface acting and deep acting), organizational commitment, and spiritual intelligence.

This is a significant gap in the literature given the growing concern for employees' well-being (Fry et al., 2016). Also striking is the perennial loss of

productivity due to employees' health (e.g., psychological and physiological) illness or conditions (Assiri, 2016; Nagata et al., 2018). For instance, loss of productivity often cost the global economy US\$ 1 trillion per year (WHO, 2019). In Malaysia, Wee et al., (2019) linked loss of productivity to employees' socioeconomic characteristics and health conditions which is often visible through absenteeism and presenteeism. In Chua's (2020) study, it was revealed that mental health conditions (e.g., depression, anxiety disorder) are estimated to cost Malaysian economy about RM14.46 billion.

Studies indicate that employees are susceptible to emotional strain when they lack adequate emotional resources to meet work demands (Choi, Mohammad, & Kim, 2019; Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Yet, in a service organization, customers will perceive the quality of the organisation based on the service interaction with front-line employees (Grandey & Sayre, 2019; Hochschild, 2012). Ideally, emotionally-strained employees result to a form of withdrawal, rather than engage in activities that can deplete their socio-emotional well-being (Chau et al., 2009; Yin et al., 2019). Apparently, this reduces their organizational commitment. Thus, leading to loss of productivity.

Nonetheless, employees who learn to manage their emotions become better employees (Christoforou & Ashforth, 2015; Richard & Converse, 2016). Scholars have found that spiritual intelligence can have a positive impact on feelings, thoughts, and behaviours at work (Conor et al., 2011; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010; Mahmood et al., 2018; Sisk, 2015). This potentially brings spiritual intelligence into the field of emotional labour.

Studies on emotional labour have often focused on health professionals (Indregard et al., 2018; Lartey et al., 2019), tourism and hospitality workers (Prentice, 2014), front-desk service employees (Sonar & Paliwal, 2018; Walsh et al., 2019),

security personnel (Van Gelderen, 2013) or airline attendants (Hochschild, 1983). Though, there is steady increase on studies investigating teachers' emotional labour, but most attention is focused on the relationship between teachers' emotional labour and their psychological consequences or emotional experiences like burnout, stress, anxiety, and so forth (M. Lee & Vlack, 2017; Näring et al., 2012; Taxer & Frenzel, 2017; Yilmaz et al., 2015).

Except in Shukla and Pandey (2019), there seems to be a dearth of research establishing empirical relationship between teachers' emotional labour techniques and organizational outcomes such as organizational commitment. Yet, Brotheridge and Lee (2003 p. 366) think that "emotional labour is a multidimensional construct that could have differential impact on employees' outcome." Therefore, it is worthwhile investigating the relationship between teachers' emotional labour techniques and organizational commitment more thoroughly.

The teaching profession is highly charged with feelings, directed towards not just the people (e.g., students, colleagues or parents), but also towards organizational values, mission, and ideas (Thien et al., 2014; Zembylas, 2003, 2005). This suggests that the profession is seemingly filled with so many complexities (Mawhinney & Rinke, 2018). Perhaps, due to high rates of pressure on teachers as nation's builder (Kwok, 2014) or their wellness impact on students' learning (Zembylas, 2005) or due to the occupational stress of the profession such as excessive workload, poor students' behaviour, aggressive parents' behaviour, etc., (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; Walifa, 2020). In addition, report revealed a worrying trend of increased symptoms of poor mental health among teachers (TWI, 2020). For instance, about 53% of teachers report personal health and wellbeing issues. Thus, continued research may provide better understanding on teachers' emotional experiences.